

ANTISEPTIC AND ASEPTIC SURGERY.

A review of the more recent progress of surgery demands some inquiry into the present status of our knowledge regarding the guiding principles which underlie the surgical treatment of wounds known as the antiseptic or aseptic method—a method which we owe to the scientific insight and genius of Lord Lister. The writer is old enough to remember something of the fierce antagonism which many leaders of our profession showed to Lister's methods. Even as late as 1887 one finds a prominent English surgeon writing as follows: "The germ hypothesis has in this country adherents whose opinions are entitled to respect, but it appears to me to be not proven and more likely to be abandoned than to be confirmed." To-day we find that the field is completely abandoned by such sceptics, and Lister has lived long enough to have received something of the gratitude he so well deserves for the inestimable service he has rendered to humanity. It is true he received encouragement very shortly after he had introduced the system from the remarkable results which were at once obtained. In his address before the British Association in 1896, after referring to his early results in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, he relates the following incident: "Equally striking changes were afterwards witnessed in other institutions. Of these I may give one example. In the great Allgemeines Krankenhaus of Munich, hospital gangrene became more and more rife from year to year, till at length the dreadful condition was reached that 80 per cent. of all the wounds became infected by it. . . . The institution seemed to have become hopelessly infected, and the city authorities were contemplating its demolition and reconstruction. Under these circumstances Professor VonNussbaum despatched his chief assistant to Edinburgh, where I at that time occupied the chair of Clinical Surgery, to learn the details of the antiseptic system as we then practised it. He remained until he had entirely mastered them, and on his return all the cases were on a certain day dressed on our plan. From that day forward not a single case of hospital gangrene occurred in the Krankenhaus. The fearful disease pyemia likewise disappeared, and erysipelas soon followed its example."

For the last few years Lister has learned something of the gratitude of his fellows by the honors which have been conferred upon him. In Britain he has been created a Peer of the Realm, and in turn President of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and President of the Royal Society. In foreign countries, too, scientists have vied with one another in their efforts to do him honor. One would think, however, that perhaps the greatest satisfaction which he must now enjoy is in being able to write, as he did in the Huxley Lecture, that "the principle that