

Why are these things so? Only by a constant use of that word "Why," can scientific knowledge advance. It is necessary to seek for causes. Empirical knowledge is useful, very useful, but it does not exhibit reasons.

The subjects, then, to which we would strongly urge the younger members of the medical profession, and we address ourselves here more especially to physicians, to devote themselves in the future, are pathological histology and chemistry in relation to therapeutics—chemical therapeutics, if we may use the phrase. Let them try to discover what in its very essence is the action on the various tissues of quinia, of iodine, of aconite, etc., etc. This is the only method by which scientific progress can be attained, and we venture to believe that in a century or two from the present day this will be the only method followed.

ETHICS IN SURGICAL OPERATIONS.

In this age of thorough cleanliness and antiseptic treatment of wounds, there is a decided necessity for radical reform in ethics at surgical operations. Any and every surgical operation, no matter when or where performed, if on a human being, is for the benefit of the patient operated on, and not for the glory of the operator or for the instruction of himself or his *confrères*. To our sorrow, we have again and again seen the reverse of this obtain. It may be asked, how can men become experts in operating except by witnessing and participating in operations, and thus become familiar with the whole procedure in a practical way and verify every detail in a critical manner? We answer that the dissecting and post-mortem rooms, and not the operating amphitheatre, are the places to become expert in either making diagnosis or operating. No man, nor any number of men, no matter what be the pretext, have the least right to jeopardize the life of another human being—and that is what is constantly being done when a crowd is allowed, in an operating room to examine a wound that has just been made, or put the hand into a peritoneal, thoracic, or other cavity, without the operator knowing that that hand has been thoroughly cleansed and made aseptic.

This state of things is wholly wrong. If a physician is, through courtesy, invited to be present at an operation, he should remember he is only an

invited guest so far as viewing the procedure is concerned. To all else he is an intruder, and an abuser of hospitality when he interferes. Again, we have seen surgeons who, while operating, apparently as a matter of routine, invite every one present to examine the wound or cavity they had opened. Any surgeon who does such a thing is surely forgetting the high responsibility that rests upon him especially, to guard the life of his patient at every point, to the utmost of his ability. A surgeon fully imbued with the responsibility of his work will invite to assist him only such persons as he may require, and he *knows* are thoroughly clean and free from infection. Having made these selections, he assigns them to their several places about the operating-table. These, and only these should be allowed to take part in the operation, and they only to examine the wound or cavity in cases of extreme doubt on the part of the operator, or when he requires and asks advice. When the operation is done the wound should be subjected to no manipulating by by-standers, but be promptly closed.

This is the only way that antiseptics can be used to any purpose, or with good effect. A rather good thing was the answer of a surgeon to a brother practitioner, who asked if a certain operation had been done antiseptically. The answer was—"Yes, somewhat." There can be no neutral ground in this question. Right is right, and nothing can make it wrong, and, wrong is wrong, and can never under any pretext be right. We are satisfied that the error spoken of is one of thoughtlessness, but it is none the less wrong and does just as much harm as if premeditated.

HALIFAX HOSPITAL MEDICAL STAFF.

During the past year a dispute took place between the "Board of Charities" or Commissioners, and the Medical Staff of the Halifax Hospital in reference to the appointment of the house surgeon. According to the by-laws of the Board "candidates for the position of house surgeon have to undergo a *competitive* examination before the Medical Staff, who shall communicate the result to the Board." Two candidates presented themselves, one of whom obtained eighty per cent of the total number of marks, and the other sixty-six. The "Board of Charities" however awarded the position to the