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### ANTISEPTICS IN SURGERY.

On the twelfth of August, 1865, a boy was admitted to the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow, suffering from a compound fracture of the leg. Such a trivial event in the largest hospital of a great city! Yet this was a red-letter day in the history of the healing art, for this was the beginning of Antiseptic Surgery. The germ theory of Pasteur, scarcely as yet formulated, was here applied to practice, and here received its most striking confirmation.

The young surgeon who, taking his stand on "the solid ground of nature," the solid ground of observation and experiment, had the courage to apply his theories to practice, has had his reward. In watching the progress of these cases of compound fractures and dislocations he saw with the eye of genius. He saw that here there was a new principle at work, and a new power given to man. He comprehended the vast possibilities opened up by the new theory, and he applied it to practice with a skill, a patience, and a success which have made him one of the great benefactors of his race. And when, after two years of careful trial, Joseph Lister published a "new method of treating wounds," it was the dawn of a new day in the realm of Surgery, the heralding of a new era in Scientific Medicine.

It is not too much to say that a new power was now given to man. From the earliest times surgeons had known by sad experience the difference between simple and

compound fractures. The former were truly simple, one may almost say, devoid of danger. The latter were among the most serious of injuries. However small might be the external wound which communicated with the fracture, there was such an element of danger and of uncertainty that the wisest and most skilful surgeons dreaded the results.

Occasionally a compound fracture did well, healing without a bad symptom. This was rare indeed. In hospitals and in war-time the mortality from these injuries was enormous. At the best, in cases where life and limb were saved the patient suffered from hectic fever and prolonged suppuration and from all the annoyances and risks of a wearisome convalescence. While a simple fracture might heal firmly in six weeks, a compound fracture of the same bone would take from three to six months.

But here was a method of treating compound fracture which reduced them to simple fractures, running the same course in the same time. Compound fractures and large flesh wounds healed without suppuration, and compound dislocations, almost invariably treated hitherto by immediate amputation, healed soundly and with the mobility of the joint unimpaired.

From time to time such things may have happened before, doubtless did happen, but now, for the first time in human history they did not *happen* but took place with certainty as the result of a definite plan of treatment. Who can estimate the saving of life, the prevention of pain and deformity