

serum or liquor sanguinis often constitutes a channel by which the offal, so to speak, is washed away, which if allowed to remain, would become a putrifying substance, to poison adjacent tissue, yet suffering from injury. After the work of sequestration has been completed, and in this way disposed of, nothing may remain but for Nature to close up the wound by granulation or second intention. But, alas, these wise efforts of Nature are often rudely interfered with, and in her first efforts she is entirely thwarted. In various ways this is sometimes done by the surgeon. I will not speak of the methods which were followed, in the past, a period of which we sometimes speak with an inconsiderate sneer, as if no unscientific treatment was ever pursued in the present day. The time I may reasonably expect to occupy will allow me only time to speak of a modern course of practice which, in the minds of some, appears to be equal to the old treatment of wounds by sympathy (sympathetical cure) where applications were made not to the wound but to the implement which inflicted the wound. Under this treatment it was found that wounds healed with wonderful rapidity, they being left in fact to the kindly operations of Nature. Meanwhile the surgeon supposed it was the unguent applied to the weapon. Such folly would not be tolerated now-a-days. However, we find among modern surgeons those who use and recommend carbolic paste and other agents impregnated with substances, having long compound names, to the wounds, or who employ some lotion or spray which has to be applied according to a certain formula, so intricate, that if success does not attend the treatment, it can easily be accounted for on the ground that the directions were not faithfully carried out. These applications possess some wonderful power to destroy supposed low forms of animal life, which (like the aerial spirits with which the Rosicrucians peopled the air) float about in every breeze waiting to flock into any solution of continuity upon the human body, upon mischief bent—to bewitch, as it were, the ultimate particles of the living tissue, so that instead of recovering themselves, and closing the breach in the surface, they perform fantastic tricks before the high priest, Nature, and thus turn the healing process into a process of death and decomposition. While there is no doubt the air is inhabited by myriads of low forms of life, and very likely these very often affect the human system by entering the blood through the lungs, it is a far-fetched theory that they in any way affect living

tissue. Dead animal matter forms the most fruitful abode for them to propagate and grow; but that has nothing to do with the cause of that death.

But I fancy I hear some earnest disciple of Lister exclaim, how do you account for the result? I am tempted to reply, as the natives of a certain country are said sometimes to do, by asking another question. If you do not believe in homœopathy how do you account for the success, which their statistics prove, attends the treatment of disease by their method? but I will not: I do not like, being a Canadian, to follow the teachings of any one simply because he belongs to a certain country. It was said of those who gained the most renown for curing wounds by the "sympathetical method" that they never undertook to heal *gunshot* wounds. Their operations were judiciously confined to simple incised wounds. Now I do not desire to convey the impression that those who practice according to Lister's theory with such success, either falsify the accounts given, or confine their treatment to cases of incised wounds. I think, certainly, that there might be found in connection with their practice something of the fallacy contained in the often quoted phrase *post hoc ergo propter hoc*. I am not going to deny the efficacy of carbolic acid and similar disinfecting agents. These it is well known, have great power to arrest, not the death of tissue, but its decomposition. Now what is it that favours decomposition of dead animal matter in any case? A dead body, the offal from the slaughter house, any animal tissue, deprived of life, is not at once poisonous; it is when it begins to putrify that it becomes noxious. And are we to believe that no such decomposition can take place without the aid of air germs? and yet we must entertain this view if we accept the doctrine of Lister that suppuration, in connection with wounds, is due to the active agency of these invisible degraded forms of life.

In connection with bruised wounds we often have rapid death of organic elements. If these be pent up within the wound, they are placed in the most favourable condition for speedy decomposition and putrifaction. Having putrified, and remaining pent up, we have following all the disastrous circumstances of septic poisoning. Now, it is obvious to all that this could have been prevented, if one of two things had been done,—either a free escape of the fluid within the wound secured, or by the introduction of some agent, possessing the power to arrest decomposition. Of course the antiseptics possess the power to do this. But it will be per-