

(3) If the germ theory were true, the mortality of small operations, as compared with large operations, ought to be comparatively greater than it is; for, during the performance of a small operation in which antiseptic precautions are not adopted, one would suppose that as many, if not more, germs would be introduced into the wound as in larger operations done with antiseptic precautions. In connection with this point, Tait accuses the antiseptic surgeons of using a "heads I win, tails you lose" argument, claiming every success as a proof of the correctness of the germ theory, and attributing every failure to the neglect of some minute precaution of antiseptic detail, which minute precaution was probably neglected as frequently in the successful as in the unsuccessful cases.

(4) The rapid healing of wounds in the lower animals shows that, whatever the influence of germs may be, the vital condition of the patient and the condition of his surroundings, hygienically considered, are of more importance.

(5) Clinical results in some departments of surgery—for instance, abdominal—show that those who adopt elaborate antiseptic precautions do not obtain better results than those who content themselves with adopting ordinary cleanliness. Moreover, the use of antiseptics involves a great waste of time and patience on the part of the surgeon. They are apt to prove more poisonous to the patient than the microbes; and, too much faith being attached to the efficacy of these, operations are apt to be undertaken which should not be attempted; and, the mind being occupied with the minutiae of the use of antiseptics, the broader and more important principles of surgery, operative and otherwise, are apt to be overlooked.

The answers given to these arguments are that, although it may be impossible to exclude from the wound every microbe, whether from without or within the body, investigations show that the healthy body has the power to dispose, in some way, of a certain number of these, and that the quantity introduced at any one time into the wound has an important influence in determining whether or not they will produce any appreciably bad effect. Although the accumulation of blood clots in a wound is, as a rule, something to be avoided, yet, in cases where strict aseptic and antiseptic precautions are adopted, the clot does not decompose, as would be the case were antiseptics not used. The clinical results obtained by the same men in the treatment of such general surgical cases as compound fractures show that the success of treatment on antiseptic principles is greater than without.

Although we should naturally suppose that the larger the wound the more apt infection would be to occur, yet we know by experience that very minute wounds are frequently the starting point of such specific inflammations as erysipelas. In fact, some lay it down as a rule that all true cases