

SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JUNE 18, 1915

BEFORE AND AFTER LISTER

LECTURE II., AFTER LISTER

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MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to Professor J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

YESTERDAY the dominant note was one of despair and defeat. To-day the dominant note shall be one of joy and victory.

Instead of hospitals reeking with pus and emptied by death, of operation after operation, when the roll was called, reporting a mortality of 40 per cent., 50, 75, 90, and even 100 per cent.—we have hospitals of immaculate whiteness and emptied by quick recovery, while the roll-call of operations reveals very few mortalities exceeding 10 per cent.; most of them having fallen to 5 per cent., 2 per cent., 1 per cent., and even small fractions of 1 per cent.

The story of Lister's work as recorded in his successive papers¹ is one of the most fascinating in all surgery. His earliest studies, from 1853 to 1863, were in physiology and pathology. Next he took up his researches on putrefaction (or as we should now say infection and suppuration) which led to his devising the antiseptic system. He was influenced to make these observations and experiments, which he applied with such signal success to surgical problems, by Pasteur's earlier researches. He always cheerfully acknowledged his debt to the eminent Frenchman. When a student in Paris in 1865 I knew Pouchet fils and was an interested spectator in the fight between Pasteur and Pouchet's father as to spontaneous generation. Lemaire's book on "Acide Phénique" (carbolic acid) was published in that same year.

Bacteriology did not exist as a science, but Pasteur, Lister and a few of the elect

¹ Lister's Collected Papers, 2 vols., Oxford, 1909.