

one result of the decomposition being that the sulphur of the albumen enters into some combination which is incapable of yielding a sulphide on boiling with a solution of lead or copper.

I have just now boiled a strong solution of white of egg with excess of potash for three-quarters of an hour, testing the alkaline liquid with lead at intervals. Up to half an hour, black sulphide was produced in abundance, but after that a red colour was the only effect noticed on the addition of the lead, whilst a drop or two of Fehling's solution produced a fine violet hue. It may be as well to mention that these colours are only observed in the case of fresh white of egg and albuminous urine, pure dried ovalbumen treated in the same way producing no colour or precipitate at all. I must, therefore, reiterate most emphatically my original statement, that no sulphide is produced by boiling together potash and albumen, except in the presence of some metal such as lead or copper.

Moreover, the idea that an alkaline sulphide may be at first formed and afterwards decomposed by prolonged ebullition, is negatived by the fact that if the boiling of albumen and potash be arrested before the alkali has had time to react completely upon all the albumen in solution, and the liquid be then cooled, no sulphide is precipitated by the addition of lead solution to the cold liquid, but on boiling again in presence of lead blackening is at once observed. The formation of the lead sulphide evidently then results from combination between the lead and the sulphur of albumen, which is in the act of undergoing decomposition by the boiling alkali; and, after sufficiently prolonged boiling in the absence of lead, which will vary in its duration according to the quantity of albumen present, it becomes impossible to produce a sulphide even on boiling with solution of lead or copper.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

G. STILLINGFLEET JOHNSON.

King's College, January 8th, 1883.

P.S.—Since writing the above, I have found that the importance of the presence of lead in effecting the production of sulphide by combination with the sulphur of albumen may be emphasised by the following experiment: If albumen, water, and a little litharge be boiled together for a few minutes, lead sulphide is produced in abundance, though no potash be present in the liquid. So that not only is no alkaline sulphide formed by boiling albumen with potash, but the presence of potash is not necessary for the production of lead sulphide from the sulphur of albumen.

Jan. 9th, 1883.

G. S. J.

"DEATHS AFTER ABDOMINAL OPERATIONS FROM HEART-CLOT."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Allow me once more to waste your space in correcting some of the misrepresentations contained in Mr. Thornton's last letter. First of all, he tells us that he is glad that his letter has at last induced me to "admit distinctly" that I stick to the antiseptic principle. Mr. Thornton has only found a mare's nest. I have in a way, to the best of my knowledge at the time, been guided by this principle ever since I practised surgery. In my first ovariotomy, above twenty and more years ago, the husband of the patient sat up half the night to see that the water in which the sponges were to be used next day was boiled long enough to destroy all organisms contained in it; and I need not tell here of other precautions taken even in those early days. The carbolic spray has been given up in abdominal operations; but surely Mr. Thornton knows that is not giving up the antiseptic principle. If some have been stupid enough to think so, it was no business of mine to correct them. Then Mr. Thornton supposes that *probably* in my early cases were included those of incomplete operations that recovered. There was only a single case that got well. She died eight years after of something else. The case was not included, but placed by itself; and Mr. Thornton will find it published if he will look for it. Then there were four, perhaps five, fatal cases of incomplete operation—two being cancerous masses not disturbed—that were put amongst the fatal cases, and I have not changed this arrangement. It seemed to me then, as it seems to me now, that the only fair and correct way is to include all deaths following incomplete operations in our statistics, and not to show them aside in a separate list.

In giving my results, all my hospital cases were given—sixty-six—and not merely a "small group of them," as being a better test of any method than those operations done in private, or in a small special hospital. Results in the Samaritan, which is merely a private house with everything that money can command, ought to show far better results than those of any general hospital; yet Mr. Thornton's Samaritan Hospital results of the last two years give, he tells us, a mortality of 6.36 per cent., as against my Edinburgh hospital results without Listerism of 2.5. I do not think that "steady Listerism scores here."

I am now done with Mr. Thornton, and, with Mr. Tait, have to request to be let alone. I must also, with Mr. Tait, express the hope that in future Mr. Thornton will do his bad cases himself, and not allow them to come straggling North.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

Edinburgh, Jan. 6th, 1883.

THOMAS KEITH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I see in Dr. Heron's letter, published in your last issue, that he is only able to controvert one of the facts stated in my letter of the week before, this one being unfortunately founded on a misapprehension on my part, as I see for the first time on reading Mr. Treves' letter, a copy of which you publish. I am very sorry this should have happened, and beg to apologise to Dr. Heron, and also to assure him that I do not wish to detract in the least from any credit that may attach to him from showing Dr. Ehrlich's process.

I remain, Sir, yours faithfully,

Gower-street, Jan. 6th, 1883.

HENEAGE GIBBES, M.D.

THE ASSOCIATION OF FELLOWS OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Permit me kindly a few lines with reference to the Association of Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons. No steps were taken to bring the Association under the notice of Fellows until a fortnight ago, when the appeal you mention was circulated, and which over two hundred members have joined. The Association is in no sense an appanage of the British Medical Association. It was necessary to have a meeting once a year of the members. The annual election day at the College naturally suggested itself as a suitable day, but it was thought that if the meeting were held after the election it would clash with the Fellows' dinner, and if before, it would be too late for nominating members for the coming election, and too early for the election following, inasmuch as it would not be known how the election just pending ended. The annual meeting of the British Medical Association seemed to afford an opportunity more generally convenient to the members than any other time. The New Sydenham Society similarly holds its annual meeting during the session of the annual meeting of the British Medical Association.

Permit me to thank you for your remarks in a leader in to-day's issue with regard to proxy voting at the election of members of the Council of the College of Surgeons. If that privilege were conceded, the Fellows would have, and would feel that they had, their due influence on the council of the College, and I think that probably all need for an association of Fellows would be, and would be considered to be, at an end.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Birmingham, Jan. 6th, 1883.

T. H. BARTLEET.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I think that in your leader of to-day there can be no doubt you have rightly estimated the true object of the above Association, and perhaps at the same time the reason for some of the opposition to it. It is the old jealousy between the London and provincial Fellows for seats on the College Council. Personally I have taken no interest in the Association, for it is not the way in which I should like to see the difficulty adjusted. But the London men may take it as a proof that the three or four seats which they seem anxious to wrest back from the provinces had better be left undisturbed, otherwise it seems probable that they will