

the operation is performed, seems to have the effect of checking the growth of epithelial tumours, though the explanation of this fact is by no means clear or satisfactory. But the value of the medicinal treatment is more difficult of explanation. Thyroid extract has been given in cases of malignant disease, in considerable quantities, but without any marked or permanent improvement being noticed; and it is, therefore, not easy to comprehend what special curative action it can possess after the removal of the ovarian tissues. But the scourge of cancer is so great and so evidently increasing, that the treatment in question deserves, and will undoubtedly obtain, a most careful trial. The results already recorded, although striking, are far too few and insufficient to be regarded as more than experimental.

Annotation.

RATEPAYERS' REPRESENTATIVES.

We referred last week in "Nursing Echoes" to the action of the Belfast Board of Guardians with respect to the nursing arrangements of the fever hospital for which they are responsible. It will be remembered that Dr. Biggar stated the nursing staff was inadequate, and that in consequence it was necessary to employ paupers as nurses. The superintendent of the Hospital, Miss M'Mullin, on the contrary, asserted that she did not employ paupers for regular nursing. "When the nurses had too much to do they gave a little assistance."

From further information, it appears that Miss M'Mullin has stated in a letter to the Guardians, that "there seems to have been some misunderstanding by the Board in not taking up the real meaning of her reply." She states that the nurse in the top lobby is in charge of fifty-six patients, many of whom are delirious with fever, and that these fifty-six patients are in eight different wards. Some of the wards are fifty yards apart. The day nurses are allowed leave of absence every alternate Sunday, so that all the duties of the entire hospital lie on two nurses every second Sunday. When this statement is made by the superintendent of nurses, we think it may be conceded that Dr. Biggar has proved his case up to the hilt, and we are glad to observe that he does not

intend to leave the unfortunate patients who are under his care to the tender mercies of pauper assistants, but has returned to the charge by addressing the following letter to the Board at their last meeting:

"A month ago the visiting medical staff recommended your Board to appoint five additional assistant nurses for the hospital, they being firmly convinced that these assistant nurses were required. Week after week since then the work has been increasing, and at present there are 50 per cent. more cases in the hospital than there were at the date of that report, so that it is totally impossible for the present staff of nurses to do the work. During the past week there were 41 patients admitted up till two o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and between that hour and 9 p.m. there were ten more patients admitted. A large proportion of these cases were delirious, so that it will be quite evident that it is impossible for the patients to receive that care and attention which their cases demand. I would now request your Board to grant more temporary additional nurses to take up duty at once."

The facts stated by Dr. Biggar and Miss M'Mullin would, we should have thought, have been sufficient to convince even the average Guardian that the necessity for increasing the nursing staff was urgent. One of them, however, inquired the cause of Miss M'Mullin's letter and thought that "the doctors were behind it," and another observed that "The Guardians were elected as the representatives of the ratepayers, and that they were not going to squander the rates in getting additional nurses."

The Guardians were elected, we take it, as the representatives of the ratepayers, in order to discharge their public duties adequately. This "playing to the gallery" may be appreciated by a certain section of the ratepayers, but the majority of them, we are convinced, wish to fulfil their obligations honestly, and will not consider that the rates are "squandered" when they are used to provide efficient care for the sick.

It was ultimately decided that three nurses be asked to go voluntarily from the Infirmary to the fever hospital, an instance of "robbing Peter to pay Paul," which, we must confess, does not commend itself to us. Either the ratepayers' money is being "squandered" in providing a surplus of nurses for the Infirmary, or this institution will be under-staffed when the nurses are withdrawn from it. But the ways of Guardians are truly wonderful. Far be it from us to fathom them.

The moral of the many instances of the inability of Guardians, to cope adequately with the questions which arise concerning nursing arrangements, is that these should be entrusted to a special committee who possess some knowledge of, and qualifications for, the work they undertake.

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