

The extent of the work that is now being carried on in this department, and the manner in which it is growing, can be indicated by a few figures taken from the annual report of the Infirmary for 1907. At the close of that year 102 new patients were treated, the cases being chiefly rodent ulcer or lupus. The patients in the department underwent 24,013 exposures, and the results obtained were of a most encouraging character. In cases of injury or disease 1,499 radiographs—or photographs taken by the X-rays—were taken. The annual cost of the department was set down at about £384.

At the annual meeting of the Aberdeen Maternity Hospital, the Chairman, Lord Provost Wilson, made an earnest appeal to the citizens to assist in the noble work in which the institution was engaged. It is an appeal which we can heartily endorse, being personally acquainted with the admirable work done there under the supervision of the Matron, Miss Beedie.

SOME MODERN WAYS OF FIGHTING DISEASE.

Mr. Stephen Paget, F.R.C.S., gave a lecture entitled "Some Modern Ways of Fighting Disease," at Bedford College, on Thursday, the 18th inst. The Lecturer secured right away, and kept to the end, the keen attention of the large audience by his clear, attractive, and telling handling on popular lines of this scientific subject. Diseases such as typhoid fever, diphtheria, anthrax, tuberculosis, and so on, were first dealt with, the methods by which pure cultures of germs were made was explained, and how the successful treatment of patients had followed inoculation experiments. The lecture was illustrated by carefully prepared lantern slides, which showed very plainly the various stages the germs passed through in the course of their growth. Photographic slides were exhibited of malarial districts in different parts of the world, with special reference to the stagnant pools selected by mosquitoes for breeding places, and to the means now adopted for clearing infected areas by drainage and by the filling up of water holes with earth in order to break up the chain of their family life. Mention was made of the horrible nature and devastating effects of sleeping sickness, particularly in Uganda, where the mortality was enormous from this disease alone. In conclusion some interesting observations were made upon Malta fever, which formerly had been such a scourge to our soldiers and sailors. In 1907 the remarkable discovery was made that Malta goats, in themselves healthy, were the carriers of the germs of this dreaded disease, and that infection was due to drinking their milk. When tinned milk was substituted the propagation of the fever ceased, the result being that the mortality amongst the troops from this cause is now practically nil.

Dr. Womack proposed, and Mrs. Leonard Darwin seconded, that a cordial vote of thanks should be accorded to Mr. Paget, and this was enthusiastically carried.

E. S.

The Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws.

PART V.—MEDICAL RELIEF—INDOORS.

The most interesting section of the Report of the Royal Commission to nurses lies in Part V., which deals with the subject of medical relief, and it is proposed, therefore, to review this at some length.

In the first place, it is noticeable that the idea of medical relief being granted by the Poor Law authorities in a general way does not seem to have occurred to the framers of the early Poor Laws, although in "cases of sudden and dangerous illness," Justices were empowered "to order medical relief," and by a later Act (1851) Guardians were permitted to subscribe to hospitals which would admit their patients, there being fixed charges for patients from the parish.

In 1868-69 the first separate Infirmary in London for non-infectious patients were established in the smaller Unions grouped together to form "sick asylum districts."

When we consider the organisation of our great Infirmarys to-day, and the manner in which the patients are treated and nursed, it is difficult to realise the condition of things so lately as 1866, when, after a searching inquiry, the report on the sick wards of the Metropolitan Workhouses showed them to be "frequently insanitary, that the beds were insufficient . . . and generally in a lumpy condition; that the eating and drinking vessels were in many instances unclean; that there was a deficiency of easy chairs, bed rests, wash-hand-basins, brushes, combs, and towels; that . . . the food was cooked (often badly) by paupers, and was frequently served nearly cold; . . . and that the patients, frequently during the day, and almost entirely at night, were nursed by paupers, many of whom could neither read nor write, "and who habitually stole the stimulants ordered for their patients," their treatment of whom "was, generally speaking, characterised neither by judgment nor by gentleness."

According to Dr. Downes, "the modern development of Poor Law medical relief" dates from this report of Mr. Farnell's. Instructions and circulars were issued by the Central Authority exhorting the Guardians to supply, in the new and separate Infirmarys, "all reasonable and proper appliances for the treatment of diseases of every kind," and anything likely to "tend to promote a cure or alleviate suffering," whilst "the fittings of the sick wards were to be such as were usually provided in the wards of general hospitals." The Infirmarys themselves, being a new creation, were placed under the administration of a Medical Superintendent, and the patients so removed from the jurisdiction of the Workhouse Master.

That part of the Report devoted to "Trained Nursing in Workhouses and Workhouse Infirmarys" is all too short, intensely interesting as it is.

Times have changed since the days (1847) when

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