

CANCER PROBLEM.

DR. BASHFORD, who has just been awarded the Walker Prize of £100 by the Royal College of Surgeons, for the best original work on the pathology and therapeutics of cancer, takes a most hopeful view of the outcome of the experiments at present being carried on with a view to the illumination of one of the most dreaded of human scourges.

The investigations of the Cancer Research Fund, which was founded on the initiative of the late King Edward, have acquired a world-wide extent on the incidence of cancer in different races of mankind, living under uncivilised conditions, and its occurrence throughout the entire animal kingdom, and have had an important bearing upon the statistics of cancer as embodied in the reports of the Registrar-General.

Perhaps, however, the part of the investigations which has commanded attention not only at home but throughout the world has been the extent to which the experimental investigation of cancer has been developed by Dr. Bashford, and in that respect he must be regarded as the founder of experimental cancer investigation in England.

"The investigations of the past ten years," said Dr. Bashford, "have narrowed down the cancer problem to an extent previously impossible. As far as experiment permits of any conclusion, it is demonstrated that the disease is not communicable from one individual to another, but always arises afresh in each individual attacked.

"Thus, many of the old conceptions, which sought for a common cause for all the many and varied forms of cancer, such as cancer parasite, or the growth of congenital germs, of necessity doing a large number of mankind to death have gone by the board. In their place the problem has been resolved into a question of the circumstances peculiar to the individual in which the disease arises.

"It has been demonstrated for many races of mankind that the occurrence of the disease is determined by the practice of peculiar customs involving the chronic irritation of tissues; and by suitable irritations certain forms of cancer could be produced at will in mice.

"Just as it is certain that if the exotic customs of various native races were introduced into England, that the frequency of cancer in England would at once increase, so it appears practically certain that native races in which it is rife because of the practice of those customs would become correspondingly exempt in proportion as they discarded those practices.

"It may be that future investigation will show that a corresponding diminution in the frequency of cancer, as it occurs in England, under the present conditions of existence, may also be diminished by avoiding insults to which at the present time the human body is subjected in the course of following occupations, or, it may be, indulging in various whims of the appetite.

"In short, investigation has gone a long way to prove that the disease, when present, is almost certainly acquired, and therefore will ultimately probably be found to be to a large extent avoidable.

"The result of ten years' work, not only in England but in all other countries in which there are centres of cancer is that a more hopeful outlook obtains in regard to the cancer problem than at any time in the history of medicine.

"Not the least significant feature in again awakening hope of a cure being ultimately found has been the demonstration of the fact so long disputed in the case of man that animals suffering from cancer can and do cure themselves of the disease.

"The immediate object of experiments is, of course, the unravelling of the mechanism whereby animals are enabled to do this, and although an immediate solution is not in sight, it ought not to be beyond human endeavour to elucidate the means whereby animals cure themselves, and to apply the results to the treatment of the disease in man."

THE VALUE OF THE UNIFORM.

AN incident which occurred at the close of the reading of the Proclamation of King George V. to the throne, at a small hill-station in India, may be interesting to nurses—in that it shows the value of the uniform.

In a large crowd, a nurse in uniform (I mean, of course, a *trained* hospital nurse) cannot but fail to be a striking figure, though she may be a stranger in the crowd. In this instance she was acquainted with a few, as could be evinced by a smile from one, and a nod of the head from another. But wait till an emergency occurs. Some one wants help. The crowd then, with one accord, turns to 'nurse', who it would now appear was no longer a stranger in that crowd, but a well-known reliable friend! Such were the feeling I experienced when attending the Proclamation of King George V. on 12th May, 1910.

We were all crowded together on the verandah of the *kutchari* on that afternoon with the hot sun striking in just under the eaves, nearly