

A PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION.

THE need of imposing a test as to the educational fitness of candidates for posts as probationers is being increasingly felt in nursing circles. As greater demands are made upon nurses, and it becomes increasingly unmistakable that their calling belongs, not to the domestic arts, but to the scientific professions, it is more and more evident that some evidence of having attained to a certain standard of general education is necessary, corresponding to that required for the medical profession by the General Medical Council in its preliminary examinations. A nurse who is entrusted, as nurses now-a-days are entrusted, with the administration of poisonous drugs, and of hypodermic injections, which must be accurately measured to the fraction of a drop, who is expected to carry out directions written in Latin, and to give a detailed report of the condition of her patients between the doctor's visits, must be a person trained to think, and to express herself accurately, if she is to perform her work in the best possible way. It is Bacon who has told us that "reading maketh a full man, writing an exact man, conference a ready man," and all these qualifications are highly desirable in nurses. We are glad therefore to see that the Belfast Board of Guardians, who are increasing the nursing staff of their Infirmary, on the recommendation of the Infirmary Committee, adopted the suggestions of their medical officers, that a preliminary examination of candidates should be held immediately. The imposition of such a test must inevitably raise the standard, and consequently the prestige, of the nursing in the Belfast Union Infirmary. We offer our congratulations to the Guardians on their adoption of this course.

A DISTINGUISHED SURGEON ON WOMEN DOCTORS.

SIR THOMAS SMITH, Bart., F.R.C.S., known affectionately to Bart's men as "Tom Smith," spoke with his usual sincerity and liberality at the recent annual meeting of the New Hospital for Women in the Euston Road. He said that "as he was now enjoying greater leisure he had lately been enabled to witness several operations in the hospital, and he had seen many very serious and dangerous operations performed with dexterity, celerity, safety. Many years ago he had declined to assist a lady surgeon at an operation. He now was happy to do penance for his obstinacy,

and to declare that he felt certain that nature had especially adapted women surgeons for the work by bestowing on them peculiar gifts and qualities. They had small hands, deftness, and were especially dexterous with the use of the needle and thread—skill which was no small advantage. The criterion of all operations was in the results, and they were as good—and in some cases better—than those obtained in any other hospital in Great Britain." The surgeons of the New Hospital for Women could scarcely wish for higher testimony to their work than this, for Sir Thomas Smith is admittedly on the highest rung of his professional ladder, and perhaps the most brilliant and rapid surgeon of his day.

A nursing journal cannot refer to Sir Thomas Smith without mention of his keen appreciation of the work of nurses, and his many kindly ways to those who worked in his wards. If a Ward Sister were away he would take special pains to put the nurse doing duty for her at her ease by some appreciative remark, and it delighted him to discover that a specially well bandaged limb had been bandaged by a nurse.

A MINE OF WEALTH.

WE have received presentation copies of the seven volumes which comprise the Transactions of the Quinquennial Meeting of the International Council of Women, and the abridged Papers and Discussions of the International Congress of Women 1899, edited by the retiring President, the Countess of Aberdeen, and published in a most tasteful form by Fisher Unwin. So far we have only had time to peep into these wonderful books. But we do not hesitate to say that they contain a mine of wealth—thousands of thoughts of the most intellectual women in the world, and indeed for those who will study them they give an interesting record of women's work in every civilised nation. Immense credit and much gratitude are due to Lady Aberdeen for her spirited determination to place the transactions of the Women's Congress on record, and these seven golden volumes will, we have no doubt, find a place on the bookshelf of every thoughtful woman. We heartily recommend Hospital Matrons all over the world to procure them a prominent place in the Nurses' Library, and also we would hope that many Sisters and nurses will buy the set of seven and study them at leisure. It will be time and money well spent. We hope to review each volume at length in early issues.

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