

Professional Review.

THE life of Sir James Simpson, by Mr. H. Laing Gordon, the third volume in the most interesting series now being published by Messrs. T. Fisher Unwin, under the title of "Masters of Medicine," has been forwarded to us for review. The life of the discoverer of chloroform must be of supreme interest to all nurses, whose duties so often place them in the position of observing the incalculable benefits conferred upon mankind by the introduction of anæsthetics. With the science of obstetrics also, Simpson's name must be for ever associated. It is interesting to read in this connection—"The practice of the branch of medicine which Simpson made so peculiarly his own—that of obstetrics—originally in the hands of women only, had been fiercely contested for by the two sexes during two centuries, and such was the feeling against "man midwives" in Scotland that the dispute had scarcely ceased at Simpson's birth. The stronger sex, however, was then at last asserting its superiority, and to be an accoucheur was beginning to be considered, after all, as worthy of a gentleman." It is noteworthy that at the time of the establishment of the Edinburgh Chair of Midwifery, in 1726, all midwives in the city were registered and certificated. On the production of their certificates, they were entitled to receive a license, which it was necessary should be signed by at least four magistrates, which was their warrant for practising, and it was further enacted that "certain pains and penalties were to be inflicted upon ignorant persons for practising without this license. It would appear, therefore, that the midwives of those days were well qualified for the work they undertook, and that the "superiority" of the "stronger sex" was the superiority of brute force.

Simpson, after a distinguished student career, became a fully qualified medical practitioner at the early age of eighteen. When he was twenty-eight, the University Chair of Midwifery became vacant, and Simpson determined to be appointed to the professorship. The odds were against him. It was popularly held that the professor of this subject should be a man of experience, and, moreover, a married man.

The objection of his youth could not be got over, but for the other matter, Simpson with "characteristic promptness, disappeared for a time from Edinburgh, and returned triumphantly with Miss Jessie Grindlay, of Liverpool, as his wife. It was a bold stroke, which delighted his supporters, discomfited his opponents—who saw therein the removal of a barrier to his success, and a weapon from their hands—and astonished the worthy town councillors in whose gift the appointment lay." Eventually after a closely contested election, in which party feeling ran high, and personalities were indulged in, Simpson was elected by seventeen votes to sixteen. His own avowed reason for applying for the Chair is characteristic of the man. "Did I not feel I am the best man for the Chair I would not go in for it."

Simpson was great enough to know that the modesty which failed to recognize the gifts which had been bestowed upon him would have been a false one, and it was his own bold avowal of his belief in his capacities which won the day. It is not to be supposed that a man of Simpson's strength of character would go through the world without making enemies. The "hostility so constantly opposed to genuine reformers, and men who live ahead of their times" was his. The correspondence relating to some of the disputes which arose was filed and, we are told, "ticketed, with

brief contempt, 'Squabbles.'" The history of Simpson's discovery of chloroform is too long to refer to in detail. We advise all our readers to procure the book and read it for themselves. "It is well that we, who are the heirs, should know how Simpson and those others whose names are ever associated with his, slew the monster (Pain), won the victory, and championed the human race forward into a land where further victories, undreamt of by themselves, are now being daily won. He went straight forward and onward, strong in his endeavour, undeterred by the jeers of the ignorant, the opposition of the prejudiced, or the attacks of the jealous, with no thought of, or wish for, reward, except that which was to come daily from the depth of sufferers' hearts."

It is interesting to notice that, "when the question of the admission of women to the study of medicine came up in Edinburgh, Simpson's sympathies appear to have gone with the sex to which he was already a benefactor. He recognized that there was a place, if a small one, within the ranks of the profession, for women; and when the question came to the vote he cast his in their favour." This is but one more instance of the fact that the greatest men are those who are most just to women.

An honour which towards the close of his life was keenly appreciated by Simpson was the freedom of the City of Edinburgh. This was conferred upon him by the Lord Provost, and in his reply Simpson was able to say, "I came to settle down and fight amongst you a hard and uphill battle of life for bread and name and fame, and the fact that I stand here before you this day so far testifies that in the arduous struggle I have—won."

Simpson's death, like Hunter's, was caused by angina pectoris, his great sufferings being allayed to some extent by his own chloroform. After his death the desire was universally expressed that the honour of public interment in Westminster Abbey should be his, but Lady Simpson decided, to the gratification of his fellow citizens, that he should be buried in the city he loved so well; and everyone will, we think, recognize the wisdom of this decision.

The Nurses' Journal.

FOOD FOR BABES.

WE have received the first number of the monthly issue of the *Nurses' Journal*, the official organ of the Royal British Nurses' Association, issued by an editorial committee, composed of Drs. Coupland and Wethered, and Mr. Fardon, of the Middlesex Hospital, Dr. Bezly Thorne, Miss Helen Foggo-Thompson, and Miss Entwistle. Presumably it is compiled for the information of the members, but this is conspicuous by its absence. The abilities of the combined Editorial Committee may be gathered from their ridiculous mistake in describing Mr. Pridgin Teale's well-known work, translated by Princess Christian, as the "TEXT-BOOK OF PRIDGE AND TEALE"!!! It is a matter of superlative indifference if the Editorial Committee individually choose to make themselves ridiculous, but that they should make the organ of the Royal British Nurses' Association the laughing-stock of the medical and nursing world is a proceeding against which the members have every right to protest. The paper and the printing of the journal are very poor, but the poverty of the literary matter is probably their best excuse and justification.

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