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Editorial.

NURSES' EXAMINATIONS.

The report of the examiners in reference to the examination for Trained Nurses under the Cape Colony Medical Council is of interest, not only to nurses in that Colony but to all who are preparing for examinations. It states:—

“Your examiners have to report that taken as a whole the papers are somewhat lower in standard than might reasonably have been expected. The principal causes of this seem to be:—

- (1) An insufficient amount of reading apart from clinical instruction.
- (2) An inattention to details in answering the questions asked.
- (3) An inadequate knowledge of the broad general principles involved in nursing.”

The question of examinations is an important one, and, while on one hand it is urged that “you cannot make an examination for nursing that an intelligent woman could not pass in six months—the limit of knowledge is so small,” it is also put forward by those who object to the adoption of a minimum standard of education for nurses that there are many excellent nurses who will thereby be debarred from ranking as such through inability to pass the prescribed examination. On the part of nurses themselves there is often a shrinking from the idea of submitting themselves to the test of examination. This is attributable to various causes. There may be ignorance of the subject in hand and therefore inability to answer the questions set. The candidate may be conscious of a defective education and consequent difficulty in expressing in writing what she really knows, her spelling capacity may be weak, or she may be troubled with what is described by

some persons as nervousness, and by others as self-consciousness.

The examiners above referred to state that inattention to details in answering the questions is a cause of loss of marks in nearly all candidates. They express the opinion that most of the nurses omitted details not from want of knowledge but from want of thought.

Do not all of these points demonstrate the importance and value of an examination, both written and oral, in any scheme for the training of nurses?

The general education of most women is more or less defective. The same thoroughness, accuracy of thought, and concentration on the subject in hand, as is expected of men, is not even yet required of them. These qualities may not be of great moment in a woman with no definite object in life, but in one who undertakes grave responsibilities in regard to the sick they are matters of paramount importance, and this importance should be impressed upon nurses in training by every possible means. Accurate habits of thought, exactness in reporting the condition of patients, both verbally and in writing, form a considerable part of every nurse's duty. Are they duties which one who cannot accurately answer examination questions is likely to be able to discharge? If a woman has a fair general education, steadiness of application, a grip of her work, the power of accurate observation, of putting into words what she observes, and an absence of self-consciousness, she will have little difficulty in satisfactorily passing an examination. If she has not, the want of them must prejudicially affect her daily work. Nurses will therefore do well to regard preparation for examinations as a valuable and integral part of their training, and to bring to bear upon it all the earnestness of which they are capable.

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