

A CORNER FOR PROBATIONERS.

BY A "SURVIVOR."

"QUILLS are things that are sometimes taken from the pinions of one goose, to spread the opinions of another."

Being well aware of this fact, it is with great diffidence that I take up my pen on the present occasion. So much has been said about Nurses and Nursing, and said so well, too, by those most qualified to write on the subject, that I naturally shrink from discussing anything in that direction; but, although I have carefully read many Nursing pamphlets, I have not noticed any column specially devoted to Probationers, and yet I believe one would be welcomed by many. I know I should have been glad to have turned to a page, specially written, to help me in my young Nursing days, when, as the very personification of a raw, ignorant, and enthusiastic Probationer, I aspired to the high dignity of a Matron.

There is at the present day a restlessness, almost a craze, amongst women, for work, which after all is connected with vast social questions, that are of the greatest interest to thousands of people, and furnish food for endless jargons. It would now be very difficult to define what woman's work is, but as Miss Nightingale says, "let her leave the jargons alone, and bring the best she has, *whatever* that is, to the work she finds to do, and let her do it in simplicity and singleness of heart, whatever the world may say."

Women need a purpose, an object in life, and they should be careful to make their aim as high as possible. "There would then be an end of all the gnawing purposelessness, and down-weighting uselessness, and miserable time-killing and helpless waste of life." There would then be no need, because no time, for all the wretched light reading, dressing, flirting, etc., which, after all, does but provoke the scorn and disgust of all right-minded men. However, I do not want my paper to be a general homily, and it is quite time to return *à nos moutons*.

A Probationer, as perhaps many of my readers may have found out, has not always reached the acme of bliss, when after perhaps much effort she has at last stepped upon the first rung of the Nursing ladder. She may have begun her career either as an ordinary Probationer, or as a "guinea-pig," a term irreverently conferred on those ladies paying a guinea a week for their training.

Possibly she finds out at once that the ways of those in authority are not as her ways, and her thoughts widely different from theirs. Filled with enthusiasm, perfectly certain she is a born Nurse, conscious of a fair share of intelligence, believing that, if given a fair field, she must distinguish herself, she enters on her "vocation." Blissful dreams

of attaining proficiency in bandaging, not dusting; of passing first-class in examinations of theoretical knowledge, not in the practical cleansing of wards; anticipations of the theatre and interesting operations; visions of future glory of being Nurse, Charge, Sister, or Matron; or perhaps her ideas float still further afield, and she sees herself decorated with the "Royal Red Cross"!

Nobler thoughts, too, crowd thick and fast—the longing, which every true woman feels, to be of use in the great suffering world, of soothing the agony of the dying, comforting the sorrowful, bearing the burdens of the weak, and those that are ready to faint in life's hard struggle.

Then picture to yourself her feelings, when instead of a bandage she is given a *duster*; in place of an interesting course of lectures on patients and treatment, a course of often severe manual labour falls to her share; that far from being first class in anything, she has to begin and sorrowfully take her place at the bottom of the class.

Far be it from me to say that the course laid down for Probationers is unsuitable. I believe the effect is most efficacious, "not in hardening and blunting, but in toughening the nervous system of those delicately nurtured." But, still, I think that now, more than at any future period of her career, she needs sympathy, and a kindly word or look would go far towards softening the inevitable disappointments that befall her.

Hospitals are almost like little worlds, especially to those who leave quiet country homes for the busy city life; here, as elsewhere, "the fittest survive," and recognising the responsibility attached to the care of the sick, it is important that only the fittest should survive. Nurses are not born Nurses, but a clever doctor once remarked to me, that "some are born the very opposite," so it is very desirable and necessary that the "very opposite" should be excluded.

To you who have been chosen, I would say, that since there is no royal road to Nursing, bring with you all the enthusiasm, patience, and courage you can, together with a large share of steady perseverance; you will need them to carry you through. If you are sensible women, you will cheerfully, willingly, do the duties allotted to you; do them thoroughly, do them conscientiously; make up your mind to go steadily on. The exuberance of the imagination will have had, after all, a wholesome check, but do not, on that account, let your energy be diminished, nor your determination to excel be lessened by one iota.

I think it is only in this spirit, with one's whole faculties concentrated upon the matter in hand, that the work of a Probationer is to be done at all—certainly, if it is to be done well. Make up your minds that even your "failures shall prove stepping-stones to success." I would urge you not to think your

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)