

authority." Will these matters come within the province of the new County Councillors? If so, the more women we have elected, energetic enough to follow the good example of the Dowager Lady Sandhurst and Miss Jane Cobden, the better!

CORRESPONDENCE

(Notes, Queries, &c.)

- * * We do not hold ourselves responsible for opinions expressed by Correspondents. Brevity and conciseness will have first consideration. See Notices.
- * * *British Nurses' Association.*—We are requested to state that Miss Wood (Secretary) will be at 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W., every Wednesday, from 10.30 a.m. to noon, and at 7, St. George's Mansions, Red Lion Square, W.C., on each Friday until noon, to see Nurses or others who may wish to make inquiries; also that annual subscriptions were due on January 1, and that early payment of these will save much trouble to the Secretary and much expense to the Association.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

Sir,—It is strange to me—the mother of two girls who have adopted Nursing as a profession, and who occupy the position of Sisters in Hospitals—that the great grievance of Nurses of all grades has never before been discussed in the public press. A young woman enters a Hospital as a Probationer, she signs a paper to remain in the Institution for either two or three years. In return for her work she is to be thoroughly trained in the various branches of Nursing, and if she avails herself properly of her tuition she is to obtain a certificate of efficiency at the expiration of that period. She is acknowledged to be ignorant even of the rudiments of her work, and imagines naturally that she will be under the direction and supervision of experienced persons—Sisters and Staff Nurses—until she shall have gained a little knowledge and experience, and in consequence will not, through ignorance, be permitted to commit mistakes which may lead to the most serious results, detrimental to the sick. In what position does the new Probationer often find herself? One, I maintain, which is equally unjust to herself as to the Hospital patient. She is practically left in charge of a Ward, or is put to work in a Ward under a woman who occupies the position of Staff Nurse, although but half trained, who is pretty nearly as ignorant as herself; it is often a case of "the blind leading the blind," and no wonder both often fall into the ditch. Under these circumstances is it extraordinary that complaints from Probationers get into the public press, or that the strongest of women get tried beyond endurance when, added to all the physical strain of the Ward work, which is doubtless necessary in the efficient performance of their duty, mental anxiety of the most serious nature is also added to their burden? A case in point recurs to my memory. The daughter of a friend (aged twenty-one) was admitted as a Probationer in one of our largest Metropolitan Hospitals. For ten weeks she was scurried from Ward to Ward, sometimes on day duty and sometimes on night duty, working in ten for a space of a few days, during that time. At the end of ten weeks she was sent to take

charge (Staff duty) of a Women's Surgical Ward containing fourteen beds, under the Sister, who—being responsible for the Nursing of upwards of fifty sick persons—had therefore great difficulty in sparing each even a few minutes' attention in the day. One evening during the Sister's dinner-hour a patient was brought in in a state of collapse after severe hæmorrhage. Our good Probationer, eager to be up and doing, immediately set to work to wash the patient in bed, exposing her to the cold and exertion. In the midst of the process, the Surgeon in charge of the case and Sister re-entered the Ward. Both took in the situation in the twinkling of an eye. Poor patient! No warm blankets, no hot bottles! A kind and willing girl, through ignorance, doing everything most detrimental to the recovery of the patient, who subsequently died. The Surgeon blames the Sister, the Sister blames the Probationer. The matter was reported to the Matron, who there and then discharged the Nurse; and the girl's career in Nursing was practically ruined. I maintain the girl was blameless; and the person who ought to have been deprived of her position was the Matron of the Hospital, for putting the sick in the charge of an absolutely untrained Nurse; or the Chairman, who permits so unfit a person as this Matron to have absolute power over patients and Nurses. The matter brought to the front by your excellent leading articles of the last two weeks, is one which, sooner or later, will have to be grappled with, or the smouldering dissatisfaction of Sisters and Nurses, patients and subscribers, connected with our large Training Schools, will burst into a lively flame.—I am, yours gratefully,

MATERFAMILIAS.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

Sir,—Doubtless you will be overpowered with numberless letters, on the subject so important to Nurses as the short-termed Probationer. Whatever her class, she is a thorn in the flesh to all honest Hospital Sisters, who are anxious that the patients under their charge should be efficiently nursed. I have been a Sister for six years, in what you term "a mere manufactory of amateur Nurses," and the rampant evils of the system are apparent to the most casual observer. It is well known that a Sister will strain every nerve to have things straight for the Visiting Staff, as she, of course, gets all the blame for the duties neglected by her so-called Nurses; and they are often in ignorance of the utterly inadequate help which she is receiving to carry out their directions, as they see plenty of caps and aprons flitting around; and they are therefore not to blame for the present pernicious system of continual change of Probationers, and, in consequence, half-trained Nurses. A Sister would be considered disloyal to the Matron, if she complained to them of her just grievances. The Probationers are not to blame, excepting in entering a Hospital, if they do not intend to give up sufficient time in which to learn their work thoroughly. They are, as a rule, most willing to work, and obedient in the performance of their duties—when they know them; but they are no sooner taught the routine of Ward A, than they are whisked off to Ward B, and they naturally get confused, and lose heart and interest in their work. The remedy lies in the hands of the House Committees,

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)