

## A Human Document.

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### AN APOLOGY FOR AN OMISSION.

For the last twenty minutes I have been studying a blank sheet of foolscap with great interest. I am convinced that it is my bounden duty to cover it with irreproachable sentiments for a beloved, but critical, editress, and not one single brilliant idea will come my way. I hark back to a former article, and beg you, Madam, to bear me out when I assert again that there is no subject in connection with nursing over which I have not at one time or another spoilt pen and paper, and the hopeless truth of Solomon's saying (was it Solomon, by the way?), "There is nothing new under the sun," overwhelms me. Nursing Congresses, Registration, Leagues, the much-trained probationer, the iniquitous private nurse, are all worn threadbare, "Alles, alles, Surrogat." I also have been to Berlin, and have just finished editing a "Berlin League number," so I may be excused. Sometimes I wish, Madam, that you would edit a poultry magazine for a change, when I would become a frequent and earnest contributor, especially to that column where the letters of the alphabet ask the editor perplexing questions. For a county Matron's life is not conducive to literary effort; its frequent interruptions spoil one's highest flights, and to be dragged back to earth by "I am so sorry to interrupt you, Matron, but the milk is short," and to be called upon at a moment's notice to arrange, on Sunday, for a further supply of that useful and nutritious fluid brings one back with a great jerk to things practical. But very often when I sit in my office, between the intervals of saying "Come in" I dream of retiring to some pastoral district, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest," and there devoting what energy I have left to chicken-farming, to rearing neat pens of silver Wyandottes, Buff Orpingtons and Leghorns, and securing a modest competency from my efforts.

That is my present ambition for the future; I wonder what my other colleagues look forward to in their old age. It would be rather interesting if we all of us made our open confession as to our secret desires. I expect most of us would be moved by the old earth hunger to go back in some form to gaining one's living from old Mother Earth herself. Then, Madam, when I view this hospital and nursing life from a distance, and regain my sense of proportion and perspective, I shall write you grand articles—really worthy of a front place, for my mind at present is so engrossed with the things that surround me that I cannot, with the best intentions, think of anything but those trivialities that form the bulk of one's worries in a county hospital.

I am afraid my interests at present are chiefly of

that parochial kind, containing little of interest to outsiders. The completion of our new, very perfect casualty rooms, which want furnishing, equipping, and generally starting, gives me great pleasure. The urgently-needed new kitchens, for which at present no funds seem forthcoming, worry me greatly. A new scheme for my probationers which wants working out rather engages my thoughts, to say nothing of new rules for the kitchen-maids, and an unsatisfactory condition of chaos in the laundry consequent on the arrival of a new head laundress. There are moments, of course, when one is disengaged, bodily speaking, but it is not so easy to disentangle one's thoughts at a moment's notice. So my wants, my troubles, my little successes are those of hundreds of other county Matrons scattered up and down the land. The habit, which some so strongly deprecate, of using the possessive pronoun when we speak of "our" hospitals, simply means that we have very entirely identified ourselves with their life, and feel very much one with it. And when we come to consider and work for progress, we have to take the letters to spell the word from the A B C of our daily existence.

When you consider the self-contained life of a hospital, it is not to be wondered at that hospital Matrons and nurses are inclined to grow a little narrow. The insistent, immediate, and daily calls of the hospital on your attention and interest, if you mean to put any vitality into your work, make your brain a little fagged when you turn to think over those broader questions which lie outside your narrower circle. You must always feel that your first duty, your best efforts, are due to the work which is unquestionably yours, and which lies nearest to you; there is no shirking that fact, and it is often so engrossing that it gives you little time for public affairs. Your own particular hospital and its concerns are apt to crop up at inopportune moments and drive your thoughts in one direction.

So much of our work must be done silently, so many of our trials borne alone, that members of the nursing profession are often accused of being apathetic with regard to questions that really concern them professionally; but I do not think our apathy is by any means always due to mental indolence, but to intense preoccupation with our actual practical, daily work. Therefore, Madam, I hope you will accept this apology on behalf of myself and many others, whose interest in public questions is not as openly expressed as it might be. But I would not have you think that we are therefore unmindful of the great unselfish work that is done by those who voice our needs, our shortcomings, and our aspirations. Some of us may only feel it dimly, but many of us can see clearly, and those amongst us who are perhaps least able to help publicly, appreciate none the less keenly the steady upward trend towards greater efficiency, truer freedom, and wider charity which underlies the modern nursing movement.

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