

An Author and an Infant.

Francis Blair is writing his weekly article for the *Sphinx*. He is a young writer with a brilliant reputation; and every Friday the British Public—or that part of the British Public which reads the *Sphinx*—looks eagerly for his observations on men and manners and passing events. He feels the seriousness of his position. The world, as he knows it, needs light and wisdom, and he is the man to give them.

This week his article is on babies; the mystery, the pathos, the appeal to all the finer instincts, of helpless babyhood. He has been a father for ten days—they seem like years—and from the depths of his heart-stirring experience he will instruct the British Public on the duties and privileges of parenthood.

Enter upon his labours his younger sister, whom he has named a whirlwind in petticoats, exclaiming:—

“Francis, take baby for a few minutes.”

A white bundle is thrust into his unready arms, and without a word of explanation the whirlwind is gone, and he is left alone with his son. With such scant ceremony are authors of distinction treated at their own firesides!

Baby has evidently just returned from an airing. Almost hidden amid white wrappings, a little round face is upturned to his own. A little smile flickers across the wee mouth; and there being no one present to explain the prosaic origin thereof our friend's heart is strangely stirred by it. Then, alas! the eyelids open, the mouth puckers, and presently the study walls are echoing an unaccustomed clamour.

Now, deep in the mind of almost every male person, is forever fixed the idea that to still a baby's cries it is only necessary to make a bigger noise than the baby is making, either with voice, musical instrument, or beating of spoons and other table gear on resounding surfaces. Sometimes the device succeeds; probably the baby is disheartened by such unfair competition. On this occasion it is a failure, for though Francis Blair lifts up his voice in song, the lamentations of his infant son are but increased thereby.

He rises carefully, and, taking a firm grip of the “clouds of glory,” proceeds to treat his son to a series of oscillations something like those of a merry-go-round at a country fair. And the baby ungratefully yells louder than before.

Despair seizes him—but stay! Is there not an article called a soother, the scorn of doctors, and those who write for the press on baby-culture, but a very present help to many a poor

wearily mother? Our friend has seen babies in their coaches contentedly sucking these things—why is not his child provided with such a solace for the woes of early life?

Seated again, wildly hunting on the study table for a substitute, the gifted writer's ideas of helpless babyhood are largely revised: for it is his spirit that quails before this loud, insistent plaint. Having rejected an india-rubber as being too hard, he is considering the claims of a fountain pen filler—one could wipe it clean with the corner of a handkerchief—when, wonder of wonders, the noise ceases, the little round face is calm once more, and gazing upwards are two blue eyes, clear, inscrutable, holding in their depths (or so the writer fancies) the story of all the ages past, and the promise of all the future.

For some time after the nurse has taken her charge away Francis Blair sits motionless, his mind filled with that marvellous vision. Then he tears up his half-written article, and proceeds to enlighten the British Public on fiscal problems.

JESSIE HARVEY.

The Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh.

At the Annual Meeting of the Managers of the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, the report for the year ending October 1st, 1910, was read. It was reported concerning the Nursing Department that the average number of nurses and probationers during the year was 260, as compared with 259 in the previous year. There were 745 applications for admission, as compared with 784 in 1909. Seventy-seven trained nurses, including four Sisters, left during the year; one to be Lady Superintendent of a nursing institution; one to be Matron of a hospital; nine to be Sisters in other hospitals; seven to be Queen's Nurses; four to be nurses in nursing homes or hospitals; one to join the Colonial Nursing Association; one to the mission field (Jerusalem); one to become a School Nurse under the Edinburgh School Board; seven to be trained as maternity nurses; twenty-six to be private nurses; six to be married. Eleven have returned to their homes. One Sister was promoted to be Night Superintendent in the Royal Infirmary. Of 155 probationers fourteen proved unsuitable; seven left of their own wish; and one left to be married.

The question of the remuneration of the Sisters was the subject of inquiry during the past year. It has been decided to give a pension, on retirement, of £40 instead of £25.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)