

How tired and happy we were at the success of our labours, the last duty being to bear a large packet of Christmas letters for the patients, to be put under their pillows by the Night Nurse. After supper we were more busy, if possible, getting ready the various cards and presents we intended for our friends and relations. Then we had the carols to sing over just once more to make sure we knew them without book or music.

Then prayers, and to most bed—that welcome friend. A few went off to a Midnight Service close by; but I, thinking I knew what was before me the next day, joined the majority.

Christmas morning, again five o'clock, again a hurried dressing, amidst smothered laughter as the contents of odd parcels came to light at the preliminary peep at them. There was no time for more than the most cursory glance then, but we nearly forgot to "make a noise quietly," as each discovered a plush monkey arrayed in cap, apron, and serge gown complete; they were really intended for pen-wipers, but we only discovered that afterwards.

This was capped by a knock at the door, and the Home Sister's voice telling us to hurry; we did, and found a welcome cup of hot coffee and a good hunch of cake, provided for us by that same good Sister—to warm us for our work, she said; and it was needed. A very heavy fall of snow had occurred in the night, and we were ankle-deep just crossing from the Home to the Hospital. We were all marshalled two and two in the hall, and starting to the right commenced singing the carols just outside of each set of Wards. The patients were having breakfast, and I think they enjoyed those old carols as much as anything we prepared, giving them a tiny peep at Christmas in the midst of their pain. One dear old man told me (he was sleeping when we began) he "thought maybe 'twas heaven, and the angels a singin'," and was "main sorry it warn't."

We trooped back to breakfast with appetites sharpened by the frosty air and the unusual exercise to our voices at that early hour.

After this all who were near enough, or thought there was any chance, asked for leave to go home for at least an hour or two of the day, to see and give good wishes to their own dear ones. I was one of this number. My home was only half-an-hour by the train, and to my joy I got leave to be off duty from one to six p.m.; that would give me a good four hours—time enough to present, and receive, the different *surprises* we had been preparing for weeks past.

We were very busy, for we had to get through with all necessary work, and all who could were expected to attend Chapel, besides taking with them those out of the Wards who were suffi-

ciently convalescent. Although I did not take particular notice, I could not help noticing that it grew very dull as the hours went on, but just before one o'clock, when I was to leave, it seemed quite suddenly to become pitch black—so dark that even in the Ward, with a large fire, and the gas all lit, it was almost impossible to distinguish any one on the other side. The Sister came and tried to dissuade me from starting, but I felt so sure it must be only local, and probably be quite slight a few streets off; and besides, after getting leave, to be stopped *just* by a fog, it seemed to my superior wisdom to be just too ridiculous; so after the manner of such folk, I threw good advice to the winds, and went.

"Good-bye, my dear; hope you will enjoy yourself; be back six sharp, mind, because Nurse——"

I did not hear any more, but sped rapidly away to get my hat, &c. It was only a very few minutes before I was tearing along to the station, about a quarter of an hour's walk, and all the time congratulating myself I had not been so silly as to stop for a fog. It was black, though—that sort of still darkness that can almost be felt. The traffic was nearly stopped, but I knew my way very well, and really lost very little time, getting just in time for the first train running after morning service. I will pass over the details of the delight caused by my unexpected appearance. The time flew all too quickly, and it was five o'clock—quite time to start if I meant to be back punctually, to let that other poor Pro. off for the rest of the day.

With a large box of crackers safely tucked under my arm to cheer my patients with in the evening, and a big brother to see me safely into the train, I started back. As the train steamed into the station I fancied they had forgotten to light the gas—it was as dark as night.

I hurried down the platform with the crowd, seeing nothing, absolutely nothing. Then it flashed across me that the gas was lighted *before* I started, and realised dimly for the first time what a dreadful sort of fog this was. One thing comforted me—I knew my way so perfectly that it did not seem likely I could be lost in it.

At the entrance to the station I stood for a moment, mentally tracing my way, and then, when all seemed quite clear, started at a quick walk. Just at first the other people leaving the station too kept me company in my quick rush through that awful darkness, but as I neared my destination they dropped off one by one, until I seemed alone, perfectly alone, in that silence and darkness that could be felt.

I had got as far as the square, only about three hundred yards from the Hospital, when I wavered. Up to then I had come along at a good pace,

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