

Letters from Life.—No. 17.

Nursing Home, Great Eastern Hospital.

DEAREST JEAN,—If ever this letter was to see the light of day, it would be considered a horrible libel on our sex. Yet, mind you, it is *true*. Before I came here I shared the popular belief that all women were tender-hearted, because they are emotional, and that the worst of women were human and loved children. These are popular fallacies. There are natures—exceptional ones maybe—to whom the helplessness of a little child does not appeal, and who are absolutely devoid of the hallowing maternal instinct—women who can be cruel to little helpless *suffering* children! Think of it, Jean—and women not taken from the class from whence come the poor drunken, abandoned wretches, who from cradle to grave have had no chance—but women gently nurtured, who have heard the Word of God read daily, and who have elected to nurse the sick!

Here there is a children's Ward, the door of which I have to pass as I go on and off duty. How the cries of these little creatures torture my heart, Jean; *cared-for* children never *wail*! They may howl, scream, yell—temper and pain produce such sounds—but the low wailing of sorrow,

where true women are, this sound is seldom heard.

To-night, I stood on the mat at the door of the Children's Ward, and peeped in (we are not permitted to enter any Ward where we are not on duty); several little piteous voices were upraised. Just opposite the door, a tiny child was lying on his cot outside the bed-clothes—a short flannel jacket his only covering, one little pink foot and leg all bare, the other covered with an ominous bandage. He was sobbing quietly—in little heart-broken gasps. He caught sight of my shadow in the doorway, and stretched out his arms to me.

"Oh! Mammie, mammie; take him! take him!" he cried.

I took a step forward—at the same moment a figure crept swiftly through the archway—Sister Regent—picked up the little child with feline ferocity—*bumped* him against the floor, threw him into his cot, and covered his head with the bed-clothes, holding them down tightly with her cruel claw. I listened intently, not a sound came from under them, not a movement. Passion, pain, grief—were all silenced by terror.

For the first time in my life—my feelings were too strong for impulse.

I stood rigid, dumb, and powerless.

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