

## "Letters from Life."—No. 21.

(Continued from page 444, No. 218.)

NURSING HOME,  
GREAT EASTERN HOSPITAL.

DEAREST JEAN,—Once possessed of that important little bottle I determine definitely how to act. I tie the stopper in quite tightly, and slipping it into my pocket pin it securely therein, then hurry to my ward. Poor No. 9's empty bed with its bare sacking is a sad sight, and I turn from it to attend to the still sadder living, feeling quite glad, for once, that there is so little time in which to scamper through the work—that regrets are a luxury in which it is impossible to indulge. Nurse Ross I left in the Home, far too ill for duty, and no one having been sent to supply her place I find a good deal of extra work to do. For once, Sister comes on duty at 8, and snarls through prayers as if she was addressing her natural enemy; she then walks straight up to me, and attacks me, before the patients, in that coarse nasal twang, which is one of her pronounced characteristics;—

"Well! I hope you are satisfied with your evening's work. It's a pity one can't be absent from the ward for an hour without the patients being murdered by your gross carelessness, bringing scandal and disgrace on the Hospital; whatever such fools are let loose upon the sick for, beats my understanding."

I have just risen from my knees. I allow my eyes to travel slowly from the hem of her apron to her face, and

then, without answering, slowly take my little note-book and pencil from my pocket and write down her words. This action seems to infuriate her still further, for she stamps her foot on the floor, and, crimson with passion, rasps out.

"Leave the ward this instant. I suspend you from duty until the Matron has investigated your shameful conduct and insolence." I have never opened my lips—(this reminds me of the story of the private soldier sent to the guard-room by an infuriated superior officer "for looking contumacious.")

"Suspension from duty does not come within the limits of your authority," I answer quietly, and taking up my duster, I continue my work. (Fancy bullying *me*, Jean!) I only repress a smile by an immense effort, and yet, how efficacious is this coarse intimidation with the majority of my companions! She comes quite close to me and hisses in my ear—

"You flatly refuse to obey?" she questions.

"I refuse to recognise your power of suspension," I reply, doggedly, "and I refuse to be intimidated," continuing my routine duties.

We are now close to the bed of No. 11, my old friend with the "unique disease." I notice that the poor weak creature is struggling to raise himself on his elbow, his face is twitching painfully—

"Stop ragging of my nuss!" he cries in a shrill shaking voice. "Ain't she the best nuss as we've ever 'ad? Think on them bed-sores. Ain't she healed them all up, a washing and attending to 'em morning, noon, and night? Don't I know the difference in the feel of my bones, hey mates? Stop her a ragging of our nuss!" and he spreads out his poor thin arms to right and left in protest. Then

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