

Our Foreign Letter.

LETTER FROM HOLLAND.

POOR Janet! and now she was ill!

Every Wednesday morning, when the clock had struck nine, she appeared before me, with her pale, careworn face and her dark kind eyes full of expression. She was a fragile looking, hump-backed creature, who earned her living by sewing, surely not a very lucrative means of existence. She had not only to take care of herself but also of her aged mother, who was, for the greater part, wholly dependent on her misshapen daughter. Yet Janet was always bright and full of hope, and when she gave proof of her ability as sewer, by mending with really wonderful speed, some old, worn piece of dressing, I often heard her hum a tune. She fought the hard struggle for life with unyielding perseverance and courage. "The light which surrounded her came all from within," the light of confidence and cheerful self-sacrifice.

And now she was ill.

"Poor child!" sobbed her old mother, who came to tell me the sad news. She has been transported to the Wilhelmina Hospital. The doctor says I cannot give her at home the nursing she wants."

On the general visiting day I went to see Janet.

I entered the ward. There she lay, her thin face seemed to me, if possible, still more transparent than it used to be. She welcomed me with a happy smile. "Oh, madam, how kind you are to come here!" she murmured with a feeble voice.

I pressed the slender hand that rested on the blanket, the quick, busy hand, alas! so idle now.

"Well, Janet, are you content to be here?"

She was full of praise for the careful nursing and excellent treatment she had found in the Hospital.

"But you are a very docile patient," interposed the Sister, who had overheard the end of her eulogy.

"And the days, don't they last very long?" I asked:

"and the nights, are they not endless?"

"Oh, no! One of the *flower ladies*, as they are called here, has given me a most charming novel, and when I read I forget all around me. I don't live no longer my own life, but that of the persons in the book, in whose fate I feel so highly interested. And so I am, for a while, removed from reality with its pain and troubles, and when I get tired of reading I fix my eyes on the Scriptural passage which the same kind lady has hung above my bed, and then a feeling of unspeakable rest enters into my heart, and I pray to the Lord that He may make all things right."

I looked in the indicated direction—on the grey wall was fixed a square piece of pasteboard, tastefully decorated with leaves and flowers. "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want!" was printed on it.

"I had never entered a Hospital before," Janet went on, "and so I had a most false and absurd idea of it. But how I have been in the wrong! I could scarcely believe my eyes when I came here. There were no naked walls, everywhere I saw pretty engravings and Scripture sentences and texts, which pour hope and courage into the heart. And then the ward itself, what a kind aspect it has! I expected to find a sombre room, a mind-oppressing scene of human misery and nameless suffering; and though it can't be changed, that this is a place of many tears and many sighs, yet there is thrown a veil of forethinking love

and poetry over it by the blessed interference of the "flower ladies," who bring here flowers and plants. I have always been a great lover of flowers, when life seems hard and difficult it is a recommendable thing to look at a flower, to inhale its sweet odour, to admire its beautiful colours. I can't express myself as clearly as I should wish, madam, I feel it a great deal better than I can say, but you will understand me."

I rose to go, for I dared not fatigue my poor sick friend by much talking. My visit to the Hospital left a most kind and lasting impression on my mind, and I felt a feeling of strong sympathy and gratitude towards the "flower ladies" who, spurred on by the noble desire of soothing the misery of their suffering fellow-creatures, bring to practice the principles of sound philanthropy.

Amsterdam must be named as that city in our country which saw first of all brought about within its walls a society for distributing flowers, fruits books, journals and newspapers in the different Hospitals on behalf of the sick who are nursed there. For more than fourteen years the above-mentioned committee of ladies has worked there with great success. In October of the previous year Groningen has followed the example given by Amsterdam, and a few weeks ago also The Hague. The flower-ladies, as they are generally called—a very characteristic name indeed—are always welcomed with smiles when they enter the wards, at least by those patients who have not yet by physical and moral pain unlearned to take joy in an opening or some interesting or edifying book. The bare walls are decorated by them with engravings and prints, the rooms are cheered up with flowers and ferns and plants, and many a dry and hot mouth finds, by their kind care, comfort in the refreshing juice of some fruit of the season. And who of us will deny the blessing of an encouraging word? Surely here lies a part of the vast working field for all those more privileged among mankind who most earnestly wish to make themselves useful. It must be hailed as a happy token of the time, that this praiseworthy desire reveals itself more and more among the higher classes of society. As a matter of course, sick-nursing and all concerning it is a favourite hobby; it lies in womanly nature to soften painful sorrows, to dry tears, and to cheer up the depressed soul.

The result of this same noble longing is what an unmarried lady in Zutphen (one of our provincial towns) has done to further the cause of district Nursing in that commune. She has offered to a trained Nurse not only free board and lodging, but also a salary. The Nurse is willing to give her valuable aid in all those cases where her assistance is called in by the attending physician. No payment whatever is required from the poor, but a larger or smaller pecuniary compensation is expected from those patients who are in more easy circumstances, in order to meet the expenses of the different Nursing necessities, as there are restoratives, bedding, bandages, &c., &c.

During a period of eleven months the Sister has paid 4,400 visits, a clear proof that her presence provides an existing want. It is our most sincere wish that this example will be followed in many other smaller towns and communes. It certainly deserves sympathy and imitation. There are many families in which one person more or less will make no difference—at least not much—in the household budget. It

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