

CHRISTMAS CHIMES.

BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK.

IT is one of the most beautiful ideas of childhood that the Christmas bells are always ringing out the old message of the angels—"Peace on earth, Goodwill towards men"; and though all too soon we discover that the first half of the legend is impossible, and perhaps even past hoping for, in the present state of our civilisation, still many things combine at Christmastide to prove the possibility, and the pleasure, to everyone of evincing his own individual goodwill to others. Some, of course, have not only greater desire, but also wider scope and larger opportunities than others, of working for their fellow-creatures. But as a broad principle I suppose it must be universally admitted that everyone can do something, and, therefore, as a member of the body politic, is bound to do that something—however little it may seem to be—to show his unity with the rest of his race; to prove that "fellow-feeling which makes us wondrous kind." Or to place the matter even on the commercial level to which everything now-a-days is apparently expected to be brought, it surely behoves everyone to show that kindness and consideration to others which all expect others to manifest to them. Now, from this I would argue that those who have great opportunities of showing goodwill to others are morally bound to utilise those opportunities to the uttermost. Perhaps this, as an abstract principle, will also be admitted. To reduce it, however, into every-day practice, to prove the obligation of Nurses in this respect, and to show how that obligation can be discharged by them, is my present object and earnest desire. And I do not restrict my ideas as to what is incumbent upon Nurses merely to the most excellent performance of their absolute duties, though I venture to consider their work the grandest, noblest, and most womanly occupation in the world. I would take a wider purview of the case, and endeavour to show that every Nurse owes, besides her immediate duty to her patients, a great debt to every other woman engaged in the same occupation as herself. I would go even further still, and say that ten thousand Nurses have the opportunity within the next twelve months—and should, therefore, avail themselves individually of the chance—of proving, beyond all dispute, their goodwill towards women engaged in every other description or kind of work in this country.

Finally, it appears to me that every Trained Nurse can, by her own individual action in this coming year, evince her regard for the comfort and the safety of every sick man, woman, and child within the confines of the United Kingdom, and,

co-incidently, for the happiness of the hundreds of thousands of other people, to whom these sick ones are near and dear. It may justly be said that I am attempting to prove a great deal. I am fully conscious that within the limits assigned to me it will be impossible to do more than touch the fringe of such a wide-reaching matter, and, moreover, that it requires a much more able pen than mine to do any justice to the great interests involved. But—however briefly and inadequately I may delineate the subject—I would contend, in the first instance, that Nurses have greater opportunities of showing goodwill towards their fellow-creatures than any other class of women can possibly possess, or indeed than any class of men can have, save and except Doctors and Clergymen. When it is reflected that from early morn till late at night every Nurse is, week after week, and month after month, in constant attendance upon the sick and the maimed; how she is for long weary days or weeks the one fellow-creature upon whom such a sufferer is utterly dependent for comfort and for hourly care—I suppose the justice of my contention will be admitted.

But I desire to draw from the opportunities which Nurses have of showing goodwill to their patients two lessons. Firstly, that all Nurses are in honour bound not only to do whatever duties fall to their share with all gentleness, honour, and true charity, but also to utilise to the utmost every opportunity afforded to them of becoming more and more proficient in their work, and therefore more and more useful to the community. I am inclined to believe that most women who have been efficiently trained, recognise their duties and their responsibilities in both these directions. And when it is remembered how many spend their health, and even risk their lives, freely in attendance upon others, I think it may be conceded that the great majority of Trained Nurses carry out their work in the widest spirit, not only of loving kindness to others, but also of self-sacrifice. But there are others who, we all know, look upon Nursing merely as a trade, to be carried on with considerable profit—women these, as a rule, who have received little or no training, and in whom the true instinct of skilled Nursing is either undeveloped, or is altogether absent. To them perhaps, we shall appeal in vain with this Christmastide motto; but I am encouraged to hope that the day is not far distant when every woman who bears the title of Trained Nurse will rightly estimate, not only the privileges, but the responsibilities of her work.

I pass to my second point, however—the obligation incumbent upon each Nurse to show her goodwill towards every other member of her profession.

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