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**Editorial.**

THE HAPPIEST DAY IN THE YEAR.

The happiest day in the year in hospital is unquestionably Christmas Day. Why? The nursing staff is tired to the limit of endurance, the patients are as ill as usual, and the many troubles and anxieties incidental to an indifferently lined purse, and the hard weather, are generally plentiful amongst the class of patients who fill the beds of our hospital wards. Yet on all sides one sees happy sunny faces, and good temper and geniality abound, so that those who have spent one Christmas in hospital, whether as patients or nurses, are all agreed that it is far and away the pleasantest place in which to spend Christmas.

For weeks before preparations begin, and even those patients who are inclined to bemoan their "hard luck" in spending Christmas away from home begin to feel pleasantly expectant. Then comes Christmas Eve, and Sisters and nurses turn out in the dark, cold morning and arrive back in the wards about 6.30, having spoiled Covent Garden, and bringing great bunches of gleaming holly, glistening mistletoe, cut flowers, flowers in pots, palms, ferns, and other treasures, till the wards are transformed into fairy bowers, and then deft fingers fashion Christmas mottoes, and give the surgeon's initials the place of honour over the mantel-piece, and make civil and flattering remarks about the H. S. in cotton wool and Turkey twill. In short, a spirit of gaiety pervades the ward, so that for a time the most phlegmatic and taciturn patients thaw in the atmosphere of geniality, and exhibit unsuspected talents which are immediately utilised for the general good.

Then comes Christmas morning. "No passes to-day; every nurse is needed on duty" sounds a hard saying to the new pro, whose thoughts turn homewards in affectionate remembrance of many happy Christmas Days. But there is little time for sentiment. Many of the nurses are up earlier than usual for the service in the Hospital Chapel, in honour of the birthday

of the Christ-Child, which gives the keynote to the gladness of the day, and is indeed its *raison d'être*. Then there is a hasty breakfast, after which hie for the wards, where work in plenty is waiting for willing hands, and smiling faces await the nurses, for has not Santa Claus (in the shape of the night nurse) visited each bed and left Christmas cards upon the pillow, as well as the warm comforter, the cosy shawl, the welcome flannel shirt, or the much-needed petticoat? And in the children's ward there is a chorus of happy, excited voices, for the same kind fairy has stuffed the stockings, which, limp and empty, were hung at the ends of the cots by tiny fingers overnight, with every imaginable gift that the heart of child can desire.

But there is no time just now except for a general "Happy Christmas," for beds must be made and this is "clean sheet morning"; Sister has put out the new counterpanes, and there are new scarlet jackets also all round the ward, and bright new ribbons for the children's hair, and Mrs. 5 has to be obliged with the curling tongs—"so I mayn't look a fright when my old man comes," she says. Then the shining brasses must have an extra polish, and everything be spick and span when Sister comes round to give the medicines. Later comes the Chaplain, and Christmas hymns and Christmas prayers ascend "as the incense." Then there is the doctor's round, and afterwards the orthodox dinner which every true-born Britisher considers it his duty to eat in all climes and in most circumstances, and Sister looks away while a dyspeptic patient has a second helping of Christmas pudding and is apparently all the better afterwards. Then comes the visiting hour, followed by tea, to which various delicacies have been added, after which the fun waxes fast and furious. "Don't take any temperatures to-night, nurse," says Sister, "except 8's and 12's." It is better so. And at last the time comes for the lights to be lowered, and soon, tired, happy, and content—for in bringing happiness to others they have found their own—the nurses troop off duty, to supper and to bed.

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