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Editorial.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Once again we wish our readers joy at this season in the old formula, for, though from time to time others have been introduced, it still holds sway as the one which above all others is applicable.

Merriment is associated in our minds with gaiety and laughter, and it may appear to the laity that a Merry Christmas is the last thing which is possible to those whose occupation keeps them at the bedside of the sick. Yet there are few whose Christmas has been in hospital, whether as patients or nurses, who will not admit that the very merriest Christmases they have ever known are those spent in a hospital ward. For genuine light-hearted fun, for the incarnation of the central thought of Christmas—love and goodwill, and care for others—a hospital ward affords a most fitting background. There are the patients, who, as Christmas Day approaches, get downhearted at the idea that their Christmas must be spent away from home. All energies must be bent to disabuse their minds of the notion that a Christmas in hospital is a depressing one, and to make them feel that it can be not only happy but joyful.

Not only the staff of the hospital, but the public also contribute to this happiness. How the nurses revel in the stacks of warm shirts and flannel petticoats, comforters, frocks, and pinafores which generous friends send at this season! Nor are the special needs of the children forgotten. Wonderful dolls, toys such as they have never seen before, a loaded Christmas tree, transform the children's ward into a veritable fairyland; while the stockings, tied by excited fingers to the foot of the cot, and watched continuously till the heavy lids close over the sleepy, eager eyes, are found filled to overflowing when Christmas morning dawns, and happy little voices proclaim far and wide that the story they have heard is true,

and that Santa Claus has indeed visited the ward in the night and left for them the things they most desired.

Neither has Santa Claus forgotten the grown-ups, and though they do not accept him with such unquestioning faith, and have a shrewd suspicion that Sister or Nurse have more to do with the parcel at their bedsides, they are supremely pleased with its contents. Later there are Christmas carols and a short service; afterwards the Christmas dinner is discussed and pronounced excellent, the visiting hour brings the home folk, some of whom perhaps stay to tea, and then the evening is given over to enjoyment. So the hours fly all too swiftly, and at the end of the day, when the lights are lowered and the soft tread of the night nurse is the only sound in the ward, its occupants wonder why they ever wanted to go out before Christmas. It is the very happiest they have ever spent.

To the private nurse a merry Christmas seems more impossible. The shadow pervading a house where all thoughts are centred in the sick room of one near and dear is more difficult to dispel. Merriment, as it is usually understood, may, indeed, be out of place; but merriment includes cheerfulness, and cheerfulness the nurse may well strive not only to maintain herself, but to infuse into the atmosphere surrounding the patient and permeating the house. So, wherever they may be, at home or abroad, in hospitals or infirmaries, in private houses, or on the high seas, we wish our readers, one and all, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

A section of the community to whom our thoughts go out specially at this time are our sick soldiers. We have not forgotten the Christmases spent on the veldt, or in isolated blockhouses. Some of these men may be, probably are, in hospitals at home at this season. Surely it is an opportunity to show them that, though the war is happily at an end, the appreciation by the nation of the work of those who fought its battles remains.

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