

Annotations.

CHRISTMAS IN HOSPITAL.

Is there a happier place in the world in which to spend Christmas than the wards of a hospital? Paradoxical as it may seem, most nurses will express the emphatic belief that there is not. True there is hard work and plenty of it, but hard work which brings happiness in its train, and the true joy of Christmas, the joy of helping to make the lives of others brighter and happier. So, as the season approaches, everything is humming, for whatever extra work has to be done—and there is plenty—the patients must receive the same attention. The excessive labour entailed by elaborate decorations is now out of date, for we know that such decorations are prejudicial to the well-being of the patients, and, after all, do not potted plants and cut flowers on the tables, lavishly provided by Sisters and Nurses out of their slender salaries, with a big, mysterious Christmas tree in the children's wards, present as festive an appearance as the heavier evergreens and mottoes on Turkey twill of former days? It is an unmixed good that cotton wool does not now play such a prominent part in ward decoration, both from the point of view of the hospital exchequer, and because of the undoubted risk of fire. We once were introduced in a hospital at this season to the "snow baby" of the ward. The quilt and curtains of the cot were of sheets of cotton wool (hospital property, doubtless), artistically decorated with trails of ivy, and with holly and mistletoe, elaborate work which must have taken hours to design and carry out, but we confess we had no eyes save for the tiny occupant; in peril of an awful death. One spark, and the whole must have been ablaze.

But decorations aside, there is work enough. The desire of their hearts has to be extracted skilfully from unsuspecting patients, parcels must be made up by busy fingers, and everything left in readiness for Christmas morning. Here the night nurses have the best of it, for it is they who play the part of Santa Claus, and who see the delight of the recipients when the eventful morning at length arrives.

Then comes a busy time. Clean sheets, clean quilts, new red jackets, clean everything. Service in the wards, doctors' visits, Christmas dinner, follow one another in quick succession. Then the visitors, and after that a sumptuous tea, carols, and songs till it is time to think of

settling the patients for the night, after which the nurses have time to read their own letters.

NURSES AS CITIZENS.

At a meeting of the West Ham Trades and Labour Council, held recently at the Town Hall, Stratford, a letter was read from the Secretary of the Canning Town branch of the Gasworkers' Union, enclosing a resolution emphatically protesting against the support accorded by the Matron and nurses of the Nurses' Home, Howard's Road, Plaistow, to Councillors Sharp and Stoner in the recent election in the Plaistow ward. Mr. McGregor said that Sister Katherine signed one of Councillor Sharp's nomination papers. As one of Mr. Edwards' supporters, he thought it rather strange that a person in her position should go out of her way to do that when she was dependent on the support of the working classes for the Home. The trades unions had been used to raise money towards this organisation, and yet Sister Katherine went out of her way to support a candidate to whom the workers were opposed. If Sister Katherine did that, let her go to the brewers, parsons, and that kidney for her money, and not to the workers.

We must at once protest against the assumption that because a woman is a nurse she is not to exercise the duties of citizenship or to support candidates with whose views her own are in accord at municipal elections. There is probably no one in Plaistow who is in a position to know more of the needs of the poor in the municipality than Sister Katherine, and it is only because of the injustice which excludes women from seats on borough and municipal elections that she herself is debarred from standing for election as a member of the Municipal Council.

At the same time, nurses should, of course, not use the machinery of a nursing organisation, supported by persons of all kinds of political opinions, for political purposes, nor should they use the influence they undoubtedly acquire over the sick for obtaining votes for a political candidate. Proselytism, whether in regard to religion or politics, should not be permitted in connection with any nursing society. But nurses, like all other members of the community, have a perfect right to work for any candidate for municipal office in their off-duty hours. That the support of the nurses at Plaistow is valuable is evident, for Councillor Sharp stated publicly that the nurses were the best canvassers he had. Whether it is *politic* for

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