

Christmas in Many Climes.

It is a time essentially for children, but if you can't be a child at Christmas, then the next best thing to be is to be a patient or a nurse in a hospital. I know it is a very open question as to how far and in what way it should be celebrated in these institutions, but most of us would be sorry to see December 25th treated quite like any other day, and one must remember that, for a time at any rate, most patients become rather like big sick children, and like to be amused accordingly.

My first Christmas in a big London hospital is now, alas! very long ago, and I sometimes give a little jump when a younger nurse says "Oh! were you there *then*?" the "then" evidently implying a quite prehistoric age to her. In those days we decorated with perhaps more zeal than taste, convalescent patients weaving great ropes of evergreens or pasting mysterious letters on brilliant red backgrounds. The main idea of all was how utterly terrible it would be if the ward opposite were better decorated than "ours," though often we might only have been stationed in "ours" a fortnight or so. Still were we not young and enthusiastic and was not our Sister a sweet and gracious lady who shut her eyes to many things the day before Christmas, perhaps giving a gentle hint that cotton wool *was* inflammable and that a little less would be an advantage. This will prove to the modern nurse that it was very long ago, in fact, before microbe-hunting became the fashion. Then came the cheerful hour when you went visiting the other wards and became quite sure that "ours" was best, "for no one else had decorated the cradles" (kept in line on the cupboard tops). Sometimes Christmas got into you and you did quite surprising things, and wondered why you had done them after. Once when on visiting intent to another block, I heard a voice say, "I will race you, nurse, across the square," and I was off and away and had *won* before I thought what I was doing. Now I am a sober, grey-haired Matron I know how naughty such conduct was—and yet I am glad I won—though I never saw the tempter then, for it was dark—or after.

Then there was a Christmas spent in Switzerland—very, very different—in a big hotel, where most were in search of health, though many pretended it was only sport they came for. Snow on the peaks, above you, round you, below you, everywhere. Feathery, powdery snow that sparkled and glistened in the brilliant sunshine, and never thought of making you wet if you had a spill lugeing or skating. A luge is a sleigh built for one, two, or even

six or eight persons, guided by ropes held by the one sitting first or alone as the case may be. It looks quite simple and in certain parts is quite the national way of getting about—every one from seventy down to two can luge, and it looks so easy and is so difficult.

Our men go out and think they can do it straight way, as well as walk on snow-shoes without practice, with this result often: Hotel-porter—"Gentleman with a broken leg, Sir?"; to an anxious friend, "Which one, Sir?" proudly "We have got three."

Then there were the delightful two-horse sleighs, which carried you down the valley at a great pace, bells jingling, feathers on the horses' heads waving (I always chose blue) and the driver shouting weird noises to his horses. On a long drive you are furnished with fur rugs and lunch. I went such a drive over a good snow road with huge cliffs towering on each side, down which streamed waterfalls—but of icicles—flew over little wooden bridges, some with quaint carved tops of many years ago, across rushing rivers, into a half shut sleepy little town, where the snow was already melting. To see the great white mountains in all their glory, you should see them in the winter, towering like sentinels over the valleys, and quiet and peaceful as they should be—not desecrated by the shouting, trumpet-playing tourist of the summer months. The Rigi in February is a dream, white from the top to the lake at its foot, white the huge panorama all round it, and often even the water white by reason of the billowy masses of cloud which settle on it for days together, your only connection with the world an odd post in and out to Lucerne, when a man and mule happens to be going down to Vitznau.

And yet in summer, I am told, the beautiful Rigi is a pandemonium.

Christmas Day itself was celebrated by what the hotel *propriétaire* called "a big dinner." It was; it lasted a long time, the climax being reached when a baron of beef was carried round the salon shoulder high, by four waiters. Privately I don't think any of us had seen one before—not even the gentleman from Barbadoes, and he had seen many things—but the Swiss, I believe, think we have one in every house.

Then there was a hot, blazing Christmas spent at Wynberg, when you felt plum pudding was almost an insult, and you hadn't much time to think of anything but getting dressings done and trying to prevent bed sores, though extra tobacco was served out and extra food partaken of all round. Indeed, whatever land you happen to be in, the food idea seems to be of great importance. I suppose because it appeals to all

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