

I the superior by more than two years, but still wore all my fair hair down, and of course the other girls said it was only that that Lionel cared for, and most certainly his attentions *did* fall off when I was raised to the dignity of a "pig-tail." Last, but by no means least, there was the children's party at the dear old Castle given by the Armitage family, and to which we went in the snow, guided home by some of the company acting as link boys with lighted lanterns.

In those days we would talk, as girls will, on our mountain rambles, of the "future," and what it would bring us. Let us see another ten years hence.

#### TWENTY-FIVE.

Yes, I was twenty-five, and it was my first year of Hospital life.

Christmas came. It happened that day, and each of the following years of my training time, not to be my turn for chapel Christmas morning. However, we could begin the day with the early service at 6.30, when in the dim light we could see the decorations of holly and ivy in the little Hospital chapel, and later on, when busy in the Wards, hear the organ pealing out and the voices joining in with "Hark, the herald angels sing"; and peeping down through the open gallery doors, we could get a glimpse of the Nurses in their pretty uniform, with the little band of patients behind.

So occupied was I that Christmas morning, trying with the Nurse of the Ward to make up a bit for the fact that the patients were all to have their ordinary fare—no roast beef or plum pudding for any of them—that I was quite surprised when my sister (we had entered on our new life together, I am thankful to say) came running to ask why I did not come down to dinner. Our own dinner was plentiful enough—a turkey at one table and a goose at the other, with plum pudding to follow, and oranges and apples for everyone; but somehow I doubt if we enjoyed it very much. Wise as it was in many ways, it seemed hard lines on those patients upstairs with nothing but their usual fare.

Then came the afternoon, and my time off. But what was one to do with two hours out of doors on a Christmas afternoon in London, no home circle to join, nor friends near enough to look up? The Wards were looking bright and cheery, but tired with all my Probationer's duties and all the extra busy work of decorating, &c., I thought I would lie down and rest in my cubicle, knowing it was my only time off duty for two days. I was nearly asleep when there came a knock, and to my surprise a young governess entered, who had been a patient some months before, and who, having leave home for a few days

at Christmas, had left mother and sisters that precious afternoon to come and look up a little Hospital Nurse. We chatted away up there in the cold, while attacking the chocolate creams she had brought. I should think the recording angel noted down that little visit somehow.

When I returned to the Wards I found Santa Claus had been there; the children were happy in their cots with some capital toys, some of them the "Truth toys." The mothers and girls were looking bright over shawls and petticoats, or perhaps a doll or box of bricks, ready to give to their own little ones expected that afternoon. And when they came, those visitors, tramping up the stairs, eager to spend at least one hour on Christmas Day with the sick loved ones, one felt it was indeed good to spend Christmas Day in a London Hospital.

We had only one patient really bad that day, and that was "Punchy," a little girl of three, who had been so badly burnt that we had feared the worst for her. But she began to rally on Christmas Eve, and was soon the merriest, naughtiest little pet of the Ward. Even this Christmas Day she looks out intelligently from her large brown eyes (I must own to a weakness for children with brown eyes), and knows her father, and finds her tongue for the first time.

That evening I spent in the quietest Wards of the Hospital, the Eye Wards, where the patients needed all that loving kindness could do to brighten the hours, for even cheery decorations were of little avail to most of them. Luckily we had come across a book that all the men were interested in, a tale of the Indian Mutiny, by Henty ("real facts, no trash," as one of them remarked), so I read to them as usual, after being with the women, where we indulged in what I must own was a downright novel. Then the men would greet me with, "Nurse, you have given those women five minutes too long." Well, I have been "too long" over that first Hospital Christmas, and now must hurry on.

#### THE YEAR AFTER.

For most of the following year I had been in the Male Wards, but Christmas found me in the Female Accident Wards, this time with more responsibility and plenty of hard work. But though, like so many Nurses, I preferred the Male Wards best for the cheerful and ready help of the men, still I find, on looking back, that, after all, my happiest times were in the Female Wards, as far as regards the Head Nurses and fellow-Nurses I had to work with.

I did not want my Ward to look bare this Christmas time, especially as it was on the ground floor, and yet it was indeed difficult to find time to put up decorations. "Success to our

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