

I often felt in that hardest, most distressing of wards, I might at least be good and kind to my Christ-kind!

And he came, a poor, miserable, foreign-looking chap, found at a coffee stall. I never knew the ins and outs of the story, but I know he had been left there to take charge of it by the owner—left, I believe, for two days and two nights, too weak to drag it home, not daring to risk the wrath of the owner by leaving it. I know that for days as he lay there, when we did not know whether he would live or die, he would mutter to himself about the hardness and cruelty of some unknown man.

I did indeed try to be good to that queer outlandish Christ-kind. When better he would tell me strange stories of his life; how, when out in Rio Janeiro, and ill there, the priests and choristers would come in procession with censers through the wards, where the men were nursed by Sisters, and how they would try to convert the strangers, but they could make nothing of him. But now, to pass on to another year, leaving the old corner behind, with its hard times and happy hours and well-tried friends.

#### LAST CHRISTMAS.

Christmas found me in a bright modern Hospital, with its pretty Wards, the colouring of the walls contrasting well with the red-striped coverlets and dainty screens.

I had never been such a Santa Claus in my life before. All the night of Christmas Eve found me, as Night Sister, here, there, and everywhere, placing round presents for the patients, packets of tea, sugar, butter, &c., filling stockings where the little ones had hung them out (one small boy borrowed a huge one from the biggest man in the Ward, and another urchin hung out *two*). Then there were presents for the Nurses to put round ready for breakfast; then sundry little gifts of ferns, &c., left in my charge to carry round as I woke the Nurses up.

Then, not very wisely, I am afraid, I went off to early service. Even that undesirable part of London looked picturesque, with the stars just disappearing in the morning light. I would not advise anybody else to try a morning service after a busy night, for I know how bad I felt before hurrying back again for the morning meal.

Then, while all over England bells were ringing to service, families, united again for that one day, were trooping to church, we slept soundly after our night's work, getting up after a few hours to join the Nursing Staff at dinner. Then there came carol singing in the Wards, for which the young Nurses had been practising before bedtime for a week or two before. Very pretty it sounded as the little band of them stood

in the centre of each Ward in turn. The Sisters took care of the small children, carrying them from Ward to Ward, so that the little ones could enjoy the carols several times over. I had a small Harry—such a quaint little fellow, about six, too heavy for me to carry up the stairs, but there was always someone ready to take him. He would nestle in my arms during the singing, just saying, "That's the one I likes best—when 'Good King Wencelaus' came."

The singing over, the Nurses had to get on with their evening work. Our little band of Night Nurses, whose duties were not yet, kept together round the piano in the sitting-room.

I knew that a welcome awaited me only half-an-hour away, where in a sweet home circle they waited to light the Christmas tree to see if "Auntie Maggie" would turn up, till it was nearly bed-time for the two small boys. But the Night Sister felt her place was with those young Nurses that day, most of whom were feeling what it meant to be absent from home for the first time.

But the chief festival day was a few days after Christmas, when a stage was put up in our Ward, and visitors came, and Father Christmas too. There was quite a concert for the men in the Accident Ward, and everybody from the Ward above came downstairs, bed and cot and all if unable to get up for the evening. Just three or four had to be left up; but they were not forgotten. Father Christmas, in his flowing red and ermine robes, found his way there and brought his gifts.

Upstairs there was an expectant circle waiting for the entertainment to begin. Among them my small Harry and another little Harry, with large black eyes and long dark eyelashes—both boys to pass away before another Christmas should come round.

But at least they enjoyed *that* day. There was my Harry whom nothing would content but that he must be allowed to nurse the baby; so at last we sat him on the floor and put the baby girl in his arms, where he jealously guarded her, patting and rocking her in the prettiest, most old-fashioned way. After that the Sister of his own Ward left him with me, telling him she must go and see how the work was going on, whereupon he said emphatically, "Bother the work!" He was then content to sit on my knee, and when I had to be elsewhere once, he graciously consented to remain with one of our visitors of that evening, the young mother of those two small boys who had expected Auntie Maggie on Christmas Day, and who had now come to see our festivities. She, too, has learned by heart-felt experience what it means to give up her little ones to Him who gave them.

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