

to greet me with a kindly welcome. Bunches of holly and ivy, mingled together in friendly fashion, were twined round the massive pillars in the Ward, and there were vases filled with lovely flowers scattered about almost everywhere. Several of the convalescent patients were standing about, dressed in their paper caps and aprons from the crackers, and wherever I looked I could see nothing but happy faces.

I arrived too late for the tea, but the graphic description I received from the patients about it showed me how much it had been enjoyed. One little girl's remark concerning it was short, but to the point. "Oh, it was nice!" she said; "we had two different kinds of cakes." The Christmas-tree was placed upon a large table, in the middle of the Ward, and all the beds were moved as close as possible to one another, so that everyone should have as good a view as could be obtained. The women thoroughly enjoyed the fun quite as much as the children did, and eagerly they all waited for their turn to receive the present numbered for them. There were all sorts of presents—toys and dolls for the children, and more useful ones for the women, such as purses and needle-cases. Everyone had some remembrance; mine was a little china doll, which I shall always keep among my treasures. One girl in the Ward had lost the use of one of her hands, and had undergone an operation to have a new nerve put into it. She was for ever questioning the Doctors and Nurses as to where the nerve had come from, and to tease her they used to say it had been taken from a monkey; so her delight and amusement need hardly be described when she was presented with a little fur monkey from the Christmas-tree. After the gifts had all been disposed of, the Probationers from the Nightingale Home came to sing Christmas carols to the patients.

It is an old-established custom in St. Thomas's for the Probationers to sing carols in every Ward of the Hospital on Christmas Day, and as they wended their way up and down the long flights of stairs, from one Ward to another, all the Nurses who were off duty followed to listen to the carols. A kind friend of mine connected with the Hospital was so anxious for me to enjoy myself that he procured the services of a good-natured student, who undertook to work the lifts, and he wheeled me in my chair into nearly all the Wards so that I could hear the singing that was going on. We had a great many journeys up and down in the lifts; but we were a very merry party, and enjoyed the excitement of the situation.

It was a wonderful sight to see so many of the Nursing Staff as I did that day. Dressed in the

cleanest of print gowns, and with their snowy white aprons and caps, the Nurses made a pleasant picture for anyone to look at. There was not one among them who looked unhappy; they all appeared to be enjoying the holiday, and there were several very pretty faces to be seen. One especially I remember, a tall fair girl with a most lovely face. She was so pretty that I could not refrain from looking at her as she sat talking to another Nurse, and when presently she came across and spoke a few words to me I thought that the patients she had charge of must almost like to be ill, simply to be cared for by anyone so sweet.

It was a very happy day that I spent, and all my life long I shall look back with pleasure to it. It was nearly ten o'clock before the lights were lowered and order once more restored, and as I left the Alexandra Ward to go back to my own I could hear the voices of the patients gradually growing less and less as they sang their evening hymn to God. I lay awake till late that night thinking over my day's enjoyment, and as I tossed about in my bed, wishing I could sleep, these beautiful words, written by Harriet King, came into my mind:—

"God gives His angels charge of those who sleep,
But He Himself watches with those who wake."

Many of my readers will know what it is to lie awake, night after night, through a long tedious illness, counting the hours as they long for sleep to come. To a sleepless person the night seems almost interminable, as if it were never coming to a close; and it is at night, too, that such curious thoughts come into the mind, thoughts that perhaps all the day have been lying dormant for want of an opportunity to find their way into the mind.

At this time of the year, with Christmas so near at hand, there must be many sufferers lying on their bed of pain, and thinking to themselves, "Christmas is so near, but of what use is it to me? Here I am, ill and helpless, and I can do no one any good; I am only a trouble and a burden to those around me. No one can feel so miserable as I do." But if God is watching Himself with those sufferers in their loneliness at night, He will surely send the thought into their minds that wherever they are, and no matter how ill they may feel, it is not a difficult task to look a little further on, and find there is good to be done to some other sufferer, who has perhaps even a heavier burden still to carry.

Some writer tells us that the best remedy in the world for depression of the mind is to do a kind action to someone, and just now there is so much to be done by sending money or gifts for the Christmas entertainments at the Hospitals.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)