

THE
BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING
WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,446

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1915.

Vol. LV.

EDITORIAL.

CHRISTMAS IN WAR TIME.

Christmas in War time. The very words are a contradiction. The essence of the Christmas message is peace and good will, the very crown and centre of the picture is the Prince of Peace. What wonder then that we are turning over in our minds in what manner we can possibly reconcile the two things—Christmas and War.

A great deal is heard of "Christmas as usual." As if it could be as usual, when there are few homes on which the shadow has not fallen, and many where the light is forever eclipsed in this world.

No, it can't be as usual, that is very clear.

If our own home has been spared so far—we cannot turn a deaf ear to the deep sighing of the nation. Surely, the Festival this year makes a special appeal to us, to try to learn, if we have never learned it before, the beautiful lesson of unselfishness.

Some of us who can look back on many a Christmas spent in hospital, have to confess that since those days it has never had quite the same flavour. We ask ourselves why?

From the close of the very early service, perhaps at 5 a.m., to the moment when we crept to bed, with aching feet, we had not known a moment we could call our own. Our letters lay unopened on our desk. We had not been able to join the multitudes singing the Christmas hymns in Church. As for time-honoured dinner of turkey and plum pudding, it was not to be thought of for the nursing staff till some later date.

Yet those were the happiest Christmases we ever knew. The reason is not far to seek. We had no time for self.

Here, surely, is the solution of the problem of a War Christmas. With the raging of the nations and its consequent calamity on all sides, this is no year for personal self-indul-

gence, and if we seek it we shall indeed find the Christmas fare as the Apples of Sodom between our teeth.

Lest we seem to have struck a depressing note, we affirm most emphatically that we are not downhearted in our outlook. Happy those whose duty lies in ministering to the sick. There is Tommy, bless him, to be nursed back to health. On Christmas Day he must be made to forget the thunder of the guns, and the misery of the trenches. We must be the sunshine to his poor blind eyes, the prop of his once splendid physique. We must give ourselves wholly to the task of seeing that he does not look back into the horror, or forward to his maimed future. Christmas Day must be happy for him, as happy as our power of sympathy can make it. We, whose own hearts are perhaps sore with loss, shall find our consolation in seeing him united once more to his friends.

Further there are the prisoners in the enemy's hands. What are we doing about them? It is quite impossible that we can ever repay them for their heroic work. We are their debtors always. But have we insured that at least one prisoner shall have a parcel during the Christmas season? There are few who cannot do that, and it would mean much to some lonely man, for beyond the intrinsic value of the gift, it carries the assurance of remembrance.

And then, our little sick children. No one would wish them to be deprived for one single year of Santa Claus coming down the chimney. While their delighted laughter rings through the ward, Daddy is perhaps lying cold and stiff on the battlefield. Let them laugh while they may. Next year they will be back in their squalid homes, and the "Christmas when I was in the 'orspital," only a lovely memory.

Carlyle furnishes us with our Christmas motto for this year: "Man can do without happiness, and find instead thereof blessedness."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)