

women brave and true, how easy to follow their high example, to emulate their unselfish devotion and pureness of living. Amid the distractions of the world, even in our unsophisticated Cumbrian valley, how was it possible to attain to such perfection?

Oh! dear, dear Jean, as if any other woman on earth could be nearly as good and beautiful as you are!

I have promised to tell you every detail, and I will do so. I arrived at the gates of the Hospital at seven p.m., and was directed by a porter to drive round to the door of the Nursing Home. I obeyed, and rang the bell with a gentle and nun-like touch. My modest appeal was futile. I repeated the experiment a second, and yet a third, time, giving it a good tug by way of a change; and by-and-by I overheard two strident female voices issuing from the area in loud and amicable converse.

"H'Ann! Do you 'ear that there bell?"

"I ain't deaf, if you are!" answers H'Ann.

"Then, why don't yer h'answer it?"

"'Cos it's only another of them everlasting guinea-pigs a-coming and a-going—'ere to-day, and gone to-morrow. This place is no better than a great rampaging h'overgrown hotel."

(Jean, have you ever thoroughly appreciated the musical burr and poetical idiom of true Cumbrian dialect? If not, come at once, and converse with H'Ann.)

A minute later the door is whisked open by that young person, and I innocently inquire if the Matron is within? H'Ann smiles—a broad, fat, knowing smile—and slowly closes one eye. She moves one step forward, and points with dignity across the quadrangle towards a semi-detached house, where the windows are lined with dainty laces, and flowers bloom gaily on every ledge.

"Our Matron resides in that there mansion," she says, with a grandiose air. "If you want to see her, you must request a audience through 'Ome Sister, and you will be seen in the h'office. It's quite like Royalty." And, with a sniff, she admits me, proceeds upstairs without further ado, and shows me my bedroom—No. 86. Would that I could say with Touchstone, "A poor thing, but mine own!" But, alas! *two* beds, ranged side by side, proclaim it the abode of another as well as myself.

"'Ome Sister is h'out," I am now informed; "and she says, will you please to unpack and put on your uniform, and come down to supper at nine. And she wishes to speak to you before you go to bed."

"Before you go," I begin, suavely, "may I ask you the meaning of a hospital guinea-pig?"

H'Ann gives me another contemptuous glance,—which says plainly, "How fresh and green you are!" and then vouchsafes in explanation—

"A guinea-pig is a paying Pro. There's two sorts of Pros.: them as pays a guinea a week, and them as doesn't. There's good of both sorts, I make no doubt," she continued, magnanimously; "but, for my part, I ain't partial to 'guineas'; they're so unsettling—'ere to-day and gone to-morrow—for all the world like all them lost pins, as is a miracle where they all go to. Supper is at nine sharp, miss. "And the communicative damsel slams my door, and departs.

I open the window wide, and draw a deep breath. Somehow I fail to find the atmosphere of the place as balmy and odoriferous, either physically or morally, as I had anticipated.

I hear a lark singing. Joyous sound! I pop my head out of the window, and glance skywards, and listen; but the sound comes not from the direction of the sun—and is joy the note of its music? Rather, is it not lifting up its tremulous voice in a great outburst of passionate pent-up sorrow? I see it—poor cageling!—suspended to a hook on the wall, outside the Matron's great bay window.

N.B.—Jean, some day, *that cage will be found empty.*

I proceed to unpack, and place your photograph in a prominent position on the top of my little chest of drawers, where we can say "good morning" to one another when first I wake up; then I untie my little hamper of flowers, and place the jasmine and French honeysuckle and roses in my tooth-glass before the shrine, and am startled to hear a clock chime nine—almost simultaneously the loud clanging of a bell. Then, suddenly, I hear a fluttering of skirts, an eager pattering of feet; and, upon going into the corridor, I see numbers of Nurses, like a flock of doves, in their mauve and white uniform, flying down the stairs, and add one to their number by following in their wake.

Oh, Jean! thrifty little housewife, dainty danner of worn linen, queen polisher of glass and plate, magician of toothsome and delectable cakes—would that you could see the refectory of the G. E. H. A long, low, and dingy room, along the whole length of which are ranged two narrow tables, on which (at irregular intervals) plates of seed-cake, cut in large hunches, are scattered; cloudy tumblers, greasy knives and plates, on the edges of which a liberal supply of yesterday's mustard yet remains. A domestic directs me to a chair at the left hand of a Sister who heads the table, and who, after repeating a rapid grace, takes a survey of the table, and murmurs a deprecating "Hush!" which is

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