

LETTERS FROM LIFE.—No. 7.

Nursing Home,
Great Eastern Hospital.

DEAREST JEAN,—After prayers, Nurse Damian comes to me and teaches me to read the clinical thermometer; then she places it in the axilla of my patient, and shows me how to hold his arm, so that the temperature of his body may be taken accurately. He is so weak, poor fellow, he just lies like a log. At the end of five minutes I remove it, and Nurse Damian kindly comes again and hears my lesson, and seems quite pleased that I have benefited by her instruction, and can tell her the correct record. Then she shows me how to chart it, and laughingly says: "I shan't teach you any more secrets to-day, or to-morrow you will imagine yourself a thoroughly trained Nurse. Feed your patient every hour with three ounces of milk and a teaspoonful of brandy, and keep a close watch, as he has suffered with repeated hemorrhages. I will come from time to time, when I can snatch a minute, and superintend matters." All this, Jean, you may think quite natural, but, I assure you, could you have seen the work that girl got through between seven and nine a.m., you would wonder at her kindness and composure. You know my faculty for observation, and this is the work she accomplished in two hours. With the help of a Probationer she made eleven beds; washed—and did it conscientiously—seven helpless patients; swept a Ward of 60ft. from end to end; made and applied six poultices; filled four hot-water bottles; prepared two inhalers; dressed a blister; and prepared several dressings for cases of skin disease; the Probationer meanwhile doing the dusting and washing of locker-tops and giving round the lunches—hot milk, or beef tea and bread. I notice that Sister begins at bed No. 1, and makes a systematic round of the Wards, speaking to each patient, as she gives medicines and takes their temperatures; and as she enters our Ward she holds a bundle of thermometers in her hand. By 9.30 the Ward is in order, and several Students drop in and quietly attend to their business, taking notes, &c.

By-and-by I see a pretty, old woman coming towards me, so noiselessly and gently, as if she feared to disturb the inmates of the Ward; as she nears me, I see her sweet old eyes fixed longingly on No. 26. I am seated in a chair, facing my patient; she comes up softly to the other side

of the bed, and without any words or visible emotion, beyond the dim sorrow in her eyes, stands looking down on him. I know by instinct that this is the mother's face that is to teach me the responsibility of my work—a suffering, deeply-lined face, which is full of the beauty of *feeling*—a pathetic figure, old, bent, and poverty-stricken, and yet scrupulously clean and modest, in spite of her well-worn attire. I am impelled to rise, and she turns her inquiring gaze upon me.

"He is better," I hasten to assure her; "he has had quiet sleep, and is taking more nourishment."

"He is my only son—all I have in the world; surely, surely God will not take him from me," she whispers piteously, her tired eyes filling with tears. "I owe him a great atonement; if he dies, I can never repay, never repay," and seeing I am grieved for her, she goes on disjointedly: "We have seen better days. Long ago we came from Cornwall, and my poor husband broke down; no work; much sorrow. I was left in this great city with the lad. I toiled for him, and fed him, and sent him to school, and got work at a brewery for him, and thought I was doing well by him but all the time I was killing him. Oh, Nurse when he was quite a little chap, he would stand at the open door in our dull street, and look up at the murky sky and cry to himself softly, and then he would call out, 'Mother, mother, I'm choked; let us go away, far away where trees and flowers grow; the sky is blue out there, mother; I want to breathe,' and I would shake my wooden head, and answer, 'This is home and we must eat.' So the years went by, and when the boy had a holiday he would leave home early and return late, with a beautiful bloom on his face, and such shining eyes, his hands full of flowers. It was always the same tale—he'd been in the country; it was springtime, and the woods were all abud, and little flowers peeping, and the nestlings were piping; or summer had come, and the woods were all shady and the roses abloom; and then the year was on the wane, with gold leaves falling, and purple heather on the hills; and even in winter the tale was the same—the boy found treasures where no other could find them. And one day, when he was fourteen, Rob was missing. Late at night he came home, his arms full of ferns and great leaves and flowers, and though footsore, full of joy, he had tramped mile upon mile; and that night he knelt at my knee and poured out his heart, and said, 'Mother, I want to live amongst the flowers. I want to take these pink roses and

Mr. and Mrs. GERMAN REED'S ENTERTAINMENT.—"Possession," by Walter Browne, Music by Alfred J. Caldicott, followed by Mr. Corney Grain's latest Musical Sketch, entitled, "Dinners and Dinners." Monday, Wednesday, Friday, at Eight; Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, at Three.—Stalls, 5s., 3s.; Admission, 2s. and 1s.—St. George's Hall, Langham Place.—"Killiecrumper" will be played next week.

DISPOSE OF THE DEAD AS NATURE DIRECTS.—Everyone interested in the reform of funeral abuses should read the brochure published by the London Necropolis Company. It can be had gratis of the Secretary, 2, Lancaster Place, Strand, or 188, Westminster Bridge Road.

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