

A CHRISTMAS TREE AT THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL.

It was a sunny afternoon in January, and at a small hospital for children with hip-disease everything looked gay and bright, for it was the day the children were to have their Christmas tree.

Perhaps you have never been inside a hospital! I had not until that day, so I will tell you how it looked.

When we arrived we were met at the door by the matron, a pleasant cheerful looking person, dressed in a dark serge dress with large collar and cuffs, and a pretty quaint cap which made her look quite picturesque. I explained that I had brought a few presents for the Christmas tree, and showed her my parcels. She smilingly told me the little hospital was quite full of visitors come on the same errand, and that the tables were covered with toys of all sorts for the sick children, who were just going to have tea, after which the tree would be unveiled. She led me straight to them, and I had never pictured any room in a hospital looking so bright and happy as this, although I must say a great lump seemed to rise in my throat at the sight of so many sweet little children called upon to bear such a burden of pain and sickness.

There were two large rooms, and the folding doors between had been removed; in one half of the opening two tall screens were arranged in a circle, from the centre of which peeped the top of the tree, and there were little shouts of delight heard now and then from the expectant children as one of the "sisters" disappeared behind the screen with more and more parcels brought by fresh arrivals.

The little beds were arranged in two rows in each room, all facing the mysterious screens; each had a pretty scarlet quilt, and was occupied by a little child in a white night-dress and scarlet flannel jacket, their faces beaming with pleasure, and the excitement making some of them look as bright and rosy as if there was nothing the matter; but at the foot of each little bed hung the suspended weight that told the reason of their being in the hospital.

Perhaps you do not know that generally when children have hip-disease, it is necessary that the leg

should be kept perfectly straight and stretched out, to prevent its shrinking and becoming shorter than the other, so a heavy weight is attached to it by means of a cord, and happily after a time the children seem scarcely to feel it, though we, who are strong and well, could scarcely bear for even a day to lie in bed quite still with a weight dragging at our foot all the time.

Tea was being carried round to all the little beds, with plenty of nice cake and buns. While this was going on I was attracted by a very white, wan, little face, with large sad blue eyes, intently fixed on visitors

just coming in, and looking round I saw a lady I knew with her two little girls, Effie and Rose La Touche; they were pretty children, with golden hair falling on their velvet frocks, and Effie had a little bunch of early snowdrops in her belt; they each carried a basket of fruit and cakes, and seeing my poor invalid's eager look I beckoned them to bring him some; but it was the children themselves that delighted him, and above all the sight of Effie's snowdrops—he would not look at either tea, cakes, or fruit, so engrossed was he with my little friends, and when Effie unpinned her flowers and gave them to him, his poor thin hands were stretched forth eagerly to grasp both flowers and pin, that he might fasten them on his little red jacket.

I left the children talking to him while I asked one of the "sisters" about

him, and was told that he was Willie Mather, the only child of a poor widow, and alas! that he was so ill that the good doctor gave no hope of his recovery.

I could tell you more about him, but as I am limited in the length of my story I must pass on and return to his bedside, where, in a husky, feeble voice, he was talking eagerly to Rose and Effie, and they had promised they would come the next visiting day (which at the hospital was every Wednesday) and bring him all the snowdrops they could find in their own little gardens.

Just then the screens were withdrawn, and the Christmas tree appeared in all its glory, covered with twinkling lamps, golden balls, and all kinds of pretty

