

THE CRUTCH.

U. S. A. GEN'L HOSPITAL, DIV. 1, SATURDAY, JAN. 9, 1864.

Debut and Prospectus.

In making our first appearance among the great throng of the public journals of the day, it is incumbent upon us to say why we appear, and so give some idea of what we have in view in so appearing—in other words, it is expected of us to display our prospectus, and give the course we purpose pursuing, and then we may have the privilege of asking of a discerning and generous public, a support equal to what it may deem commensurate with the merit of our effort.

In the first place therefore, it is our intention to make the CRUTCH a general directory of all the Hospitals of the Medical Department of Annapolis; to give a general outline of the localities of the offices, and officers connected with the post; the commander, officers in charge of the different Hospitals, and the different boards that may be in session at the time of publications, or in prospect of convention.

We purpose it shall contain a complete register of all officers, and men, admitted to this Hospital for treatment; of all who return to duty; of all who are discharged from services; of all who leave on furloughs; and of all deaths. It will contain also, all circulars, and orders, in relation to furloughs, and leaves of absence; and other circulars, and orders, of general interest, either emanating from this Hospital or this department. In a word, it is our intention to make it a complete HOSPITAL GUIDE for residents or strangers visiting the Hospital, as well as for persons who have friends in, or business with the Hospitals of this district, to enable them to see at a glance, what course will be necessary, in furtherance, either of the object of their visit or communication.

In the second place we desire to make it as far as practicable, a literary and current NEWS JOURNAL. In addition to editorials, it will contain, original contributions, and communications, and selections from the best authors, as well as copious extracts from the *Knapsack*, a literary and humorous paper, edited by the Ladies in connection with the VANDERKIEFT Literary Association of this Hospital, and from other public journals, and a summary of the best news, and the operations of the army.

Thirdly, we desire to make it also beneficial to the soldier personally, by relieving the tedium of a Hospital life, by giving variety to its monotony; by strengthening his interest for good reading, and producing subjects for thought and consideration; and by eliciting, and encouraging his intellectual powers, by offering an opportunity to display them. And lastly, but not the least worthy of notice—we desire to make it a source of pleasure and satisfaction to his friends at home, by giving them constant evidence of his safety, and, at least, the temporal providences that surround him.

It will be seen then that we have a very extensive field before us; and object in view—an object of information, interest and guidance to the public at large—an object of benefiting the soldiers in the Hospital; and an object of pleasure and satisfaction to his friends at home.

To sum up—we hope to make it a readable paper—fit for the fireside or the field—comprehensive as well to the young as to the old—and eminently worthy of the confidence, encouragement, and support that we now ask for it.

The Knapsack.

This is a paper edited by the noble corps of Lady Nurses connected with the Hospital at Annapolis, Division No. 1, under the charge of Surgeon B. A. VANDERKIEFT. It is the paper read before the Lyceum in this Hospital at their regular meetings held weekly on Tuesday evenings.

The editors of the CRUTCH are kindly permitted to select any articles they may choose for publication. We shall often avail ourselves of this privilege. The papers which we have heard read show that many of the contributors are ably qualified to write for the improvement and entertainment of all who attend the meetings of the Lyceum.

From the Knapsack.

A Letter From "Santa Klaus."

MISS EDITRESS:—Having returned to my home, after my yearly visit to the earth, and during my stay there, having witnessed some sights which wonderfully pleased my fancy, I cannot consider my Christmas labors ended, till I write you a few lines, expressing my pleasure at the "Merry Christmas" passed in your Hospital.

Arriving at Annapolis on the 21st, I had ample opportunity for seeing all the great preparations for the memorable 25th. One evening as I was passing your Chapel door, I was attracted by the busy sounds within, and entering slyly, perched myself on the organ, where I could watch the proceedings and not be seen. On the floor, in the centre of the hall, were seated a dozen young ladies and gentlemen "*à la Turc*," busily engaged in covering long ropes with a variety of evergreens. There appeared to be something in the employment eminently amusing, for occasionally loud bursts of laughter issued from the young men, accompanied by a feminine response from the ladies. I could not see the particular object of their mirth, but could not refrain from indulging in a smile, for it really gladdened my old heart to see so much hilarity and hear a hearty laugh. Every one appeared to be busy, except a few young men, who seemed to enjoy the society of the ladies more than their work, and really, Miss Editress, I could not blame them. I watched the decoration of your Chapel until its completion, and having had considerable experience in such matters can truly say that I have never seen anything that surpassed it; and when, on Christmas eve, I attended divine service, and saw the appropriate sentence:—"*Let every thing that hath breath, praise the Lord*," on the panneling of the gallery, and the bright smiling faces that surmounted it, it filled my heart with gratitude, and I thanked God that I was again permitted to hear:—"*While the shepherds watched their flocks by night*," beautifully sung by more beautiful singers.—The text—"*Peace on earth, good will to men*," met with an undeniable "*Amen*" from the bottom of my heart.

After the services, I wended my way in the direction of Section 3, from whence issued sounds of music and mirth. As I entered Ward A, my ears were greeted with—"*Ladies to the night*," "*Allemande left*," "*Eight hands round*," and certainly, I never saw soldiers obey orders more promptly than on this occasion. The Ladies, too, advanced and retreated with the skill of veterans; every countenance was smiling, and all seemed to consider the whole affair a decidedly rich joke. On inquiring of a bystander the meaning of it all, he informed me that it was a Social Assembly, given by the Surgeon in charge to the inmates of the Hospital; and I have no doubt, but that he was amply repaid for his trouble, when he saw how many hearts he had made glad. There may be a seeming inconsistency in my going from the Church to the Ball-room, but my creed, which is remarkably liberal, does not prohibit dancing, consequently I felt no compunctions of conscience. At two in the morning the dancers commenced to retire.—A curious looking young man lingered behind, and with him I formed an acquaintance. During our conversation he informed me that he belonged to the order of "*Knights of the Quill*." Having never heard of this order, and being somewhat curious on the subject, I accepted his invitation to pass the rest of the night among the fraternity. He escorted me to a couple of buildings apart from the Hospital, and with great ceremony ushered me into the presence of a dozen young men of literary appearance and *Sanitary* habiliments. I was greatly amused with their performances, and have come to the conclusion that it must have been the Hospital Menagerie. Those clerks are a jolly set of fellows, with a decided talent for double-shuffles and raw oysters.—The next morning

"Aurora called us precisely at seven,
And swept all the clouds from the face of the heaven."

Never was there a more propitious day for a "*Merry Christmas*." One by one the *Knights* came dancing in to breakfast, and one by one retired. Bidding adieu to the noble order, I started on a tour of inspection through

the Hospital. My limited time prevented me from seeing all the beautiful decorations in the different wards, and I trust no one will take offence if I fail to notice their particular departments. The upper portion of Section 1, was certainly beautiful, and I held my breath as I entered what seemed to be a second Arcadia. It made such an impression on my mind that when I emerged into the cold air, everything appeared bleak and desolate.—Passing on to the General Office, I stopped in, hoping to catch a glimpse of Dr. VANDERKIEFT, but he was out, and on his door was posted a notice, saying: "*Gone to Merry Christmas*."

The Chapel next demanded my attention, as I wished to see it by daylight. I shall not attempt a description, as the contrast between it and the reality would be too great. I particularly noticed the National emblem over the arch which was artistic and elegant, and coupled with the holier symbol above it, the effect was grand.

The large building in Section 2, was so beautifully decorated, that I can think of no adjective to express my admiration. When the English language was established, it was not known that such perfection in the art of decoration could be attained, consequently a great deficiency exists therein, and the beauty of these wards can never be known, till N. P. WILLIS coins a few words apropos.

At one o'clock I arrived at Section 5, and after admiring the numerous adornments, particularly the "*Goddess of Liberty*," on one of the tents, I approached the dinner table, occupying the whole of ward G, to witness the preparations. Every one was running to and from the kitchen, and though the idea of perpetual motion always seemed to me absurd, yet the manner in which one lady bustled about, fully convinced me that such a thing was possible. Surely I never saw a table more tastefully arranged. Epicurus himself, could not have wished for daintier dishes. But the part I most enjoyed was seeing the food vanish, when the crippled veterans commenced eating. Standing at the head of the table, where I could take in the whole at a glance, I witnessed some wonderful feats of legerdemain. Such a conglomeration of tin plates and humanity, was never known before. Some one with a wilder imagination than mine, must describe it. I left the tents with confused ideas of cold turkey and perpetual motion running through my brain, and entered Ward C, Section 3, where I was politely received by Maj. ANDERSON, (not the one of Sumter notoriety, but one equally patriotic,) and here I found the "*chef-d'œuvre*" of decoration. It certainly reflected great credit upon the taste and skill of the Major. I was pleased at reading on the wall the sweeping, comprehensive motto:—"*The world is my home, to do good is my religion*." If the civilized portion of mankind would adopt this, as their creed, throwing aside their narrow, fixed and peculiar ideas, what a different world we should have. Opposite this, was another motto, reading:—"*Owe no man anything but love*." Exactly what that good Christian, Tom Hood, would have said.

You say, "Sir Andrew, with his love of law,"
And I, "the Saviour with his law of love."

I wished to visit the Mess Hall, but 'twas getting late, and I had other duties to perform. The good boys and girls of the North must be remembered, their stockings filled and all made happy. I left Annapolis with a merry heart, rejoicing that your brave boys were enjoying a merrier Christmas. Wish them, from me, a "*Happy New Year*," and with love to all, believe me,

Truly yours,
SANTA KLAUS.

We acknowledge the receipt of many valuable stores from the Sanitary and Christian Commissions for use in behalf of the patients in this Hospital. These noble organizations deserve the aid of all the loyal in our country. The work which they are doing will form one of the wonders that shall mark the pages of history in all time.

Boasting is sometimes out of place. We were once amused at hearing a gentleman remark that he was a bachelor, as was his father before him.