

" Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand."

Which tempts one to exclaim, "Care! what care can there be in a large Institution, where, if a cistern is wrong a blue paper need only be sent to Mr. —? If the butcher has not the required joint, at least the Sister has not to supply the deficiency; something will be forthcoming out of those capacious tins. As to blankets, after the sorting, nothing is seen of them till returned sweet and clean." Yet surely my brain must have played me false that afternoon, if in addition to these shades it did not recall some at least of the *endless* lights and sunny bits that occur in a Cottage Hospital. So precious, reminding one of the gold dust. Kindly acts and words, that from the condition of things cannot happen so readily in a large Hospital. That Christmas morning, when so busy helping with the finishing touches for dinner, being startled by a gruff voice, "I heerd you waur throng, so come round." Then the owner of the voice appeared at the window—a rough-looking lad, "but handsome is as handsome does," say I; and J— having been a patient for months, knew the ways of the place and was a real help. The same Doctor who made such a ruthless visit leaving—literally dropping over the wall—a luscious bunch of grapes for the flock, one day, when driving by.

The wonderful plum-pudding, made with the assistance of Tommy, Dicky, and Timothy Titus, and Daddie, all with histories of their own.

Poor Y—, who was dying for months, but did not want to go out—"he would liefer die here; it was homelike." Old X—, "who reckoned, when he mended, with his bit of pension he could set up a donkey and go errands for us; then when badly maybe we would tend him." Ah! right gladly would we, brave old soldier, and the morning he died, so glorious was mother earth, decked in her mantle of frost and snow, that we did not attempt making a way to the mortuary, but let him lie in the room, though we made a sally forth for holly and ivy to put round him; and on looking in later found a robin red-breast perched on his grey hair.

The games of bagatelle—such exciting matches between Sister's and Nurse's side for a cake.

And last, but not least, Christmas Day, with its sequel—the party. No mere line would half convey what that season of seasons is in a Cottage Hospital. First, we have to go back to rainy days in October, when sundry and amusing devices are cut out from a private store of material of Sister's.

Then when December 22 arrives, the excitement occasioned by the loads of evergreens coming. The work of decorating in itself deserves a chapter.

At last comes Christmas Eve, bringing a bonny plump turkey and fowls from the home farm of

his Grace the Duke of ——. The same kind donor having expressed a wish that the bills for whatever else was needed for dinner should be sent to him, imparted a wonderful cheerfulness to the preparations. Matron able to rejoice that, for one day out of the three hundred and sixty-five, the amount consumed need not be a matter of anxiety. At an early hour on Christmas morning a few forms, not in strict uniform, might be seen stealing downstairs to the day-room. Then suddenly the beautiful words of the "Adeste" were heard for the benefit of the Matron, and those patients who would not be able to take part in the services of the day. After a while all is activity, those who are able and care to do so going to either the seven or eight a.m. services.

Then the inevitable work, finishing touches to decorations, laying of the dinner table in the large Ward, dessert being a special item, provided with the other good things. What matter if the chief ornament consisted of the mustard barrel? The arrangement of holly and crackers round it, surmounted by a sugared cake, rendered it one Gunter himself might envy. One needed but to remember that nuts do not form part of regular Hospital diet to understand that nut-crackers are not included in the furniture; hence the need of sundry flat irons skilfully wreathed with ivy. The mysterious pink and blue envelopes at each place; the round table covered with letters. At last the great moment arrives, and dinner is served, all—Matron, Probationers, and patients—dining together. Who could forget the intense excitement that prevailed when Matron, having disappeared, returned, bearing the plum pudding all ablaze? Of course, it was pure accident that caused the real silver sixpence to be in Dicky's piece of pudding. For the time being, that quite compensated for the loss of his poor little foot. After dinner, the distribution of letters. One wonders whether the letter-bag being kept so long in Matron's room had any connection with the singular fact that each one had a card in a stamped envelope, though certainly some of the dates were rather ancient.

Then the delightful afternoon, when some of the Medical Staff came to see the decorations. Four p.m., coffee and cake in proper afternoon-tea style; the arrival of a few special visitors—sad-eyed wife of one patient, grandmother of another, besides two or three lonesome old patients—rendering it quite a family gathering.

The evening opened with the wonderful game, "Quakers' Meeting," causing quite convulsive symptoms to appear in some cases. All the day various members of the party went to see poor Number Three, who could not join in the festivities, but it is really astonishing how many aches and

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