

"A Hospital Incident."

By MISS JESSIE CARGILL BEGG.

Sarah Smith's left leg had been swung in a Lawrence cradle for four weeks. To a lady of her temperament the position was, to say the least of it, unfortunate. The sense of helplessness weighed down her spirits and irritated her temper. She told John, her husband, that she might just as well have broken both her legs, it took as long to mend one as it would have done to mend two.

"Two plaits or one?" asked the staff nurse, as she combed out Sarah's thin grey locks one morning after breakfast.

Sarah sighed. The woman in the next bed thought it must have taken years of practice to learn to sigh like that. "I reckon it don't signify if it's one plait or two. I ain't seen my own fice for a month. I shall forget what I look like soon," she said drearily.

"I want you to look extra nice as it is visiting day," said Nurse Brown, as she selected two pieces of scarlet ribbon to tie up the ends of hair.

"Not scarlet," said Sarah faintly, "I'm feelin' that low I couldn't put up with a bright colour." She folded her faded pink shawl tightly round her shoulders. "I think wot I feels most, is not bein' able to get out of a draught even if I want to," she said plaintively, with a nervous glance at the window beside her.

Nurse Brown said she was surprised she could feel cold on such a warm day.

"I don't say as I'm cold *now*, but it would be all the sime if I was. There 'ave bin days when I've bin chilled to the marrer," retorted Sarah, with a glitter in her eyes that suggested forthcoming trouble.

Nurse Brown went quietly over and closed the window. Sarah sighed dismally when it was done. "I don't know as you've made it any better—the flies can't get out now—anythin' more maddenin' than that buzz, buzz, I don't know," she muttered.

The woman in the next bed uttered an impatient exclamation, and rolled over so that she might wither Sarah with a glance. "I reckon you'd 'ave bin better if they 'ad kep' you under a glaws kise," she said.

"There you're wrong. I don't want no one to think as I'm always complinin'. I ain't one of the worryin' sort. I only get riled when I'm crossed like I was this mornin' by that sorcy ward maid, puttin' drippin' on my bread an' makin' out it was butter," said Sarah, with some indignation.

Number Eight rolled her eyes up to the ceiling with a may-you-be-forgiven expression in them.

"I tell you what it is," went on Sarah, becoming more animated. "I've 'ad a lot to put up with since I come into this 'ospital. If John an' me 'adn't bin very redooiced, wild 'orses wouldn't 'ave druv me to do it. All my folks 'as bin reel respectable. My 'usband's mother never thinks of payin' less than one an' four a pound for butter—that 'ill show you they live in style. They 'ave a clock in every room, keeps two servants, an' a machine for cleanin' knives the're—"

"Reel toffs!" suggested Number Eight, with some show of interest.

Just then John arrived with a bunch of dahlias, and a bulging parcel, which he carried with great care.

"Dahlias again!" murmured Sarah.

"Why, I thought you liked 'em." John's honest face betrayed disappointment.

"Well, if you look carefully, you always find beasts in 'em," remarked Sarah, with an injured air.

John inquired if she had finished all the lemon drops he had brought her last Wednesday.

This was evidently a subject that ought to have been avoided.

Sarah pursed up her lips, and maintained absolute silence for the space of one minute, then she burst forth: "I can't think why you go gettin' them cheap lemon drops. Why, they went wrong the very next day—run all together somethin' shockin'."

"The 'eat of the ward," suggested John.

"It wasn't nothink to do with the 'eat. Py a proper price for 'em an' they'll last," said Sarah sternly. Her eyes travelled over John's person, and finally lit on the paper bag. "Wot's them, nuts?" she jerked out.

"A few noo laid eggs," replied John, betraying some nervousness.

"Eggs, but not noo laid," corrected Sarah. "Pr'aps before I die I may tiste a noo laid egg, but it ain't likely," she added pathetically.

"You ain't goin' to talk about dyin', seein' as you're gettin' on so nicely," said John. There was a mild reproof in his tone.

"Well, there's no sayin'. Number Ten was eatin' a slice of cold beef the other dy, an' she died afore they brought 'er the potatoes, there—"

There was a long pause, then John remarked that he had been knocking up a bookcase for the best parlour.

"Wiste of time. If you'd make me a pair o' crutches against my comin' out, it would be somethin' like," snapped Sarah.

John said it had never struck him that crutches would be required.

Sarah murmured something to the effect

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)