

laugh, her joyous, rippling laugh. "It's this way. When I heard the ambulance coming in the gateway I said a prayer to Our Lady for the patient in the wagon, and it happened to be you. I never hear the gong of an ambulance in the street or anywhere else that I do not say this prayer. It's a practice that my mother taught me."

The girl tore her hands away from the nun's embrace and spoke rudely. "I wish I could think as you do; but it's impossible!"

Something much like a sigh came from the compassionate lips of the little sister; but she uttered no word of reproach.

IT was five o'clock now, and that interminable walk was beginning to tell on the fragile little religieuse. Her companion, absorbed in her own troubles, did not think of the strain on the self-sacrificing one by her side. The sister's head began to ache furiously, her limbs were sore and swollen, her feet were like lead; but discipline and faith were performing their daily miracles, and there was always that compassionate smile on her face.

Half past five! She felt as if thirty minutes more would prostrate her. She had an intense desire to scream, and suppressed it. She became dizzy, her steps were unsteady. At that psychological moment she came opposite the electric bell. Her hand went forth instinctively. One tiny push, and she would be in the strong arms of her loving superior! But supernatural strength possessed the little nun. She cast aside the thought as though it was a temptation to sin. She drew herself up rigidly and marched on, victorious now as she had been a thousand times before.

A little later a new thought assailed her. Why not sit down and rest? The girl was all right. It was within twenty-five minutes of the time. What difference did a few minutes make one way or the other? As if to complete the conviction, the girl was heard voicing the first spark of unselfishness.

"You look ill. Why don't you rest for awhile?" She smiled gratefully; but shook her head. The silent monitor that had been her guide all her life had spoken. It said, "The doctor insisted that the girl should not sleep for six hours. You volunteered to keep her awake. To quit, even a minute before the time, would be to desert your post of duty cravenly." That was sufficient for the little sister. She might die; but she would never desert!

BUT the longest night has its morning. The bell in the neighboring towers struck six; the rattle of milk wagons and the increasing hum of life announced that the world without was beginning another day. The doctor and the sister superior came along the corridor together. The physician looked at the little nun and spoke in his sharp, snappy way.

"Dark rings under the eyes; general air of lassitude. If you don't get to bed at once and stay there until I give you permission to rise, I'll not be responsible for the consequences!"

He turned to the girl roughly and lifted up her eyelids and felt her pulse as though examining an animal. He wrote a prescription hastily and handed it to the superior. "Give her this. She's all right now. Send her about her business."

Her face was distorted with rage. She was turning on him fiercely, when she felt the soft hand of the little sister plucking at her dress.

"Don't mind him," she whispered. "It's only his manner. You may stay as long as you wish."

"I want to go now," she retorted sullenly. "I didn't come here by choice." She noticed the pained expression of the little sister's face and tried to soften her tone. "Don't look so sad. I'm not angry at you; but I hate that doctor. I hate everybody—except you!"

"Then you'll come to see me?"

"Yes," hesitatingly, "I'll come to see you."

"Come tomorrow."

"Oh," with a start at the thought of her rash promise, "I can't come tomorrow."

"Next Sunday, then?"

"No," doggedly, "not next Sunday."

"Well, promise me, please, that you'll come on my name day, the feast of Saint Cecilia. Don't say no. Our Lady never refuses me anything I ask on that day."

"I'll come," was the curt response, and the next minute the girl who had forgotten how to cry was down the steps and out of the building.

THE sister superior gave the little nun a maternal embrace and led her to her cell. "Do you feel all right, my child?"

The sister gave a wan smile.

"Wait a minute until I get you a bowl of beef tea. After that you may take a long rest."

The superior had scarcely left the room when outraged

nature asserted itself, and the little sister sank unconscious to the floor. When the older woman returned she beheld a heap of blue and black clothing surmounted by a cornet. There was a chafing of hands and a scurrying about, and the little victim of duty was soon restored to her normal condition. After that she was tenderly tucked in her bed, and sank into the dreamless slumber that brings perfect rest and refreshment.

At four o'clock the following morning the usual hospital routine was resumed; but the little sister could not drive from her mind the thought of the unfortunate one she had dragged from the brink of eternity. She spoke to the superior.

"Sister, did you study that girl?"

"I did."

"Do you think there's any hope for her?"

"Yes, on one condition. It's not the first case of the kind I have observed in my forty years in this hospital. She is hardened, embittered, and impenitent. If that condition continues, she'll try to forget herself in one excess after another, and the next dose of poison she takes will end all."

"Oh, please don't say that!"

"But if she can be softened she can be saved. The girl is not naturally vicious; my experience teaches me that. A good cry would be her salvation; it would be like the merciful rain that saves the parched fields from death."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" exclaimed the little sister. "And I let her leave me with a face as hard as a rock! Oh, how stupid and incompetent I am!"

"But, my child," smiled the superior, who loved the little nun more than she would ever admit, "you saved her life."

"Much good that will do her," retorted the other, "if she loses her soul!"

"But you gave her another chance," persisted the older woman. "You gave her her life, and where there is life there is always hope."

"That's true," responded the other, her eyes lighting up, "and if I ever get another chance I'll make her cry, even if I have to beat her to do it."

hands to emphasize her determination, "I'll make her cry before she leaves me!"

ON the feast of Saint Cecilia the girl who had forgotten how to cry made her way into the main entrance of the hospital. She wore a modish hat with two extravagant feathers stuck in the side. Her dress was stylish, her brows were penciled, and there were evidences of powder on her hardened cheeks. She strayed into the corridor and walked the length of the same hallway whence she had been literally dragged from the embrace of death. Presently she met an attendant.

"I want to see the sister."

"There are many sisters here."

"I want to see the little sister with the dark blue eyes."

The woman looked at her hesitatingly. The smile left her lips. She pointed to a double doorway midway down the corridor. "She's in there."

The girl hastened in that direction. She found the entrance guarded by a sober-faced nun. "I want to go in."

"Who are you?"

"I'm a friend of the little sister."

"I don't know that you can go in now."

"But I must see her. I had an appointment to meet her. She made me promise to be sure and come today."

The sister looked at her curiously. Her lips trembled. "Don't you know?" she asked.

The significance of the words escaped the girl. She turned to her questioner with old-time sullenness. "It's none of your business. I came here to see her. I hate everybody else!"

The other bowed her head and opened the door without further parley. The girl walked in.

FOR the moment she was dazed. After that she realized that she was in the chapel of the hospital. A dim light came from a few tapers on the altar. The pungent odor of incense was all about. Many dark-robed, kneeling figures were in the pews. The organ was playing a low, sad prelude. The girl instantly became resentful. She felt that she had been tricked. All the wilfulness of her nature came to the surface.

Suddenly her attention was attracted by a bulky, black object in the center of the aisle. She slowly realized that it was a catafalque. Her impulse was to leave the chapel at once; but some unseen power pulled her forward. Presently she reached the bier, and her unsuspecting glance fell upon the face and form of the little sister with the dark blue eyes.

How tranquil the dead nun looked, and how young! Her hands were fondly clasping the crucifix, the emblem of salvation, and from the pocket of her habit protruded the scroll that contained her vows, those vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience which had been kept so faithfully and so lovingly. The smooth, cold brow which had never been disfigured by a frown gave her countenance a look of ineffable serenity.

The girl who had forgotten how to cry gazed long and earnestly at the dead nun, gazed with dry eyes and hardened face and parched lips. But there was no detail of the silent religieuse that escaped her penetrating glance.

Those hands as white and as pure as the snow from Heaven and as graceful as the lilies of the valley, those hands that had reached down to lift many a poor sinner up from the mire, those hands that had smoothed the fevered brow and given drink to the burning lips,—those hands had gained repose at last and were gently folded for eternal rest.

Those lips, still flushed with a color of which death itself seemed helpless to rob them, those lips that had given kindly advice to so many poor sufferers, those lips that were never opened except to sound the praises of God or to speak in compassionate tones to the lowliest of His creatures, were stilled forever to the poor and unhappy of this world.

Those eyes, as soft and as blue as the sky itself, those eyes whose unfathomable depths were beyond the penetration of the worldly wise, those eyes that had shed love and charity on the unfortunate, were closed now in the sweet sleep that comes to the just.

The girl standing there became utterly oblivious of her surroundings. Two women were whispering at the door. Their words floated to the solitary spectator by the coffin. "Wasn't it sudden?"—"Very. She became infected when assisting at an operation, and died in two days."

The girl who had forgotten how to pray reached out her right hand and groped about until she touched the hem of the habit of the dead nun. She gave one last strained look at the serene countenance of the little sister with the blue eyes and, sinking to her knees, buried her hardened face in her jeweled hands, and gave way to an unrestrained flood of tears.



She Gazed with Dry Eyes and Hardened Face.

"Didn't you try when you had her?" asked the superior gently.

"Yes; but I'm afraid I didn't do it in exactly the right way," was the contrite reply. "I'm afraid I preached to her, and you know it's a terrible thing to have somebody preach at you."

"It must be," laughed the other, "especially if you are the preacher."

"She promised to come to see me on my name day, the feast of Saint Cecilia. Do you think she'll come?"

"I hope so."

"Well, if she does," and the little sister clenched her