

St. Cecilia of the Court

By ISABELLA R. HESS.

By special arrangement with the Publishers, The Fleming H. Revell Company, New York and London.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

She woke up as the car stopped, near the hospital, and clung to Jim's hand, as they walked up the path, with a new feeling of fear; and when they were shown into the little reception room, she stood up stiffly at his side, half afraid to sit on the other side of the room. Her big eyes took in every detail of the place, the tall clock ticking in the corner, the curious little paper-weight on the desk, the frontispieces of the magazines on the table. She bent down to whisper in Jim's ear, 'Ain't it awful clean?'

Then the doctor entered. Cecilia liked him at once, liked his cheery 'Good-morning,' liked the way he smiled at her, even liked his name, as he said, 'I am Dr. Hanauer, and I believe this is Mr. —, let me see, I believe I've forgotten it!' How could he have forgotten it, when the drug-clerk had told him that he didn't know the name?

Jim stood up, awkwardly, but with a certain dignity that he never forgot. 'My name is Belway, Jim Belway.'

Cecilia had never heard his full name before, and admired its sound. She was proud of Jim for the way he said it.

'And I believe you wish to go through the hospital?' The tone was kindly, but Cecilia fancied it rather implied a rebuke to Jim for coming. She lost her unusual shyness, and pushing her hair back with her old gesture, she said earnestly, 'It wasn't for himself he was comin'—it was for me! Puddin' is sick—he fell down-stairs—the doctor says it's his back that's hurted, and he ought to be took to the hospital. I won't let him be took to a hospital—they say they kill people there. Jim said as how he'd show me one, and so he brought me here. But he wasn't going to bother you for himself—Jim's awful good, he wouldn't. Honest!'

The doctor looked down into the honest eyes and saw clear to their depths, and he put his hand very kindly on her shoulders, and said, 'I will find it a pleasure to show you through. I am glad Mr. Belway came, and when I have shown you everything, maybe you will find a hospital pleasanter than you think.'

If the nurses, with their snowy caps and aprons, flitting so noiselessly about, thought it strange that Dr. Hanauer was playing guide, they did not say it; if any one thought it a strange sight, to see a thinly-clad, pinched little girl and as poorly-clad a man taking up the valuable time of the doctor of whom they all stood somewhat in awe, then neither Cecilia nor Jim ever guessed it. As they went from room to room, Cecilia's eyes grew wider and wider; she peered into every corner, she saw the spotless linens and the dainty trays, and even saw some patients who were smiling quite happily. She noticed too that Dr. Hanauer had a smile or word for each, and that the sick ones turned their heads to watch him as he went about.

Then they stepped into the elevator and were whisked to an upper floor; an elevator ride was a treat to Cecilia, and she was sorry when it ended,—but when they stepped across the hall, and into a great, sunny room beyond, she forgot the elevator, and took in every bit of the scene before her. About forty children were there, some tiny cooing ones in the nurses' arms, some larger ones building block houses, some little fellows with ugly crutches and crooked backs, and two or three who were simply sitting in their push chairs and smiling at the

rest. Through an open door, the Saint caught a glimpse of another room, with many little iron beds in it, and from there she could hear the sounds of childish voices.

Dr. Hanauer's gray eyes watched her face keenly—he had guessed that this would be most intense; he saw the big eyes grow darker, and saw how she held on to Jim's hand as if she did not want to let go of herself. She fastened her eyes on a little fellow about ten, who walked with a limp that showed hip disease, and whose back was bent painfully; she watched him bend over to pick up a ball, as if the movement hurt, but saw him smile cheerily as he threw it to another.

When the nurse who happened to be near him moved away, she calmly walked up to the child, and her clear voice rang through the room, as she asked, 'Say, are you here long?'

'Me?' the boy was surprised at being spoken to, and dropped his eyes bashfully. 'Oh, yes, weeks and weeks and weeks, a whole lot.'

The Saint dropped her voice, and asked hurriedly, 'Are they good to you?'

The boy laughed outright, 'Well, you bet!'

Cecilia knew boys well, and she knew the lad spoke truthfully. She half turned away, then asked again, 'Do you get enough to eat?'

The doctor smiled as he waited for the answer. One glance at the girl's face had told his practiced eyes that 'enough to eat' was not usual with her, at least! 'Enough to eat!' the boy echoed scornfully. 'Get enough to eat, and eat, and eat, and eat! Say, guess what we got for breakfast this morning!'

The Saint guessed the finest breakfast she could remember. 'Tea, and rolls, with butter on.'

'Ah, say, go on!' Several of the youngsters laughed at the simplicity of the menu. 'Say, we had an orange, and an egg, and toast, and codfish, and cocoa!'

'Don't you make fun of me!' The Saint's eyes began to flash.

'I ain't a-makin' fun, honest injun!' The boy was taken aback at the implied doubt. Ask her!' pointing to a nurse.

But Cecilia turned to the doctor, and jerking her thumb in the direction of the boy, asked, 'Did he have them things for breakfast?'

'My child,' the doctor's voice was very gentle, 'if he had that breakfast, it was simply about the kind the children have every morning!'

Cecilia paused a moment, to let the idea sink well into her brain, then the doctor saw her brave little lips tremble, and she turned to Jim to hide her face. With a choking sob, she said huskily, 'Jim, Puddin' never had such a good breakfast as you brought us to-day, and maybe he won't soon again! And, look, these ain't no better, and see what they get!'

And with the wondering children looking on, and the sympathetic nurses, she broke into a wild passion of sobbing; and in the midst of it, Jim smoothed back her red hair with his rough hand, and said softly, 'Look you now! Puddin' could be havin' the same, would you be lettin' him!'

The sobs stopped, as she shook the tears from her eyes. She turned from Jim to the doctor, whose eyes too were not free from a bit of mist. She put her thin little hand on his coat sleeve timidly, and gazed excitedly into his bearded face.

'Would my brother be here? Up here?'

With all these things, and with,—with them things to eat?'

'My dear little girl!' Dr. Hanauer's voice was very tender. 'If the little one comes to us, we will try our very best to make him well, and he shall share everything that these little ones have.'

Still half-unbelieving, she hesitated, and said slowly, 'We ain't got no money, we're poor, we're awful poor.'

'Yes? And what of it? Then he needs the care most—and he shall have it.'

Cecilia turned her back on the room, and stood at the door leading into the hall, while she blinked away her tears and choked down her sobs. She turned back to the doctor, started to talk, and couldn't, but finally blurted out, 'I can't tell you—what I want to. Let's go home, Jim!'

And so they went down-stairs again. And before he would let them go, Dr. Hanauer showed them into a little room, and saying, 'I know you are tired after going about, and you must take this before going out into the damp,' he placed before them glasses of warm milk and dainty slices of bread. And to make them feel more truly his guests, he joined them in their lunch.

Then he watched them as they went down the stone steps to the street, and thrusting his hands deep into his pockets, he whistled softly; but, as peering through the window, he saw how the wind tossed about the thin little shawl, and saw how Jim held his collar more closely to his throat, the whistle stopped, and he turned wearily away.

'There's so much of it! Good God, why can't we help them all! And still we can help one at a time, I suppose! If that red-haired child's brother comes here, he'll have all the house affords, or we'll know why!'

VIII.

A FRIENDLY DISCUSSION AT THE PUMP.

To have the ambulance stop at one's house, gave a certain interesting distinction to one who dwelt in the Court; even Cecilia, though her heart seemed full to overflowing, could not help but feel her importance when she came down to the pump the next morning. The whole population of the Court had watched the ambulance when it came in the afternoon before, had watched and commented upon the careful way in which Puddin' was carried down, and lifted in, and long after it had gone, had conversed at the pump, and from window to window, about Puddin's mishap. Mrs. Sweeney, of necessity forced to be sober, had gone to work unusually early, and to the few questioners had vouchsafed no information, except to say that Puddin' wasn't the first of her people to be in a hospital, as her mother's own sister had been in one for many weeks, and had had the enviable distinction of dying there. It was when the Saint appeared at the pump, that many of her neighbors found that their water pails needed replenishing, and improved the occasion by asking the minute particulars of the case.

'Tis yourself as is lucky to be gettin' him into a hospital, so you are!' Mrs. Flynn was pumping vigorously, good-naturedly filling pail after pail. 'It's himself as will be having plenty to ate while we'll be half starvin'!'

'Eatin' is it?' The Saint's voice was a little husky. 'The pain has kept him from eatin' this four days.'

'But sure it will be different there,' asserted Mrs. Flynn, soothingly. 'It's a fine life he'll be havin'!'

'It is that! So it is!' corroborated Mrs. Daley, who between holding her pail under the spout of the pump, and keeping the two young Daleys from the same place, had to speak in jerks. 'He'll not be sleeping in his shoes to keep his feet warm! 'Tis hopin' I am they'll keep him till the winter itself is broken!'

'Till the winter is broken!' Cecilia stood aghast. 'Tain't winter yet barely, and the doctor says he'll be doin' his best! My