

rod and his eyes twinkled. There was only one explanation of his condition in Mary's mind. She was silent.

"I want it understood, Mary," he said—"and I speak to you because you have the most sense—that Arthur Fitzgerald is never to be permitted to enter this house again. Do you hear?"

And he walked slowly out of the room.

"His Royal Highness has met the Governor," Esther murmured; and then, with a look at the petrified Mary, she sat down at the piano and began to play "Hero's a State of Things," from "The Mikado." "Sister," she said, turning suddenly to Mary, who was standing in the middle of the room as if rooted to the spot—"dearest sister, let us cease to weep that we are old maids, since we have seen the creature, Man, in his native lair."

XI.—The Amiability of Miles.

Miles was not in a pleasant state of mind. He had come back from Albany somewhat the worse for late hours and the liquid "attentions" which he had exchanged with friends. He felt that he had made himself "solid" with certain influential politicians, but nothing had come of it. He had never felt the need of money so much; he knew very well that he had exhausted Mary's resources for the present, and experience had taught him that Esther as a banker was a personage without possibilities.

The chance of getting the reward offered by the executors of John Longworthy became more and more fascinating. The clue had been in his hands and he had let it go. If he had kept that handkerchief! Another clue had fallen at the very feet of his sisters, and they—just like women!—(he ground his teeth at their foolishness),—and they had deliberately thrown it away! Without vouchsafing a word of explanation, he raged and stormed until even Mary's patience was exhausted.

"Miles," she said at breakfast, two days after his return, as he sat, sullen and injured-looking, waiting for his coffee; "I cannot understand why you insist on making us so unhappy. If I knew in what we are to blame I would try to remedy it."

"You're never to blame," snarled Miles. "If a fellow takes a drink with a friend or come home a little late he is frowned at as if he were going to the bad."

Miles had learned the art of carrying the war into his opponent's territory when he was doubtful about the strength of his defences.

Tears came into Mary's eyes. "We've never made home unpleasant for you, I hope," she said in a low voice, her tender conscience alarmed by this accusation.

"I don't say that Esther has," retorted Miles, hoping to enlist that young lady on his side; for he was rather afraid of her.

"You are right," said Esther, coolly. "But I have often wanted to make it as unpleasant as possible for you: and if it were not for Mary's example, I should have tried to teach you better manners long ago."

"Esther! Esther!" exclaimed her sister, in alarm. What if the tender and sensitive Miles should leave the house at once and take to drink? She hastily picked out the plumpest of the poached eggs—triumphs of her art, like golden flowers veiled in transparent white.—and transferred them to Miles' plate.

"I want to know," said Esther, looking at her brother with an effrontery that surprised him—hitherto she had kept quiet when he and Mary happened to have a duel; she had seemed to enjoy it,—"I want to know why we are to say 'Not at home' to Mr. Fitzgerald when he comes here? And I want to know why you have made our lives a burden just because we returned to him a sum of money he had lost?"

"It wasn't the money," muttered Miles, holding out his plate again.

"What was it then?"

"Let him alone, dear," interposed Mary. "After breakfast he will feel better."

Esther shrugged her shoulders. There was a gleam in her eye which Miles had never noticed before, and he did not like it.

"When you marry you will probably make a slave of your wife, but don't expect—"

"O Esther, you are cruel!" cried Mary. "You never talked like this before. O Miles, don't mind her!"

"I'll try not to," murmured the young man, virtuously, pathetically helping himself to fried potatoes.

"Why do you refuse to permit Mr. Fitzgerald to enter this house?" pursued Esther.

Miles was cowered. He heartily wished he had never made his hasty speech. He was sane enough to think that Arthur Fitzgerald was incapable of murder—the girls had not mentioned his agitation at Esther's hoydenish speech, though they had noticed it. If Mary and Esther refused admittance to Fitzgerald now, the clue might never be regained; and he had no doubt that Fitzgerald knew all about the taking off of John Longworthy. Lawyers, he said to himself, were unscrupulous; they would lie like interviewers to help their clients out of a scrape. He hastily made up his mind to recede, as a matter of expediency, from his first high-hand position.

"You can do as you please. If you like that dude you can have him here, for all I care," he answered, with the air of one making a concession.

Esther did not seem grateful. "You are very kind, but why did you 'command' us not to invite him here? He is one of the nicest people we know, and—"

"O Esther," broke in Mary, "you know how careful Miles is of us! Why, he rarely introduces anybody, even his own friends!"

"He thinks we need a chaperon, dear boy!" said Esther.

"That's it," growled Miles—"whatever it is!" he muttered under his breath. He felt relieved. But Esther was relentless.

To be continued.

THE HOME OF THE TRUE MAN

The Catholic Church attracts those who love the simplicity of natural manners by the harmonies of a restored creation. The Catholic religion is not presented to us as separated from nature, but in conjunction with it, forming a grand whole, fostering all the domestic affections with manhood, gentleness, liberality, and all the virtues which conduce to the happiness of home, banishing not more the luxuries which militate directly against the social state in general, than the false notions of spirituality which would interfere with the free action of the natural relations. For, as a recent author says, the beauty, peace, unity, and truth of life repose on that religious equilibrium which protects the flesh against the pride of the spirit, and the spirit against the invasions of the flesh. In truth, nothing is so natural as Catholicity—nothing so full of heart, nothing so favorable; therefore, to all the sweets of home. Virgins and boys, mid-age and wrinkled elders, soft infancy, that nothing can do but cry, all are in the secret of its charm.

When one looks abroad upon the nations which once constituted Christendom and examines seriously the causes of social and political prosperity or decay, this great fact stands forth as evidently as a bright beacon-light in the darkness over a dangerous reef. The strength or weakness, the vitality or decadence of nations, is to be measured by the purity of their home life, by their sacred regard for home, its authority, and its sanctities.

Take any people among whom home, from that of the sovereign or chief magistrate to the lowliest and poorest citizen—is protected by law, manners, and a wholesome public opinion, against everything calculated to loosen or to weaken the sacredness of the marriage tie, the rights of parental authority as sanctioned by the Christian law and immemorial custom, or the duties of filial love and reverence—and you will find the nation distinguished for private worth, political honesty, and an enlightened love of freedom.

Abuses there may and will be in the administration of the best human institutions; but where the homes of a nation are sincerely and thoroughly Christian, public corruption must find a certain and most effective remedy in a public opinion fed by the purity and honesty of private life.—*Kenneth Henry Digby.*