

creature comforts to those little Italians who professed themselves eager for Bible truths), and adapted to a new purpose.

The denizens of The Anchor and of the surrounding rookeries observed with amazement that the facade and the raised panels which supported it had been rough-cast with some compound of a brilliant red tint, and that broad bands of gilt were spread in various places over its front. Thus improved, it offered a marked contrast to the dinginess of the street, where everything—except the washed-out red flannels that fluttered from the clothes-lines and fire-escapes—was either gray or black. Brilliant blinds of crimson and gold appeared at the four windows, and the useless little balconies which guarded these windows had their rusty railings coated with gold-leaf. Two or three withered evergreen trees—relics of the days when the building was a "summer garden" that stood in the narrow open space before the door were replaced by large red *terra cotta* vases, in which fresher evergreens were planted. Altogether, the streets around The Anchor had not felt such a thrill of interest since Guiseppe Baldi had killed his wife. The tomato cans of years, gathered in the little front space, were carted away with other refuse, to be dumped into the Bay and thrown up later on the beach at Coney Island. Electric lights were placed in rows in front of the gorgeous edifice, and one day there appeared in large gilt letters on the facade the words "Concert Hall."

On a sunshiny day this concert hall lightened the squalor about it wonderfully. Many a weary eye rested on it with pleasure. It would have shocked the æsthetic taste, but fortunately there was no æsthetic taste in The Anchor or thereabout; and so the hopeless sewing-woman, whose hours were from daylight until ten o'clock at night, gazed on the gay splash of color with pleasure, and helped to quiet her little children by holding them up to see it. It was a revelation to the Italians, who seemed to have special joy in it; and when the flags of all nations were made to flutter around it the excitement reached a pitch which another murder—common in comparison with many other events—would not have occasioned.

After all, there are no poor so pitifully unprovided for as the poor of New York or London. The Italians at home have something beautiful to look at, and no one is utterly poor until the eye is starved as well as the stomach. To work from morning to night in wretched work-rooms is bad; to exist in more wretched rooms is worse; but to see nothing all the year round but dirt and gloom and squalor, made only more plain by the sunlight, is the sum of earthly misery. The Italians in Italy have churches built for them, where they can enjoy the perfection of form and color. But in countries where the spirit of the Reformation prevails the poor are indeed without comfort in their dwelling-places.

The whole quarter on which the glory of gold and crimson shone was soon absorbed in one subject of conversation—could the owner of the new concert hall get a license? If he could not secure legal permission to sell liquors on his premises, he might just as well, The Anchor opined, shut up shop and sell his paraphernalia to the old-clothes men.

During Christmas week the thoroughfares around The Anchor were amazed by a shower of little pink tickets with coupons attached to them. These did not fall from heaven, but they were sent to the housekeeper of each tenement house to be distributed to his clients. The pink tickets contained an announcement of a grand vocal and instrumental concert to be held on December 26, at seven o'clock; and the coupon was good for coffee or tea and cakes at the refreshment bar. It was the opinion of the people whom The Anchor represented that the proprietor of the new concert hall could not get a license and was "trying to play some game" on them. They were suspicious. The pink tickets were, however, eagerly taken up; for there was much curiosity to see the interior of the gold and crimson building.

At half-past six o'clock on the evening named—a raw, slushy evening it was—the electric lights burst into full bloom, and a brass band in the vestibule began to play. All the front fire-escapes of The Anchor were crowded with human beings of all ages and sizes, wrapped in garments of all kinds. These were the "stay-at-homes," whose pink tickets for

various reasons were unavailable. For instance, if there is only one decent shawl in a family, all the daughters can not go to an assembly at once; and even a young lady of the most advanced opinions can not go into society without a pair of shoes.

Shortly after the band began to play the audience passed through the lines of spectators into the glowing vestibule, where mirrors in gilded frames and crimson *portiere* dazzled the unaccustomed eyes.

Little Jimmy O'Connor, who had only one boot and no pink ticket—there are some people to whom one boot is not an obstacle to their mingling with their kind,—caught a glimpse of this vestibule.

"O Kathleen," he said, "It's like heaven, or the altar on Easter Sunday!"

Nellie Mulligan, leaning on Jim Dolan's arm,—why be off with the old love even after one is on with the new?—had on all her best clothes. She was one of the first to enter, though as she did she apologized to some intimate friends for going to a "charity show"; and she asked a dignified policeman, also an acquaintance of hers, if "Eye-talians couldn't be kep out."

#### NIX.—Bastien's Experiment.

Mary had no school to teach until the day after New Year's. There was nothing to prevent her going with Esther to the rehearsal at the music shop. Mr. Bastien was there, polite, interested, rather silent. He heard Esther play her four pieces with evident approval; then he stipulated that she should have some trifles ready to play for *encores*.

"A musician always has to do double work," he said, pleasantly.

When he explained that the entertainments were to be given at the concert hall near The Anchor, Esther could not repress her astonishment. He caught her look.

"I'll send a cab for you," he said, misinterpreting her meaning; "there will be no danger. And surely you will not object to letting those poor people hear your music?"

"Not at all!" answered Esther quickly, irritated as usual by his tone. "Only I fancy I need not trouble myself about pieces for recalls, or *encores*, or whatever you call them. Chopin's Mazurkas, the Overture to Semramide, Liszt's Rhapsody, and a minuet by Gluck, are not likely to induce enthusiasm in people from The Anchor."

"Then you are one of those who think the poor have no souls," Mr. Bastien said curtly, with a sharp gleam in his eyes.

"They *have* souls, but you can't reach them with a minuet by Gluck any more than you can improve the Italians who know only a dialect by giving them Bibles in Tuscan."

"My dear young lady," Bastien observed, with what Esther chose to think was an air of patronage. "you don't know the people; their present degradation is the result of such ideas as yours. Give them the best and they will recognize it at once. There is no teacher like music. It elevates, it touches the soul as no other teacher can. I would not give them the Bible; I would set its canticles to music."

"That has already been done, sir," broke in Mary, a little sharply. "The Church in all ages has set the inspired words to grand music."

Bastien looked at her with that expression of interest which Esther took for insolence.

"We must talk of this another time," he said, holding the door open for them. "At half-past six, please," he added, with a slight bow.

"He is the most insufferable creature!" exclaimed Esther. "I dislike the very sight of him. 'At half-past six, please!' I felt like throwing the music roll at him—him and his nonsense!"

Mary smiled for the first time that day.

"I rather like him; he is earnest, even what people call intense. I think he means to be kind. I wonder if our O'Connors—poor thinks!—will come to his concerts?"

"Oro hearing of the Gluck Minuet will be enough for the O'Connors, I fancy," said Esther, with a smile. "And," bursting into indignation again, "how does that man expect people like the O'Connors to go to concerts when they haven't decent clothes?"