

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN LONGWORTHY.

M. F. EGAN IN AVE MARIA.

"I own one-third of this house," Miles struck in.

"True," said Mary; "and if you like Esther and I will go out of it at once. You and your—your wife can live on one-third of the rents, a large portion of which you have already borrowed from us in advance."

Miles' countenance fell. To his astonishment he saw no sign of relenting in Mary. He turned to Esther. Her eyes avoided his.

"If you knew Nellie," he said, "you would not be so unreasonably selfish. Why, she adores the ground I walk on! Nellie—"

"Who?" asked Esther, her curiosity getting the better of her dignity.

"Nellie Mulligan."

Mary and Esther exchanged glances. For the first time in his life Miles saw his sisters united against him. It was an unpleasant experience.

"You don't mean the girl in Lacy's glove department,—the girl that passes here every Sunday?"

"I mean Miss Nellie Mulligan, and no other."

"Good gracious, Mary," cried Esther, in real alarm. "It's the girl that goes to all the picnics! She wore a Gainsborough hat last summer and very short sleeves."

"That girl!" exclaimed Mary, in horror, which only the vision of Nellie Mulligan in a rakish hat and very short sleeves could have evoked.

Miles' face grew redder and redder. This was much worse than he had, in his wildest visions, expected. Moreover, he could not understand what his sisters meant. What objection could they have to the amiable Nellie,—*la fleur du pois* of a large and admiring social circle?

Mary began to walk up and down the room.

"Miles," she said, after a pause, "you can choose between her and us. The house in which our mother lived can not be large enough for you and—your friend."

"A sales-lady is as good as a music-teacher or a school teacher any day!" said Miles, fiercely. He fancied he had found the cause of his sisters' objection. "Nellie Mulligan is a lady fitted to grace any station of life. She's poor, but I should think you'd be the last persons to call poverty a crime. But I tell you she's proud, and I'm proud too; and she shall be treated as a lady when she comes to this house, or I'll know the reason why!" Miles brought his fist down on a small table in a way that would have frightened both his sisters at ordinary times.

"She'll hardly call here to see you, unless her manners are as outlandish and as improper as her dress," said Mary, very coolly, much to the astonishment of Esther, who could not help wondering how Mary could so easily condone theft one minute, yet treat Miles' engagement as worse than theft the next. For herself, she was alarmed at the prospect of having their home broken up. She thought of Nellie Mulligan as a possible inmate of their house and shuddered.

"Understand me, Miles," Mary continued—"and if you knew me better you could not misunderstand.—I do not care whether the girl you want to marry is a sales-woman or a milk-woman or a servant. Occupation makes no difference to me; we are not snobs—Esther and I. If she were good and kind and gentle we would love her as a sister. We all work in this world; what we do makes no difference, if it be after God's will. But that girl is vulgar, she is frivolous; she will drag you down. If you have committed yourself, God help you!" said Mary, solemnly. "You must keep your promise, I suppose, but I will not assist you."

"I suppose Nellie Mulligan's not good enough for you, Esther, either?" said Miles, with a sneer.

Esther made no answer; her sister had said enough.

"With my prospects," Miles continued, raising his voice, "I can marry any woman I like; and Nellie's too good to live in the same house with two dowdy old maids."

Esther spoke. "If we were not 'old maids,' if Mary had not sacrificed herself, given up her friends, secluded us both, in order that we might work and save for you, would you be

here to insult us now?"

"No more, no more!" cried Mary, raising her hands.

And Miles turned away, slamming the door viciously as he went out of the house.

The sisters did not speak for a long time after he had gone. Mary put her head on Esther's shoulder and cried until Esther began to be frightened. She did not understand that those tears were symbols of the flood of grief that almost bursts a heart when its sweetest illusion disappears forever. Miles was no longer the innocent child of her girl hood; he had broken loose from her; another had taken her place. Who can say that Mary's devotion to her brother had been entirely unselfish?

XVIII.—A Vision of Crimson and Gold.

There are parts of New York which the native New Yorkers—and there are few—never visit. They read the fashionable novels of Mr. Besant, and are shocked by his description of the "nether world" of London. It seldom occurs to them that the social problems which Mr. Besant would solve with the assistance of music, dancing, fresh air, and temperance drinks, are becoming unsolvable in New York. It is the stranger in New York who finds this out. The metropolis—most splendid, most luxurious, most delightful, most squalid, most hopeless, most wretched of cities—contains inhabitants steeped in corruption as deep and as baffling as if it were an old and not a new city.

Poverty is a veritable curse there, since to be poor means to herd with the outcasts of old nations. The creature that has committed nameless crimes in his own country flees to this city of refuge, and he lives brooding over new sins, separated by a thin partition from the decent family which has done no crime, and which has come into the seething town with the dew of the country on its children. The young girl, who knows no evil, passes each day on the common stairway the spawn of the worst European cities. She hears nightly shrieks and cries and oaths, such as Dante never heard in his vision of hell. But how can she be protected from the sound of the quarrel in the room below, where a foul-mouthed, half-human Russian cries out from a fouler heart against the slave he calls his wife? On the floor opposite the rooms her parents occupy two females have come to live, and to drink the rest of their lives away with companions of their own choosing. The rattle of the beer-cans goes on day and night on the stairs; and it is no unfrequent thing for this young girl to be awakened by a corpse-like thud at the door of her room, and in the morning to find an inert body on the passage without—not dead, but dead for the time, and of an appearance more repulsive than peaceful death ever gives to the face and figure.

It was in such a place that Mary Galligan's friends, the O'Connors, lived. There were six of them, and they lived in two rooms. The eldest of the children was Kathleen, and no one looked at her fresh-colored, modest face, and frank, clear eyes, without wondering how she could exist, so honest, so untainted, in this beer-reeking and pestiferous air. She was like a strong-stemmed rose rising from a compost heap; or, rather, like a pink water-lily floating on a prism-coated, stagnant pond.

Near the O'Connors lived the Mulligans, whose eldest daughter, Nellie, was at present the lady of Miles Galligan's thoughts. The tenement house, which sheltered fifty-eight families besides the O'Connors and the Mulligans, was called "The Anchor." Why no one knew. It had nothing to do with hope; for many who entered there had long ago left nearly all hope behind. Of the sixty families that inhabited the structure, whose walls were damp and whose floors rotten, there were many Russian Jews, some of their Polish brethren, a large number of Italians, a few Chinese, and six families of the nationality of the O'Connors.

Across the street from The Anchor was a dilapidated building with a repellent look. It had in other days been a hall for the meeting of the Odd Fellows or some other society of the kind, later on a beer saloon with a concert hall attached, and still later a Home for the Evangelization of the Italians. Recently somebody had bought it from the Evangelization Society (it had really been a station for the giving out of