

MADEMOISELLE ANGELIQUE.

AN ALMSHOUSE IDYL.

John J. A. Becket Ph.D., in *Catholic World*.

James Townley had been in Paris and the rest of Europe so long that his friends began to look on him as a foreigner. When he came to New York the visit to his native city almost seemed a condescension, and the men at the club thought Townley a very cosmopolitan sort of fellow for being at ease and seeming to quietly lapse into the ways of the town with which he had been unfamiliar for years.

Soon after leaving college Townley went abroad, and he was so well content that he remained for five years knocking about the different Continental cities where there was most life. Townley Pere supplied the sinews of war in the shape of checks, and Townley Junior enriched different tradesmen and hotel-keepers on the Continent with his good American money. He found it entertaining enough. He was a cheerful young man who did not require a rich and select diet of thought, provided incidents were sufficiently varied to make the round of daily life interesting. He had the great gift of finding content in the things which were attainable. Never did his mind spring soaringly into realms of rarefied thought, nor was his healthy heart given to sinking into harrassing depths. He wrote an occasional letter to some of his friends who lived in New York, and was fond of consorting with New-Yorkers who went abroad.

When his father died a comfortable little lump of money went to the son. He continued to distribute it abroad, and showed no violent yearnings for a return to his native soil. So it was with a little surprise that Mr. George Ramsay, a Union Club man, found this letter addressed to himself one fine May morning :

“ PARIS, May, 18—.

DEAR RAMSAY,—How are you getting along? Haven't heard a word from you for three months. But if you didn't write for ten years I should be sure a letter would reach you at the Union Club. You are too fond of your old New York to leave it for any length of time, and, of course, so long as you stay there you will always think that the best part of life is that which you put in behind the club windows. Is it just as much fun as ever to look out on Fifth Avenue and see the world go by?

“ I think you will have the doubtful pleasure of having me sit there with you pretty soon. I'm a little tired of knocking round over here. That is an awful admission, isn't it? When I tell you that I think of doing a little something over in America in the way of business you will be still more paralyzed. Of course I don't know anything about business, but nobody does until he learns, and I don't see why I may not learn. Anyhow, that is my scheme now. I seem to be working backward when I tell you next that I find that I have run through a good deal of money and want to recoup myself a bit. I am not in straitened circumstances, you understand, but I simply feel that I am spending money and that it is giving out. So I am coming over there to make some more.

“ I have a funny thing to tell you. Don't let Bradley know, or he will think I am losing my senses. Perhaps I am. This is the thing, anyhow. Two months ago I went to a theatre where they were having a ballet. There was a dancer there that took great hold of me. There was such a sweet, winning dignity about her. You may laugh. I know it sounds absurd. After I left the theatre I dropped in at a neighbouring *cafe*. It was a half-Bohemian place, but of the better sort. Several fellows were in the place, and at one table there was a party of four rather noisy men who had been drinking. Soon after I entered two girls came in and went to the only disengaged table, which was across from the one where the lively crowd was sitting. One of them was my interesting young *dansusee*. They sat down quietly and ordered a bottle of *vin ordinaire* and a *ragout* or something.

“ When they were served they ate with a good appetite and evidently enjoyed their meal. The girl who had attracted my attention at the theatre was even more taking off the stage than she was on it. There was a frank, good-natured air, blended with a brisk kind of independence and a sweet

suggestion of sympathy and tender feeling in her face. Her companion was one of the dancers or actresses at the theatre, I suppose, and they had dropped in after the play to have a bite.

“ The two girls interested me. They seemed to be so good-natured, and somehow they gave me a very domestic feeling by the way they ate their supper. They were so modest, although cheerful and chattering away to each other. The meal seemed a recreation for them.

“ The boobies at the other table began to busy themselves with the girls soon after they were seated, ogling them and making quite audible remarks about their appearance. The girls could not help noticing this and were somewhat annoyed by it. This interested me still more, because the actions and talk of the fellows, though free and easy, was the sort of thing that one supposes ballet-dancers and actresses to have no particular aversion to.

“ Finally one of the quartette, a beastly Frenchman with crinkly moustache and a conceited smile, called the *garcon* and told him to serve the young women with a bottle of champagne. When the waiter brought it the elder of the two girls, the one I had noticed in the theatre, told him to take it away, that they would get their own wine.

“ This was still more interesting! A ballet-girl declining champagne from an admirer! The fellow got up from his table and coming over said in a killing way: ‘ Will not Mademoiselle Angelique do me the honour to drink wine with me?’

“ ‘ No. I do not wish for any wine, monsieur,’ said the dancer.

“ ‘ Oh! but mademoiselle will not be so cruel. You will take one glass, at least, from my bottle, just to become acquainted. Come, now, that's a darling.’

“ ‘ Monsieur, I do not want your wine nor your company. If you will have the goodness to leave us alone it will be the best thing you can do.’

“ ‘ Ah! mademoiselle,’ the fellow said, leaning over, ‘ how can I leave you alone when you are so pretty?’

“ All this is rot and rubbish to tell you. But I wanted you to understand my part in the business. Mademoiselle's eyes flashed. She looked at the man straight and said indignantly, and with a natural dignity that should have driven him off:

“ ‘ You brute! have you nothing better to do than come and amuse yourself by worrying two girls? Go! Leave us! If not,’ she added, noticing me and seeing my interested attention, ‘ I will beg this gentleman to protect us from your annoyances.’

“ I felt pretty disgusted with the smirking, conceited ass of a fellow, for the girls had done absolutely nothing to provoke or encourage such attentions, but had behaved very properly and had been enjoying their modest repast thoroughly till he came to make it unpleasant for them. I hadn't the faintest wish to make myself a spectacle over a ballet-dancer, as you may imagine. But, no matter whether it sounds silly or not, I felt respect for the girl—a respect, mark you, that did not prevent my mouth from wanting to twist a little into a grin at the thought of my quixotically espousing the cause of a ballet-girl whom I didn't care a button for. But I did care a button for the something that shone through the girl with a luminous reflection of that human or divine element in man which always touches the quick of a decent fellow-creature.

“ I stepped over and said, I think rather coolly: ‘ Monsieur will please to remember that mademoiselle is now under my protection.’

“ Her first glance was at him to see how he took it. It was a curious look, there was such a sort of surprised impersonal curiosity in it. It seemed to say: ‘ There! what are you going to do now?’

“ The Frenchman glowered at me angrily. Then he laughed as only that sort of a Frenchman can, and said brutally: ‘ Of course, mademoiselle belongs to the class which selects its protectors as they come. You are welcome to her.’

“ I paid no attention to him. He bounced back to his table. I took a seat at the table where the girls were. ‘ Since mademoiselle has done me the honour to make me