

AT ST. MALACHI'S.

(By MARY T. WAAGAMAN)

It was small but select, the Sanctuary Society at St. Malachi's. It numbered seven ladies only, six of whom were veterans in the altar service. Indeed, there was a tradition current among the irreverent that active membership in the S. S. conferred immunity from all mortal ills, death and matrimony included. So that when a daring cavalier broke in upon the maiden band and carried off Miss Mary Grey, all the prestige of a nuptial Mass with surpliced choir did not prevent a certain sense of shock. And when the gap in the ranks was filled by Daisy Dunn! "Ah, it was a world of change, indeed," as Mrs. Flaherty, who had swept the church under three pastors, declared, with an ominous nod.

Daisy Dunn: a mere slip of a girl, whose short frocks Mrs. Flaherty had washed not half a dozen years ago. Daisy Dunn, whose white hands had never touched any weightier domestic implement than an embroidery needle. Daisy Dunn: whose mother kept five servants and a French maid. True, Daisy was a goddaughter of Miss Moseley, the president of the S. S., and so had a certain amount of pull. "I'm not saying it's wrong," said Mrs. Flaherty, guardedly, as one who knew the weight of her words in church matters; "but it's queer to see such a bit of a butterfly around the holy altar, very queer."

But "bit of a butterfly" as Daisy was in the outer world, she proved a busy bee in the sanctuary, as even Mrs. Flaherty was forced to confess. Whether it was nature, grace, or simply inborn domesticity, suppressed hitherto by the five servants and French maid, she took to her new duties like a duck to water. The vigil of every feast found her at her post from which no golf tournament or baseball game or social tea could allure the season's belle. Muffled in a huge gingham apron that effectually concealed the chic gown beneath, her pretty golden pompadour tied up in a white handkerchief, thick chamois gloves on her dainty hands, Miss Daisy was ready to scrape, candle, dust vases, mend surplices, or polish censors at her senior's command.

It was a busy group gathered today in the Sunday School chapel preparing the Repository for the coming feast. Palms, potted plants, flowers, vases, candlesticks, were gathered in picturesque profusion for final arrangement, while, poised on a step-ladder at a perilous altitude for a lady of her avowed status, Miss Moseley surveyed the situation with the ease of a practiced generalissimo who knows the field.

Rumors had gone abroad that the adjoining parish was putting forth unusual efforts this year, and there was unanimous resolve that St. Malachi's must not be surpassed in its labor of love; so it was with a decisive voice the commanding officer issued her orders.

"Old Mrs. Morton's lilies have just come, set them aside, please, Miss Grace, for a while. The dear old soul always expects to see them directly in front of the tabernacle. I will have to ask you, Miss Ellen, to mend the rent in Father Flynn's alb, or he will put his foot into it to-morrow, sure. And what is that you say, Miss Rosa? Fenton has sent only a dozen palms! I put in my order for three dozen fully a month ago! He must fill it or lose St. Malachi's custom. Florists really seem to lose all conscience at times like these. Let us see if we have all the candlesticks ready—ten, twelve, fourteen—My dears, we've forgotten the Calvert candelabra."

A dismayed pause followed this announcement. Then Miss James, who had simply stepped in to assist, ventured the flippant suggestion: "Oh, cut them out this year, Miss Moseley, they're so big."

"Cut them out!" echoed Miss Moseley, in a shocked tone. "My dear, I wouldn't dare. They were presented to the church fifty years ago by old General Calvert, and every great-grandchild of his—and they are legion—who will bend a knee at the Repository to-morrow will want to know how, where, and why those candelabra have disappeared."

six-winged cherubim on those candlesticks have to be scrubbed semi-yearly—from angels of darkness into angels of light. Keep on your gloves, for you will be beyond the help of a manicure for weeks," she warned, as all undaunted, Miss Daisy tripped gaily away to her task.

"Stretch out in that big arm-chair of mine, Tom, and make yourself comfortable," said Father Flynn to the tall University man, who had slipped down to spend Easter week with "Uncle Larry," and recuperate, after a close call from pneumonia, in this softer air.

"Old Biddy is out, like the rest of the women, after an Easter bonnet, but she has put a bit of a girlie in her place that you can call on if you want anything like a glass of milk or a cup of tea. It's at home you are, remember, my boy, at home."

"Thank you, Uncle Larry, though home is a word that seldom enters my vocabulary just now."

"I know it, my lad, I know it," said the old priest, tenderly. "It's a hard, cold, lonely road you've walked since your poor mother, God rest her, left ye ten years ago. But since you won't follow my track, as I once hoped, Tom, the next best thing is to look up a good girl and make a home for yourself."

"Too heroic a measure, uncle. Girls don't like me, and I don't think I like girls."

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Uncle Larry, shaking his head. "That's heresy, or next to it, Tom, my lad. Holy Orders or matrimony is Mother Church's teaching to the men. If you don't like one sacrament take the other, but it's a poor sort of a Catholic that balks at both. But you're half sick now, and it's no time for preaching. Don't forget to take the milk, and, though I am a teetotaler myself, there's a drop of something stronger for weaklings on my sideboard if you should need it, lad. You want bracing up, body and soul, just now."

And with this kindly parting word, Father Flynn betook himself to his confessional, while Mr. Tom Bryan freed himself from collar and necktie, loosened the shirt button from his well-shaped throat, and sank back in the depths of the pastoral easy chair with the pipe and book that had so far supplanted for him all feminine charms.

Spring came early to St. Malachi's. Already the great oaks that shaded the grounds were veiled in tender mists of green, the crocuses that fringed the box-bordered garden were in yellow bloom, from the chapel choir came the silvery voices of the children practicing the Easter chants. Alleluia, they said, and the note of joy seemed echoed from the wakening earth, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The listener dropped the treatise on "Criminal Psychology" that he brought down to study during his holiday, and clasping his hands over his head, lay back on Uncle Larry's shabby cushions and gave himself up to unusual reverie.

Bare of all womanly touch as was

the dim old room, a paternal spirit pervaded its austerity with a homely charm. There was a pile of Sunday School books, a worn catechism on the desk, a lot of small shoes, left for gratuitous distribution, in a corner a half-munched apple under the big sofa, dropped by some little sinner called to pastoral judgment, while over the old colonial mantel, with its broken marble pillars, hung an exquisite copy of Raphael's Madonna, that gave life and color and glow to the bare monastic walls.

The sweet eyes of the Virgin Mother seemed to rest upon the young man with a tenderness that recalled to him the loss that had darkened his early youth. All since had been the cold, grave-academic life in which he had won brilliant place and name, but love and home were not for him—they were beyond his student reach. A strange, new sense of self-pity stirred in his heart. It had been a hard five weeks' struggle in the hospital, with death perilously near. He closed his eyes with a dull sense of weakness and weariness, and was startled to find his lashes wet with unshed tears.

"Good Lord, I must be in for brain softening," he muttered half angrily. "Uncle Larry is right. I want a brace indeed, when I go all to pieces like this." And, starting to his feet, he pulled the old-fashioned bell-ropes with an impatient hand.

But though the summons clanged harshly through the house, there was no response. Again Mr. Bryan rang, and again, with the natural irritability of the masculine convalescent, descended the stairs in no friendly mood to old Biddy's delinquent substitute.

Led by the sound of a fresh, rich voice, he pushed open the dining-room door and faced a young person polishing a pair of heavily branched silver candlesticks with an unusual amount of vigor, while she softly hummed an accompaniment to the children's Easter hymn.

There was a rustic flush on the velvet cheek, and a smudge on the pretty patrician nose that told the six-winged cherubim supporting the silver branches had taxed unaccustomed powers. But Mr. Bryan, as he had said, was not wise in woman-kind.

"My good girl," he began, "didn't you hear that bell?"

The good girl's start and stare were blank and bewildered. Such an introductory address from a collarless stranger, haggard in face and hollow of eye, was a shock, to say the least of it.

"I rang three times," continued the intruder, with the patience of long suffering, "but I suppose you don't know what a bell means. I want a glass of milk, and please be quick about it."

"You want a—a—I don't understand," faltered the "good girl." "A glass of milk—milk—milk—milk—milk," said Mr. Bryan, losing patience at such stupidity, "milk from a cow."

The violet eyes fixed on the speaker began to dilate. This must be either madness or intoxication: never in all her twenty years of life had man looked or talked so in her presence before. And the door was closed behind her and Father Flynn was out!

"I want a glass of milk," repeated the intruder, "and that bottle of brandy on the sideboard there behind you."

"Don't—don't come any nearer." The speaker's voice trembled, but the soldier's spirit in her rose valiantly. "Don't dare come a step nearer, or—" she grasped the silver cherubim in reckless disregard of cost or weight—"I'll throw this candlestick at you, you coward!" The violet eyes were blazing lightning bow. "Walk right out of this room, or—"

"Sure, what is it you're wanting, sur?" and a rosy, rotund person appeared at the door, tray in hand. "I had me hands all black wid polishing the stove, as Aunt Biddy could me, when the bell rang, an' I couldn't come at wanst. But I brought the milk, as his riv'ence bade me, and, sure, Miss Daisy, isn't this the thirty work for pretty hands like yours? Lave me to finish it, darlint."

There was a pause—an absolutely breathless pause—in which the two late antagonists stared at each other speechlessly. Revelation burst upon the daughter of Eve first.

"You—you are Father Flynn's Tom," gasped Miss Daisy, who had heard about the expected arrival of her brother's brilliant class-mate, a woman-hater on whom Dick had warned her it was useless to expend any feminine ammunition.

"And you—you?" Mr. Bryan's wits, although veritable searchlights on all sociological problems, were still in a hopeless haze.

"I am Dick Dunn's sister, Daisy. Perhaps you have heard of me," laughed the lady, roguishly.

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Heard of her! Heard of this matchless queen of hearts! Mess room and campus had echoed with her name and fame—even to his averted ears. Mr. Bryan clutched at his throat in a vain effort to conceal its reckless dishabille and wished he could sink quietly into some convenient rat-hole. "You see," exclaimed Miss Daisy, continuing to whisk off the disgusting kerchief from her golden pompadour as she spoke, "I am a member of the Sanctuary Society, and came in here to clean the candlesticks for the Repository to-morrow, and, and—" as she summed up the situation, she broke off in irrepressible laughter. "Oh, what a joke it will be on both of us—what a dreadful joke! Dick will keep it up to his dying day. Don't tell, Mr. Bryan, don't let's ever tell."

"We won't," he answered, in a tone of great relief, while "Nonie," who had altogether missed the point of the scene on which she had intruded, stared from one to the other with cheering stupidity. "You're—you're a trump, Miss Daisy. I mean that you're—you're the most delightfully sensible girl I ever met. Shake hands, will you, on that proposition? We'll never tell."

And they never did. When Father Flynn came in an hour later, the six-winged cherubim had been changed from dark angels to spirits of dazzling light, but it was by Nonie's vigorous hands, while for once the youngest and fairest of the S. S. was a derelict to Sanctuary duty. Ripples of youthful laughter came from the rectory parlor, where Miss Daisy had brewed a milk punch for the interesting invalid after her father's time honored recipe, and Tom—the cold, the clever, the brilliant, the woman-hater Tom—was her unresisting victim forever. "Eh, God bless us!" murmured Uncle Larry to himself, as he looked from his favorite nephew to the flower of his flock, and wondered at the light and glow that kindled the pale

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young student face, a while ago so sad and weary. "I couldn't ask anything better for either of them. But," he added aloud, with a paternal twinkle in his eye, "isn't this a sudden conversion Tom, a wonderfully sudden conversion?" "It is," answered Tom, hastily; "Uncle Larry was lecturing me this afternoon on some unorthodox opinions of mine, Miss Daisy. I retract them all, uncle. You were right, altogether right. And I may call to-morrow, Miss Daisy?" And he called the morrow, and the next morrow, and the next. And before the crocuses in Uncle Larry's garden bloomed again, there was another Nuptial Mass with surpliced choir in old St. Malachi's, and the six-winged cherubim shone in all their glory upon the high altar that the Sanctuary Society had decked with loving hands as the "bit of a butterfly" fluttered from their maiden ranks forever.—Benziger's Magazine.

DIDN'T CONSIDER HIM A SUCCESS. The late Protestant Bishop Dudley, of Kentucky, made friends with the guide on a hunting expedition he took once, near Louisville, and they became quite intimate. After some good times together the guide asked, "Say, Dudley, what business do you follow?" "I am a preacher."

"Oh, got out! What are you giving me!" "But I am. I preach every Sunday in Louisville." "Well," said the guide, "you ain't stuck up like the preachers our way." And he accepted an invitation to hear his now friend preach the next Sunday. After the service the Bishop greeted him as familiarly as in the woods, and asked him how he liked it. The guide hesitated for a minute, then said: "Well, I ain't much of a judge of this kind of thing, Parson, but I riz with you and sot with you, and saw the thing through the best I knew how; but all the same, if my opinion is worth anything to you, the Lord meant you for a shooter!"

A bright little girl asked one morning at the breakfast table, "Mamma, is hash animal or vegetable?" "Animal, my dear," replied mamma. "Then," cried the little girl, triumphantly, holding up a tiny bone, "here's the hash's tooth!"

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