

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN LONGWORTHY.

M. F. EGAN IN AVE MARIA.

With maternal looks at Rose, who had fallen asleep in her warm corner, the girls went out to resume their work.

Nellie Mulligan had very truly depicted the effect of Mr. Bastien's attempt to elevate the neighborhood of The Anchor. Chopin and Liszt and Gluck, and even Schubert's "Serenade," which would have pleased a German audience, no matter how uncultivated in other things, had fallen on unheeding ears. If Esther had not descended suddenly from her classical standard, the concert would have been an utter failure.

When she came into the withdrawing-room after her success, with a flush on her cheeks and her eyes shining, Bastien felt a great respect for her. She understood more than he understood; she could do something that he wanted to do—please the people. He bowed to her and said:

"Your grace and skill have tamed the lions. Miss Esther Galligan, you are indeed a second Daniel in Shylock's sense as well as the other."

Esther never learned how to take a compliment. If anybody praised her she was apt to be pleased, provided she knew the person well. But she looked on compliments from outside people as veiled sarcasm; and Bastien's manner, which was intended to be both deferential and considerate, struck her as the poison added to an arrow deadly in itself. Esther answered him with a flash of the eye and a stiff inclination of the head.

"Did you see that hateful creature's manner?" she said to Mary, as they stood at the little window while the damsel in sage-green warbled her Provençal *aubade*.

"What hateful creature?" Mary asked. She had caught sight of Maggie O'Connor down near the door; and she was a little absent-minded, too; for was not the resplendent Nellie Mulligan, all smiles and giggles, before her?

"Oh, that man, of course!"

"Oh, Mr. Bastien! I saw him bow very gracefully, and no doubt he said something nice—which you entirely deserved for your presence of mind."

Esther turned away a little impatiently.

Bastien offered to act as escort to the young ladies on their way home; and Arthur Fitzgerald, whose German song had been almost hissed joined him in the offer. But Mary, who outside her own house was a little uncertain about etiquette, and at the same time anxious to be on the side of formality, if possible, declined to avail herself of their politeness, and so the two sisters drove away alone.

"That is a clever girl," remarked Bastien, looking after the cab, as he stood in the glare of the gold and crimson facade, which still glittered with electric lights. "I feel that she has taught me a lesson to-night. I have read nearly everything, I have travelled nearly everywhere, I have met clever people from my youth up, and yet how narrow-minded I am! What a mistake I made to-night—the mistake of all theorists and *doctrinaires*! Because the great masters of music are very dear to me and to all whom I know, I fancy that these people, who have never heard anything better than a tramping cornetist, a hand-organ, or a brass-band, would care for them. To think that the wretched bit of trumpery, 'Listen to the mocking bird!' should have saved a concert in which the exclusive Miss Thornton, whose engagements are thick as leaves in Vallambrose, sang! It is too funny. I say, Fitzgerald," he asked, "how do these people amuse themselves? I have seen a great deal of them, but I haven't gotten near them yet. If John Longworthy were here," he added with a smile, "he could go into one of his favourite clubs for the settling of everything by 'culture,' and open their eyes."

XXI.—A Great Function.

The eventful evening on which the Lady Rosebuds were to have their dance was a sleety and unpleasant one. Miles Galligan felt this as a personal grievance. There was no hope that he would be able to save the five dollars which it would now be necessary to spend for a carriage. Had it been a clear evening, Nellie Mulligan might have preferred to walk to the hall where the festivity was to take place,

carrying her dancing shoes in her hand, while he held her bouquet, her fan, her *rinaigrette*, an extra shawl, and other *impedimenta*.

As Miles tried to adjust his white tie—he told himself that he had too much self-respect to ask either Mary or Esther to do as usual—he looked dolorously into the storm, and felt that the five dollars must go. Nellie knew her position and his position too well to walk on such a night. What would Jim Dolan say? What would the Lady Rosebuds say? Miles had managed to get a loan from a future constituent who believed in him, but he felt the necessity of making it go as far as possible, since Mary had become suddenly so unkind and selfish.

Miles went to telephone for a carriage with a sad heart, in spite of the consciousness that his evening clothes were very new and had been seldom used—a fact which was made known to the public by the odor of camphor which clung to them; for Mary had a horror of moths. He looked at himself in the glass again, swathed himself in a long gold watch-chain, and sat down to wait until the carriage should come. He was obliged to ask Mary for a latch-key, as he had mislaid his on Christmas night.

Mary did not seem moved by his magnificent expanse of shirt front or by his stately manner; she did not even offer to find out whether his collar was properly fastened or not; she did not ask where he was going; she did sniff at the smell of camphor, and remarked that his coat ought to have been aired before he put it on. He replied to this by saying that his decision was unalterable.

"What decision?" Mary asked.

"I will marry Miss Mulligan."

Mary made no answer, and at that moment the driver of the carriage knocked at the door. Miles put on his light overcoat, stuck a cigarette between his thumb and finger, and went down, to be driven off—in solitary grandeur.

In the meantime Nellie Mulligan had not been serene or idle. Rose O'Connor had been able to go home, laden with the offerings of indigestible food which her kind friends had given her. She, at least, was off Nellie's mind.

When Nellie reached home, about half-past six o'clock, she carried various paper parcels, one of which contained Eliza Brown's white satin shoes. Her mother, two interested neighbors, and her younger sister, were in the little room in which they cooked, dined, and in which one of her brothers slept. Nellie swallowed a cup of tea, and then the neighbors, assisted by suggestions from other neighbors who appeared at intervals in the doorway, with their mouths full of pins, began to "do" her hair. It was nervous work.

Mrs. Mulligan, a good-natured, elderly woman, with a matured resemblance to Nellie, looked on, alternately poking at the grate of the stove and making comments.

"Faith," she said, when Nellie's hair had been "done" and "undone" several times, "I've seen corpses laid out elegant with less trouble."

She was promptly rebuked for this, as a long box was brought in, containing the white satin gown which Nellie had hired at a customer's, at an expenditure somewhat more than a week's salary. It was opened very carefully by a committee of the women with the pins in their mouths, and loudly admired. But Nellie had no time for any unnecessary emotion. A fan she had been promised had not come, nor had Eliza Brown's lace handkerchief been sent; but one of the committee offered her a diamond ring.

"I bought it on installments," this good Samaritan said; "and the second has not been paid yet. The agent is coming to take it to-morrow, so you may as well get some good out of it."

Nellie made the ring glitter in the light of the kerosene lamps her attendants held, and felt that now indeed was she blest.

It took two hours to complete her toilet—two hours of nervousness, indignation, hope that she might look well; fear that somebody else would look better; doubt as to the fit of Eliza Brown's shoes, trepidation lest Eliza, whose temper was uncertain, might come to claim them at the last moment; of quarrels among the various nymphs with pins in their mouths. But at last the awful work was done. Nellie stood in the little parlor, complete, while the