

"I'd make them," retorted Nellie, with a flash in her eyes. "There goes that new schottische. It's just too sweet! Try it, Miles."

"Don't know it," answered Miles, reddening angrily.

"Wonder your accomplished sisters haven't taught it to you? Come, try it, this way; two jumps and five kicks—O Jim, you dance it lovely! Mile can't. Just a few turns. Excuse me, Mr. Galligan!"

And Nellie and the grinning Jim Dolan kicked over the floor in a way that extorted admiration even from the most worn-out ball-goer.

Miles was too indignant to speak. He was on his way to the bar when Miss Simmons, the deserted one, asked him to bring her a glass of water. He rushed into the dressing-room, grumbling under his breath. Bastien and Fitzgerald were there in deep conversation, with their backs to the door. Miles paused on the threshold. He did not catch Fitzgerald's words, which seemed to be grave, but he heard Bastien's reply;

"I'll tell you the whole story, my boy, and you shall know"—and then he laughed in his usual quick way—"Why I killed John Longworthy."

Miles gasped. Bastien turned suddenly and laughed again. Miles disappeared. He went into the bar-room; and Miss Simmons remained, for all he cared, as thirsty as the Desert of Sahara for the rest of the night.

XIV.—A Sweet, Sweet Home.

Miles danced no more, and on the way home Miss Mulligan tried in vain to draw him into conversation. That young lady ascribed his preoccupation to sulkiness, and in her heart she rejoiced in her powers to depress his spirits to such a depth. Nevertheless, she made up her mind that she would not be satisfied until she brought those "stuck-up" sisters of his to a sense of her merits.

Miles was heartily glad when Nellie was safely deposited at The Anchor, the carriage door slammed, and he alone with his own thoughts. What a fool he had been, he said to himself, not to have kept on Bastien's tracks! He might have secured a good round sum by this time, and been sure of a place as the member from his district. In that case it would not have made much difference how Mary and Esther regarded Nellie—in that case he would be independent of relatives whose selfishness he began to feel acutely.

What right had two girls to whom he had always been a model brother, to interfere not only with his happiness, but with his advancement in life? Some fellows sisters' would have lived on bread and water, and worked their fingers to the bone, to help in the elevation of a brother who needed only a little assistance to cross the threshold of a brilliant career. And, then, Nellie Mulligan's "style" and "go" were qualities most needed in a politician's wife. What a swathe she would cut at Saratoga! He felt bitterly the indifference of his sisters to the realization of his ideal; but here was a sudden opportunity of teaching them that he could realize it without any help from them.

Some day they would regret their present attitude. Why didn't they get married, like other girls? Of course, he reflected Mary would never marry; Esther would, if she had a chance. If Mary came to her senses about Nellie Mulligan, she should always have a home, and he would forgive and forget. Nellie and he would be out a great deal, and it would be convenient to have somebody in the domestic circle who could be depended on to look after things. Oh, yes, he'd make Mary come around! But Esther should never enter his door unless she accepted it at once.

Miles, to whom Bastien's words had been as the dawn of hope, laughed aloud when he thought how simple Bastien's trick about the letter had been. Of course John Longworthy's letter was forged—and yet it had been well done, too; for it had nearly thrown him, the astute Miles, off the track. He wondered if Bastien had seen him, and he wished that he had not been in such a hurry to leave—he might have heard something more; but he had heard enough. The question was, how to utilize it.

Miles trusted no one. He would put no detective on the track. He determined to use Bastien—who was evidently spending Longworthy's money recklessly—as a mine from which nuggets could be taken at will. What did he care whether Longworthy's murderers were brought to justice or

not? Justice could look out for itself; he wanted money, and he saw it within his grasp. That sarcastic, patronizing, insolent Bastien was really in his power. And Miles, reaching home, threw himself down on the lounge in his room, with a plan in his mind for beginning his extortions at once.

The morning after the dance was not a happy one for the Lady Rosebuds. Most of them had reached home after sunrise, and they were obliged to be at work at seven o'clock. Nellie Mulligan, relying on the prestige given her by her engagement to a possible member of the Assembly—which she announced in the domestic circle—sent word to Lacy's that she was sick; and at eleven o'clock she went over to the O'Connors' rooms to ask after Rose.

Nellie was rather pale and faded, and a draggled wrapper and a dishevelled condition of hair did not improve her appearance. She had a headache, and her mother had said some sharp words concerning her absence from the store, which had not improved her temper. However, she thought of Rose, and also of the remains of her bouquet of the night before. She chose the flowers that were not hopelessly withered and climbed to the top of the house, heartily wishing that she had not torn one of Eliza Brown's shoes, that she had never danced in her life, that she was at the store, fresh and energetic—that she was, in fact, somebody else.

The O'Connors lived near the roof. The passage which led to their three rooms was dark and evil-smelling. A sickly glow from a kerosene lamp was dimly projected from a dingy reflector as Nellie groped her way along this corridor. The girl, who liked to be sentimental when there was no practical question at issue, said to herself that her heart was sad because of Miles' unfeeling conduct in deserting her during the last part of the ball. She determined to tell Rose all about it, for lack of a better confidant.

Without knocking, she turned the greasy knob of the O'Connors door and entered. The first room was lighted by a pane of glass set in the sloping roof. A parlor stove, a wash-tub with some wet clothes hanging over the edge, a candlestick in a corner, encrusted with tallow, and a pile of sombre-looking quilts and blankets, were the only furniture. Nellie passed quickly through the middle apartment, which was so dark that she could not distinguish any object clearly, and entered the room where Rose and sister Maggie slept, when the whole family were not living in it.

Here there was a big kitchen stove, several cooking utensils, and a shelf of dishes. The floor was uncarpeted, and dark from the ill usage of many occupants during many years. This room was lighted by a glass frame in the roof. At one end, where Rose lay on a lounge, the roof and the floor almost met.

Nellie was startled to see another person there—a trim-looking, quick-moving person, who had just put several paper parcels on a chair beside Rose's resting place. Nellie was even more startled at recognizing in this person Esther Galligan.

Esther had taken off her waterproof cloak, and she looked very comfortable and graceful in her tight little coat, white collar, and black frock. Nellie took this in at a glance, and would have backed out the door had not Rose called to her in her weak, treble voice:

"O Nellie, you must have looked grand last night! And you did not let me see you before you went!"

Nellie forgot her vanity in compunction.

"Oh, I forgot, Rose! A gentleman friend was waiting for me," she added, with a glance at Esther; and I couldn't let him wait too long, you know. But I have brought you some flowers."

"Oh, how sweet!" cried Rose, her pale face flushing, as she eagerly took the flowers in her thin hand. "And see what this kind young lady has brought us!"

Several bunches of grapes, some oranges and lemons, and a beefsteak, on the chair, were evidently the occasion of this exclamation.

Nellie at once assumed her "best" manner, muttering to herself: "I'll soon teach this upstart that everybody that's poor and lives in The Anchor doesn't need cold victuals!"

(To be continued.)