

## THE DISAPPEARANCE OF JOHN LONGWORTHY.

M. F. EGAN IN AVE MARIA.

## XIV.—A Model Girl.

Miles looked helplessly at the amused face of Bastien.

"You don't mean to say that—"

"I do," answered Bastien, offering him a cigar, which he mechanically took. "John Longworthy is alive and in New York, and his executors will pay no reward for the recovery of a live man, who can save you the trouble of discovering himself at any moment."

Miles gave back the letter; the game was up. He felt angry enough at Bastien to have knocked him down.

"Have your picture taken?" asked Bastien, hospitably.

Miles walked sullenly to the door, and as he was going out said: "I'm not sure that letter isn't a forgery. I half believe you've made away with him, after all."

Bastien smiled. "You'll find it hard to prove in the face of that letter and a dozen more."

Miles left, disgusted and indignant, but not convinced of Bastien's innocence. Bastien took up a note-book, and said to himself: "I am free from that fellow's prying, anyhow."

Miles Galligan left Bastien's studio in a condition of mind which was excessively unpleasant for him, and which would have had unpleasant effects on his sisters if he had been near them just at the moment. Miles, irritated and baffled, held them responsible for everything that had irritated and baffled him. Here he was with a political campaign almost on his hands,—a campaign which would either make or break him. To be sure, election day was far off, and even the time of the nominations was not near; but no one knew better than Miles that these were only episodes. The real event would be decided before the convention, or that meeting at the polls which the uninitiated regard as the important point in a campaign. Miles must begin to "lay his pipes" at once, if the fresh stream of general suffrage was to pour through them and bear him resistlessly toward the Capitol at Albany.

He must put money in his purse. But where was it to come from? This wretched John Longworthy was probably alive, after all—though Miles was half disinclined to believe Bastien,—consequently there was no hope of the reward for which he had worked so hard. The girls might do something, if they would; they might help him by agreeing with him to mortgage the house. It was worth at least fifteen thousand dollars, and he was sure they could raise ten on it. But, he reflected bitterly, what did they care for his advancement? If they had the proper spirit, they would be willing to work their fingers to the bone to elevate him to a position which would give him a political "pull" second to that of no man in his section of the city. If they had taken the trouble to conciliate Arthur Fitzgerald, he might have gotten some hold on Bastien—who no doubt was mysteriously and illicitly rich—that would have "paid." As it was, he saw no hope of that. Whether John Longworthy had been murdered by Bastien or not—and the date of that letter about the Cuban plantations might have been forged,—he was in a "no thoroughfare." He felt sure Mary could be induced to mortgage the house. But Esther would talk about the risk, and say that the house was the only thing in the world between them and poverty. He knew her well—Miles flourished his cane so viciously that a sailor, who was going into a Dime Museum, gave him a sharp reminder that he wasn't running the earth; and he awoke from his reverie for a moment, only to relapse again, and to emphasize the ingratitude of Esther. She'd be going to Europe next, to improve herself in music, instead of staying at home and assisting him to make a name in the world!

By this time Miles began to feel truly pathetic. It was easy for the girls to talk religion—Mary was a crank on the subject,—and to make him "mad" by trying to turn him into a devotee. Religion wouldn't get a man into the Assembly, and religion was a poor thing to be offering to a man when he wanted money; but the girls were always doing so, especially Mary. If they had more snap in them, like some girls of his acquaintance, he should not be compelled to bear the whole burden of his advancement on his own shoulders.

Miles, it is plain, had overlooked some things which other people might have seen, and which altered materially his pose

as an exemplar of injured innocence. It did not occur to him that he was thoroughly selfish, and that at this very moment he was wearing a suit of clothes he had bought with part of the money he had "borrowed" from his sisters. His frame of mind is not an uncommon one in people of his education and experience. Nor was he entirely responsible for it. Its blossom had been cultivated by one of the kindest and most foolishly affectionate of mothers, and here it was in full flower.

It was striking five o'clock as Miles reached Fourteenth Street and concluded to take the elevated railway to a political club he often visited. He was about to ascend the steps to the station when a light hand tapped him on the shoulder. He turned and saw a young woman in a dark-red cloak trimmed with fur, and a jaunty hat set above a profuse "bang." Her eyes were bright and brown; she had a great deal of color; one of her ungloved hands was covered with rings; she carried two books under her arm, and a box wrapped in a piece of soiled newspaper. She seemed delighted to see Miles, and he returned her effusive greeting in a pleased tone.

"Why, Nellie, where are you going at this time of day?" he asked. "I thought this was your busy season."

"So it is. Every sales-lady in the store is nearly run off her feet. I shall be on duty on Monday till midnight," she answered, keeping her hand on Miles' arm. "Oh, I'm nearly dead! Just think of it,—I was at the Morning Star Social on Wednesday night, and last night we had the gayest time at the Orion Coterie's reception. I danced till I couldn't stand, and I never laughed so much in my life. I went with Jim Dolan."

"Oh, you did!" observed Miles, frowning. "You must have had a good time. How did the thing go? Were there many women in the grand march?"

"Over a hundred. Lou Simmons had that old blue rag on again, and Jim and I laughed till we almost died."

"Oh, you did!" said Miles, sullenly. "Jim Dolan is a good enough heeler, but he'll never have much of a pull in our district,—I can tell you that."

"He thinks of running against you for the Assembly. Imagine it!" answered the young person, with a giggle. "The idea! I said: 'Jim, you'd have no more chance than the moon against Miles Galligan.' 'I wouldn't?' says he. 'No you wouldn't,' says I, and then he went off and danced the waltz quadrille with Lou Simmons. But I didn't care. I just sat and laughed and laughed! I was sorry you weren't there."

"Were you, Nellie?" asked Miles, regardless of various hard knocks he was getting from pedestrians hurrying up the steps of the station.

"Indeed I was. Good-bye—but I forgot to say that the Lady Rosebuds give their reception next Wednesday. Come for me; I'm on the committee, and I've the right of inviting two gentlemen friends, but I care to ask only one. Don't forget—Wednesday, nine o'clock."

Miles assented and walked up to the platform, reflecting on the roughness of human life. Why had Heaven denied him a sister like that? There was style, there was snap! Nell Mulligan didn't talk religion, like Mary; she wasn't always making you feel uncomfortable, like Esther. She liked to have fun, and if a man took his glass of beer she didn't make a fuss. Her presence could never be associated with the odious lemonade. Look at her dress! Here wasn't a woman on Fifth Avenue that attracted more attention on the street, and he knew she didn't waste half the money Mary and Esther did.

Miles sighed sentimentally as he thought again of the red redingote, the banged hair, and the fascinating giggle; and wondered why he could not raise his relatives to the level of this bewitching creature, who let a man smoke when he pleased, and obligingly took a sip of beer with him in the intervals of Terpsichorean exercise.

## XV.—Mary's Resolution.

Arthur Fitzgerald saw the near approach of Christmas with trepidation. He had promised to sing his part in the Mass at St. Mary's,—there was no escape from it. And yet he dreaded to meet Mary and Esther. They had come as near