



"MISS RUTHERFORD'S WASH."

"MARY ELLEN, I wish you'd carry Miss Rutherford's wash home to her."

Mary Ellen, not one jot or tittle of whose name was ever abated at home although the feather factory and her social circle knew her as Mamie, paused in her occupation of tying a wide white bow beneath her chin. She did not turn from the square little mirror that hung between the two windows of the tenement kitchen, to show her mother, ironing energetically behind her, the mutinous line of her lips at the request.

She was tired of being told to carry Miss Rutherford's clothes home. She could scarcely recall the time when she had not been tired of the command. Back into the remotest, pinafores past, every Saturday had seen her Miss Rutherford's laundry bearer. Lately she occasionally effected a transfer of the task to Tim, but he was generally reserved for longer errands.

"Where's Tim?" she inquired now, shortly.

The habit of obedience was strong, and even a few months of wage earning independence at the factory had not given her the courage to refuse outright the behest of the old woman who with practised arm was sending her iron over a pink shirt waist.

"Tim's at the ball game," replied Mrs. McNulty, oblivious of Mary Ellen's protesting attitude. "He won't be home before supper, an' ye could get these things over to Miss Rutherford an' be back in time to go to the store for me before then."

Mary Ellen looked steadily at some geraniums growing insolently bright in tin cans along the window ledge. They were but a painful blur of scarlet to her, for there was an angry mist before her eyes. She did not speak at once.

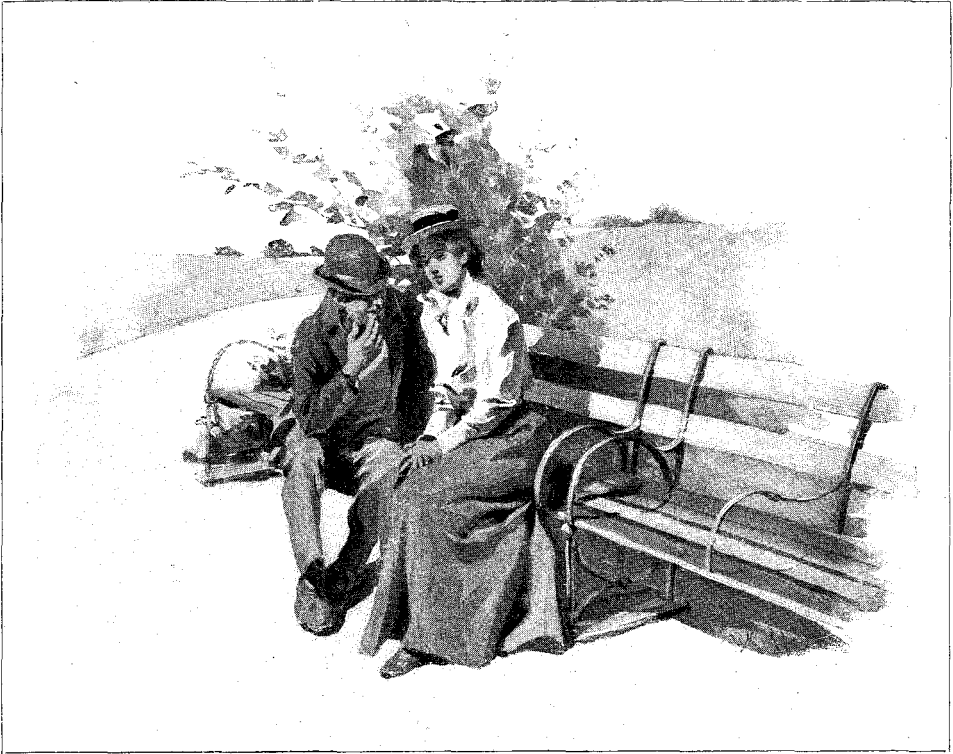
"Well!" cried her mother sharply, as she turned from the board to put a chilling iron on the stove and to test the temperature of a fresh one by trying its hot breath against her cheek. "Well, are ye goin' to stand there all night? Miss Rutherford's wash is all done up there in the basket in the corner."

"I don't want to go," said Mary Ellen sullenly.

"Don't want to go!" cried Mary Ellen's mother, scorching a handkerchief as she held her hot iron still in astonishment.



"OF A SATIDDAY, TOO, THE ONLY DAY I HAVE FOR A LITTLE PLEASURE!"



"SAY, MARY ELLEN, I CAN CALL YE MARY ELLEN, CAN'T I?"

"Don't want to go? I didn't ask ye, miss, whether ye wanted to go or not. I'd have known ye didn't want to go. Since ye've been to the factory it's little ye want to do anywhere else. Ye're ashamed, I suppose, to be takin' home the wash ye ain't ashamed to have yer mother doin'. Don't want to go indade, miss——"

Mrs. McNulty's tongue was as tireless as her hard and misshapen hands and as sharp as her keen eyes. Her oration might have continued much longer had not Mary Ellen broken in, with a sudden and unexpected flash of spirit.

"An' I ain't agoin' either," she said, seizing her hat. "Of a Satiddy, too, the only day I have for a little pleasure!"

With which declaration of independence she dashed through the door and was picking her way through the babies in the narrow hall before Mrs. McNulty had recovered speech again. Then she sighed a little and shook her head.

"She might have stayed and helped me," she said. "Jim Dowd wouldn't think less of her for it. I s'pose she imagines I don't know what's the matter with her, with her airs an' her graces an' her new

ties an' her sittin' up till midnight to copy Miss Rutherford's shirt waists an' her askin' me to stop callin' her Mary Ellen."

Again Mrs. McNulty shook her neat gray head, but this time she laughed comfortably to herself, though her laughter ended wearily.

"She might have helped me tonight, for I'm tired."

Meantime Mary Ellen, though she found Jim waiting at the corner and though he told her with flattering promptness that she "looked out er sight," did not experience the delight she had anticipated. Independence, to be enjoyed, should have no intermixture of remorse, and Mary Ellen's cup of freedom was bitterly tinctured with the thought of a stout, tired old woman journeying ceaselessly from an ironing board to the stove and back again. Whenever silences fell between her and Jim—and they were in the state when silences are many and sweet—a picture came before her of her mother, toiling, toiling, toiling. She was a little girl again, waking from sleep and seeing from her cot in the corner the

ceaseless work of the woman. She remembered guiltily how she had been used to say at such drowsy times: "When I'm big you shan't have to work so." She recalled her pride when first she had been allowed to carry Miss Rutherford's clothes home, the boundless dignity she had assumed when she presented the scrawl of a bill, the eagerness with which she had clutched the silver payment and

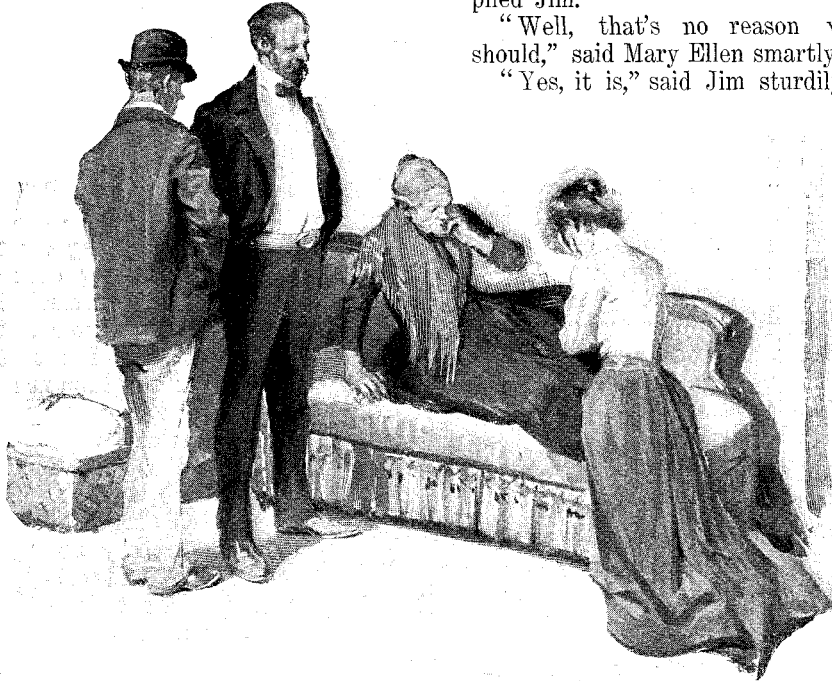
when he had seated her on a bench opposite a fountain that showered pearls upon a pond of floating lilies, pink and pale and languid, "Mary Ellen——"

"What are you callin' me 'Mary Ellen' for?" inquired Miss McNulty, suddenly ceasing to attend to her two voices and listening to Jim instead. Jim belonged to the "Mamie" set of her acquaintances.

"The old woman calls you that," replied Jim.

"Well, that's no reason why you should," said Mary Ellen smartly.

"Yes, it is," said Jim sturdily, though



"YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE MISS RUTHERFORD'S WASH HOME AFTER ALL."

had borne it back to her mother. And today——

"No, I don't want to go on a boat," she heard herself saying crossly.

The boat had been the last of Jim's suggestions. He looked at Mary Ellen, pondering deeply.

"Come on over to the park, then," he said, "an' sit down, for I have somethin' to say to yer."

Mary Ellen walked on. Her feet kept dragging time to a dialogue in her mind, in which one voice said: "You might have done that for her; it wasn't much, an' think of all she's done for you," while the other replied: "Any way, she needn't have asked me to lug a basket of clothes home on a Satiddy afternoon."

"Mary Ellen," began Jim solemnly,

he was slowly growing red beneath his tan and freckles. "Yes, it is, Mary Ellen. For I—I like you like the old woman does. An' I want to take care er ye like she always has—and say, Mary Ellen, I can call ye Mary Ellen, can't I?"

In Mary Ellen's breast was a tumult as though a flock of birds fluttered their tiny wings. The spray from the fountain was a shower of gold; the lilies swam in opalescent beauty.

"Say, I can, can't I?" Jim persisted, whispering—"Mary Ellen—Dowd?"

And Mary Ellen shut out the dazzling vision of the enchanted fountain by covering her happy face with her hands and saying tempestuously and irrelevantly:

"Oh, Jim, you'll always be good to mother, won't you?"

It was dark when they walked eastward again through the glittering, busy Saturday night streets. They held fast to each other's hands and trusted the wide folds of Mary Ellen's crash skirt to hide the embrace. They talked and planned, and bubbled with joy, or were silent in swift dreams of happiness. And Mary Ellen's heart yearned toward her mother with a dim understanding of great tenderness and care.

"I wish I'd taken them clothes home," she mourned to Jim, to whom she had told the story of her revolt.

"She ain't going to work so hard any more," Jim replied, and Mary Ellen thrilled to hear his masterful, kind voice.

There was a crowd at a corner as they crossed Second Avenue. A bicyclist was engaged in giving voluble explanations to a policeman who was making notes of his remarks. A wheel with splintered spokes leaned dejectedly against the curb. The proprietor of a drug store at the corner warned the mob away from his door.

"Them bicyclists——" began Jim fiercely. But Mary Ellen uttered a shriek.

"See, see!" she screamed, pointing to a scattering of white garments on the sidewalk and to an overturned basket. "Oh, Jim! It's a judgment on me. It's mother!"

They pushed their way to the officer and begged for details. Then they fought their way to the drug store.

"It's mother. I know it's mother," Mary Ellen moaned.

The druggist made way for her.

"Come in, if you think it's your mother," he said, and added reassuringly, "She isn't much hurt."

On a lounge behind the prescription counter lay the stout figure of Mrs. McNulty. A physician bent over her.

"Stunned by the fall," he said to Mary Ellen. "That is all, I think. She won't

have to go to the hospital, if you don't wish her to. She's comin' around already."

Mrs. McNulty's eyelids wavered a moment, then lifted themselves. She gazed about her blankly. Then memory returned as she saw Mary Ellen, crying at the foot of the lounge. She smiled a little grimly, but when she spoke, celestial voices bidding sinners enter heaven could not have sounded sweeter in Mary Ellen's ears than did her mother's words:

"You'll have to take Miss Rutherford's wash home after all."

Anne O'Hagan.

TWILIGHT.

NIGHT is coming on; the room is growing dark as with a fast accumulating black mist. Through the east windows I see the foliage of the lawn massed darkly and heavily against the colorless sky, while through the west windows, beyond the open lawn between the snowball hedges, I see the sky and river equally red and calm, and divided by a long black trail of pine woods. Over the open lawn bats whirl aimlessly and tirelessly. The windows are open; the air is warm and damp, and sickening sweet with locust blossoms. The mirror between the east windows reflects the west, which is at once gorgeous and peaceful; the opposite mirror reflects only shades of darkness, as indefinite as a dream.

There is no one in the room but Ruth and me. The piano stands across a corner with the keyboard towards the walls, and she is playing that old thing of Mendelssohn's which says plainer than words: "It is all, all gone—my happiness, youth, love, everything." It does not say so much to her, and yet she is very sad. Her black dress blends with the shadows, but her profile, like a cameo, lies pale against them. Softly, softly, she plays on. I sit with my forehead in my palm.

The piano is old—it has been here since many years before the war. Its notes are thin and tinkling, but she makes them

