

CHOICE LITERATURE.

MORE THAN CONQUEROR.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ONE LIFE ONLY," ETC.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Anthony's heart burned within him as he followed the slaves through the hot streets, and saw them urged on by the lash when they paused a moment under the weight of his heavy luggage, as he carried it to the hotel. He panted to be at work in doing what one man might accomplish in resisting so infamous a system; but he knew that it would probably be some little time before he would have acquired sufficient information as to the existing state of the cruel traffic, to enable him to begin any active work in connection with it. The treaty forced by England upon the Sultan of Zanzibar had been concluded since Anthony had last been in the island, and he was quite ignorant, as yet, of its results, which could only be ascertained in the country itself. However, he knew that his first duty must be to turn his attention to the formidable Miss Vera Saxby, and when he had had a bath and his breakfast, he attired himself in the white linen habiliments which alone can make existence in the stifling climate of Africa endurable to the gentlemen whom we are accustomed to see in respectable broadcloth and black hats. Thus equipped, he started in quest of Captain Saxby's self-willed daughter, and after having received numerous directions and misdirections as to the position of her house from the Europeans whom he questioned, he found himself at last approaching a long, low building on the outskirts of the town, which he was assured was the "slave's asylum" established by Miss Saxby. A wide verandah ran round the whole of the house, so as to afford a shelter, open to the air, from the scorching rays of the sun, and a group of mangrove trees, at a little distance from it, gave rest to the eye from the glare of the walls and ground; but on reaching this little forest he perceived that it stood, as those trees always do, in a swamp, which made him doubt much whether his old friend's daughter was as wise as she was independent, in having chosen a locality for her "Home" which could scarcely be healthy.

Anthony went on through a little wicket gate which led into a garden that had evidently been cultivated with great care, although the rank vegetation of the cactus and other native plants had very speedily choked the English flowers which some unpractised hand had planted among them. All the windows of the house were standing open, and seemed to be used as doors, so it was rather difficult to decide which represented the principal entrance.

Anthony stood looking round for some one to guide him, and presently perceived two little black boys busily engaged in washing vegetables at a fountain which stood on one side of the building. He went towards them, but as he did not know a word of the language he could only show them by signs that he wished to find his way into Miss Saxby's presence. They pointed in the direction of the back of the house, where there was most shade at that time of the day, and he went towards it. As he turned the corner, he heard a low-toned pleasant voice reading aloud, apparently in the soft Swaheli tongue, and, raising his eyes, he was witness to a scene which held him fixed to the spot by the strong interest with which it inspired him.

A number of young African girls and children were seated in a circle on the matting which covered the stone floor of the verandah, and their dark faces and keen black eyes were all turned upon a young English lady, who sat in their midst reading to them from a Testament translated into Swaheli, which she held upon her knees.

She was slender and well-proportioned, of medium height, and with a graceful, firmly-knit figure, which looked as if she must be capable of great activity. She wore a grey dress, touched up here and there with dainty pink ribbons, which contrasted well with the rich brown of the smooth hair that was simply folded round her shapely head. Without being possessed of anything like remarkable beauty, her face was one of the pleasantest to look upon that could well be imagined. She had delicate features, and a clear complexion, with dark grey eyes that were full of animation and feeling; but her chief attraction was the expression of invincible good humor, which sent a bright smile to her lips when the children interrupted her with troublesome questions, and made her eyes often dance with merriment at the absurd grimaces to which they treated her. She had small white hands, which she often laid on the woolly black heads round her in order to recall their attention; and her manner to a very unruly set of little savages was so kind and gentle, that Anthony watched her for some time with very great satisfaction and approval.

This gentle, merry-looking girl was so perfectly unlike the idea he had formed to himself of the formidable Miss Saxby, that it never occurred to him that it was she and none other on whom he was gazing; the mere fact that she was so perfectly feminine and unassuming in appearance made it simply impossible for him to suppose she could be the masterful, arrogant person he had pictured to himself. Quietly assuming that this bright-faced girl must be a young pupil-teacher she had got from the missionaries to help her in her work, Anthony made his way towards her, and, doffing the flapping straw hat which covered his dark hair, he asked if Miss Saxby were at home.

The young lady looked round, quickly scanned Anthony's appearance for a moment with her smiling eyes, and then starting up, she broke through the circle of little black children, and took him frankly by the hand.

"I am sure you are Mr. Beresford, my father's cousin, from England. Oh dear! how glad I am to see you!"

"You do not mean to say that you are Vera Saxby!" he exclaimed, in utter surprise.

"I am that identical individual; why should I not be?"

"It is impossible!" he exclaimed.

"Perhaps you know better than I do," she said, laughing merrily; "my father always told me you were very wise, which is far from being the case with myself, still I think

this is a point on which I may be allowed to have an opinion."

"No doubt," said Anthony, laughing; "but is it really your opinion that you are my cousin Vera, because I can hardly believe it?"

"Well, I think so, unless you have any proof to the contrary," she said, her eyes sparkling with amusement; "do tell me what you expected to see, since you are so surprised?"

"Something much more like a dragon, with claws and scales, than what I find you to be."

"Please to explain," she said, "what is the truth hidden under that figure of speech?"

He looked into the honest eyes that seemed to ask a straightforward answer, and gave it. "Simply this—I did not think that the determined, independent Miss Saxby, who came out all alone to fight the slave-traders here, would have proved to be a gentle-looking girl like yourself."

"You thought I must be very arrogant and bold to have done it," she said, coloring vividly, "and I have begun to think so myself of late, I can assure you, but it was a little your own fault, cousin Anthony; your letters first filled my whole soul with compassion for the slaves, and then the longing to do what I could to help them took such possession of me that I could not resist it. You know you did say in those letters that you wished some woman would come out to take care of the poor slave children," she added, looking up with a timid deprecating expression into his face.

"Yes, I did, and I am thankful you are here," he said, heartily. "Do not mistake me, I think it the most noble work to which any woman could devote herself. I only doubted the wisdom of your starting it quite alone."

"And it was not wise; at least I have found many difficulties which are very embarrassing. I have been hoping you would give me your advice and help, cousin Anthony," she said, almost humbly.

"And so I will to the very best of my power," he answered. "I promised your father the very last day I spent in England that I would do all I could to take care of you till he should come himself."

"You have seen him lately, then!" she exclaimed; "oh, tell me how he was looking, and all that he said to you; it seems so long since I have seen him—one whole year! But I must not keep you standing here; will you come and sit down in my own little room?—it is cool there," and she led the way through a large school-room, where a number of other little Africans were amusing themselves, to a small apartment surrounded on all sides by open windows, where a table with a writing-desk on it and two or three chairs formed the sole furniture.

"This is my own den," she said, "do sit down," and as he did so, and took from his pocket various packets he had brought for her, she clapped her hands in glee.

"Are those letters from home for me?" she said. "Oh, how delightful but I shall keep them for the evening, when I am alone. I want to hear all you can tell me now." As she spoke a slight noise at the open door made them both look round, to see one of the young slave-girls leaning against the door-post, with her dark eyes fixed on Vera with a look of wistful affection.

"Oh, my poor Maimouna," said Vera, and rising she went to the girl, and spoke to her for a few minutes in the soft sounding Swaheli, gently drawing her back into the outer room, and presently the slave stooped, and kissed Vera's hand, then quietly went away.

"That poor child cannot be happy if I am out of her sight, because she thinks she is only safe with me," said Vera, as she came back, and sat down opposite to Anthony. "She ran away from a master who was fearfully cruel to her," and Vera shuddered as she spoke.

"Is that the girl you fought for with a slave-dealer?" said Anthony, with the malicious purpose of bringing the bright blush back to her face, in which he succeeded perfectly.

It was with crimson cheeks that she answered, "You have heard that story, then? Yes, that is the girl. It was a dreadful scene, and I cannot think of it all without horror. But, oh, cousin Anthony, this is just one of the cases in which I did so require some help and advice, and I had no one to give it to me. Will you tell me whether you think I did right or wrong? You know I managed to keep her safe in here the first night, but not without great danger to all of us, and indeed at the risk of having the house burnt down and ourselves in it; but next day she would have been torn from me, and I could not have saved her from being beaten to death, if I had not paid the price at which the man valued her. I had a strong feeling that, as a matter of principle, it is utterly wrong to buy a slave, but it seemed to me that in this case I had no alternative. I could not let her die under the lash," and Vera's eyes filled with tears. "I thought I might look upon it simply as her ransom. Do you think I was wrong? Many Europeans have blamed me, and said I was encouraging that horrible trade, which I would give my life to resist if I could!"

"You were perfectly right," said Anthony, warmly; "of course I agree in the principle of not buying a slave under any circumstances, when it can be helped, but there is no rule without exceptions, and this was clearly one. No doubt you have taken legal measures to give her her freedom now."

"I should think so!" exclaimed Vera; "I would not have kept her here a day longer than I could help as a slave. All those children are free now; but what are they to the numbers I hoped to have had safe in this Home!" And she sighed heavily.

(To be continued.)

COFFEE ROOMS FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.

An interesting and numerously attended Meeting, for the purpose of hearing an address from Lady Hope of Carriden, authoress of "Our Coffee-room," was held on the evening of 25th April, in the Tennis Court, Castle Wemyss.

The Earl of Shaftesbury presided, and was received with applause. He said it was his duty, and it was also to him a very great satisfaction to have the honour of introducing to them a lady who had come from a distance for the purpose of giving them the benefit of her experience and the aid of

her counsel on one of the many methods now on foot for the purpose of improving the condition of the working-classes, and meeting one of the very great evils that afflict this land. That lady had been well known under the name of Miss Cotton. She was the daughter of Sir Arthur Cotton, a most eminent engineer, and, he was proud to say, a dear and esteemed friend of his own. That lady had since become a Scotchwoman, having accepted the hand of a most distinguished naval officer, Admiral Sir James Hope. What she had, by the blessing of God, done in her own country, she was desirous of doing in the country of her adoption. She had established at Dorking a large coffee-room for the purpose of weaning the working-classes from habits of intoxication, while raising them to a higher level of life, elevating their thoughts, giving them the means of shunning the public-house, and promoting their temporal and eternal welfare. Her experience would be of great importance to them here, and they would be glad to hear from her own lips how she began and carried on the work and how eminently successful she had been. They had heard of coffee-rooms and cocoa-rooms, and there was perhaps some slight difference in the characteristics of Scotchmen which made them more difficult to deal with than Englishmen, but the principle was the same, the evil was the same, and, to some extent, the remedy was the same, and what was good and beneficial in England might be beneficial in the kingdom of Scotland.

Lady Hope then rose and was greeted with cordial cheers. She began by remarking on the interest which more or less was manifested in philanthropic movements, and that while various modes of doing good were attempted, there was more or less a desire to do good and be the means of communicating that good to others. But while this feeling existed there were many temptations that kept people back from indulging it, or permitting it to be carried out into active effort, as the fear of what others might say if they tried the very plan that they thought was best. There were so many phases of Christian work,—such as classes and cottage readings, and other means of introducing the Saviour to the sinner, that it seemed almost selfish, she was going to say—it seemed wrong that one should take up a particular branch of work and speak of it. There was a beautiful verse—the 6th in the fourth Psalm, which contained a question and an answer she wanted to see practically carried out—"There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."

That question was being echoed throughout the length and breadth of the land, and was heard among every grade of society in the pleasure-seeking everywhere manifest, in the rushing to theatres, the crowding of music halls, and in Sabbath-day excursions. Some true, satisfying pleasure was what all wanted, and David, the Shepherd King, found the answer, which he showed to others—"Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us." When first she used to go among the poor people at Dorking, having about fifty families in the district which she visited, each of whom had their cottage, with its little garden in front, she found that what might be comparatively happy homes were not so, for a large proportion of the wages which the men earned were spent in the public-house, and the people, in several instances, had a poverty-stricken appearance; and even when she came to respectable dwellings she found there was no love for the house of God, and no regard for the Scriptures, while the men spent their whole evenings in the public-house.

Her business was to collect money for a clothes club, but as she went round she found that more than the savings of their pennies were needed. The difficulty, however, was to get to the people. She began with the boys, and then with the women, and for nearly two years went up and down the district. She pleasantly narrated how she came afterwards to labour among the men, describing how a great navy had expressed a wish to see her, and at the close of the boys' class, wanted her to bring those of his order together and have some hymns and a meeting. She said it was not right for women to speak to men, but he reminded her, among other instances recorded in the Bible, of how the woman of Samaria spoke to the men of the city. The man wished to know how to be saved, and she agreed, if he would come and see her, to read him some verses out of the Bible. Next Sunday he came, accompanied by his wife, and when he had seated himself by the fire, he whistled on his mate, Joe. She read and prayed with them. Next Sunday Joe was there again. On the following Sunday about fifteen people came, then forty, till the room was crowded. She said, if they wished these meetings continued, she would try and get a missionary for them, which she did; but he was not altogether successful, and after an interval of six months, as the people would not let her alone, she began the meetings again, circulating notices with her name attached, saying "Would you like to come and read the Bible?" The meetings were still going on, and were attended by about a thousand people every Sunday night. This proved the thirst there was for the living water. Lady Hope then spoke of the efforts made to provide counter attractions to the public-house during the week, especially on Saturday nights. Having but limited accommodation in their own dwellings, if working men wished to meet a friend or read the papers, they went to the public-houses, of which there were perhaps hundreds through the streets inviting them to enter. Touching instances came before her of how drink was keeping men back from entering the Kingdom, and the thought crossed her mind—if it was the public-house that was doing this, why should she not have a room, and sell coffee and buns, and get the men to come in? She got an empty place, which was opened as a coffee-room. There was a good many there in the morning and afternoon, and a great many always in the evening. After it had gone on for two or three weeks, their manager, always on the look-out, drew their attention to a man who was in the room, and on his suggestion she spoke to the man, whose house, she learned, was one to which she never before could get admission, the man having dared his wife to let her in; but he now assured her of a hearty welcome, and when she went to the house next day, the wife told her what a changed man her husband had become. When he used to go to the public-house he could