

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

A STORY WITH A MORAL FOR SOCIAL THEORISTS TO ACT UPON.

CHAPTER XXX.—Continued.

'Yes, you are,' continued the professor, gallantly. 'But you do have your uses in the world—most things have. Now, as a confederate or assistant, there's nobody like a woman. They do what they are told to do. They are faithful over the secrets. They learn their place on the platform and they stay there. Some professors carry about a boy with them. But they can't place any real trust in a boy; he's always up to tricks, and if you wallop him—likely as not—next night he'll take and spoil your best trick out of revenge. Some have a man to help, but, then, he learns the secrets and tries to cut you out; but with a woman you're always pretty safe. A daughter's best; because then you pocket all the money yourself. But a wife is next best so long as she keeps steady and acts on the square.'

'I never thought of it before,' said Angela, 'but I suppose it is as you say, and the real object for which women were created must have been the assistance of conjurers.'

'Of course,' said the professor, failing to see the delicate sarcasm of this remark, 'of course. What better thing could they do? Why, here you sit slaving all day long, and all the year round; and what are you the better for it? A bare living—that's all you get out of it. Whether you go into shops, behind a bar or into the work-room, it's the same story—a bare living. Look at the conjurin' line now—you live in splendor; you go on the stage in a most beautiful costume—silks and satins, gold and spangles tights, if you like. You travel about the country free. You hear the people clapping their hands whenever you go in; and believin' that you do it all yourself. You've got nothing to do but just what you are told, and that's your life—with pockets full of money, and the proud consciousness that you are making your fortune.'

'It certainly seems very beautiful to look at; are there no drawbacks?'

'None,' answered the enthusiast. 'It's the best profession in the world—there's no danger in it. There's no capital required. All it wants is cleverness. That's why I come to you; because you are a real clever girl, and, what's more, you're good-looking—it is not always that looks and brains go together.'

'Very well, professor. Let us come to the point—what is it you want me to do?'

'I want you, Miss Kennedy, to go about the country with me. You shall be my assistant; you shall play the piano, and come on dressed in a pink costume—which generally fetches at an entertainment. Nothing to say; and I will teach you by degrees all the dodges, and the way it's done you will learn. You'll be surprised when you find how easy it is, and yet how you can't do it. And when you hear the people telling what they saw, and you know just exactly what they could have seen if they'd had their eyes in their heads, you'll laugh, you will.'

'But I'm afraid I can't think—'

'Don't raise difficulties, now,' he spoke persuasively. 'I am coming to them directly. I've got ideas in my head which I can't carry through without a real clever confederate. And you must be that confederate. Electricity; now—he lowered his voice, and whispered—'none of the conjurers have got a battery at work. Think of new feats of marvel and magic never before considered possible; and done secret by electricity. What a shame—what a cruel shame, to have let the world get hold of electricity. Why, it ought to have been kept for conjurers. And telephones! again, what a scope there is in a good telephone! You and me together, Miss Kennedy, could knock up an entertainment as nobody ever yet dreamed of. If you could dance a bit it would be an advantage. But, if you won't, of course, we must give it up. And, as to the dress-making rubbish, why, in a week you will be wondering how in the world you ever came to waste your time upon it at all, while such a chance was going about in the world. Not that I blame you for it; not at all. It was your ignorance kept you out of it, and your good luck threw you in the way of it.'

'That may be so. But still, I am not sure—'

'I haven't done yet. Look here! I've been turning the thing over in my own mind a good bit. The only way I can think of for such a girl as you to go about the country with a show is for you to be married to the showman—so I'll marry you before we start, and we shall be comfortable and happy; and ready for the fortune to come in. And you'll be quite sure of sharing in it—'

'Thank you, professor.'

'Very good, then; no need for thanks. I've got engagements in the country for over three months. We'll marry at once,

and you can spend that time in learning.'

Angela laughed. Were women of 'her class,' she thought, so easily won, and so unceremoniously wooed? Were there no preliminary advances, soft speeches, words of compliment, and flattery?

'I've been laying out a plan,' the professor went on, 'for the most complete thing you ever saw! Never before attempted on any stage! Marvelous optical illusion. Hush—electricity!' He said this in a stage whisper. 'You are to be a fairy. Stale old business, isn't it? But it always pays. Silk stockin's and gauze, with a wand. I'm Sinbad the Sailor, or Robinson Crusoe. It doesn't matter what; and then you—'

'Stay a moment, professor—she laid her hand upon his arm—you have not waited for my answer. I can not, unfortunately, marry you; nor can I go about the country with you; nor can I possibly become your confederate and assistant.'

'You can't marry me? Why not, when I offer you a fortune?'

'Not even for a fortune.'

'Why not?'

'Well, for many reasons. One of them is that I can not leave my dress-making—rubbish, as it seems to you. That is, indeed, a sufficient reason.'

'Oh!' his face becoming very sad, 'and I set my heart upon it! The very first time I saw you, I said to myself—'There's a girl for the business—never was such a girl!' And to think you're thrown away on a dress-making business. 'Oh! it's too bad! and that you're contented with your lot, humble as it is, when I offer to make you an artist, and to give you a fortune. That's what cuts me to the quick—that you should be contented.'

'I am very much ashamed of myself,' said Angela, with contrition; 'but you see what you ask is impossible.'

'And I only made up my mind last night that I would marry you, if nothing else would do.'

'Did you—poor professor! I am quite sorry for you; but you should never marry a woman unless you are in love with her. Now it's quite clear that you are not in love with me.'

'Love! I've got my work to think of.'

'Then good-morning, professor. Let us part friends, if I can not accept your offer.'

He took her offered hand with reluctance, and in sorrow more than in anger.

'Do you really understand,' he asked, 'what you are throwing away? Fame and fortune—nothing less.'

She laughed, and drew back her hand, shaking her head.

'Oh, the woman's a fool!' cried the professor, losing his temper, and slamming the door after him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

CAPTAIN COPPIN.

It was at this time that Tom Coppin, Capt. Coppin of the Salvation Army, paid his only visit to Angela, that visit that caused so much sensation among the girls.

He chose a quiet evening early in the week. Why he came has never been quite clear. It was not curiosity, for he had none; nor was it a desire to study the kind of culture which Angela had introduced among her friends, for he had no knowledge of, or desire for, culture at all. Nor does the dress-makers' workshop afford a congenial place for the exercise of that soldier's gifts. He came, perhaps, because he was passing on his way from a red-hot prayer meeting to a red-hot preaching, and he thought he would see the place which, among others, the Advanced Club, for instance, was keeping his brother from following in his own steps, and helping him to regard the world, its pleasures and pursuits, with eyes of affection. One knows not what he expected to find or what he proposed by going there, because the things he did find completely upset all his expectations, if he had any. Visions, perhaps, of the soul-destroying dance, and the red cup, and the loud laughter of fools, and the talk that is as the crackling of thorns, were in his mind.

The room was occupied, as usual, with the girls, Angela among them. Captain Sorensen was there too; the girls were quietly busy, for the most part, over 'their own' work, because, if they would go fine they must make their own fineries; it was a frosty night, and the fire was burning clear; in the most comfortable chair beside it sat the crippled girl of whom we know; the place was hers by a sort of right; she was gazing into the flames, listening lazily to the music—Angela had been playing—and doing nothing, with contentment. Life was so sweet to the child when she was not suffering pain, and was warm, and was not hungry, and was not hearing complaints, that she wanted nothing more, Nelly, for

her part, sat with hands folded pensively, and Angela wondered what, of late days, it was that seemed to trouble her.

Suddenly the door opened, and a man, dressed in a tight uniform of dark cloth and a cap of the same, with S. S. upon it, like the lord mayor's gold chain, stood before them.

He did not remove his cap, but he looked round the room, and presently called in a loud, harsh voice:

'Which of you here answers to the name of Kennedy?'

'I do,' replied Angela; my name is Kennedy. What is yours? and why do you come here?'

'My name is Coppin. My work is to save souls. I tear them out of the very clutches and claws of the devil; I will have them; I leave them no peace until I have won them; I sing to them; I seek them out in their hiding-places, even in their dens and courts of sin, there are none too far gone for my work; none that I will let go once I get a grip on them; once my hand is on them out they must come if the devil and all his angels were pulling them the other way. For my strength is not of myself; it is—'

'But why do you come here?' asked Angela.

The man had the same black hair and bright eyes as his brother; the same strong voice, although a long course of street shouting had made it coarse and rough; but his eyes were brighter; his lips more sensitive, his forehead higher; he was like his brother in all respects, yet so unlike that, while the Radical had the face of a strong man, the preacher had in his the indefinable touch of weakness which fanaticism always brings with it. Whatever else it was, however, the face was that of a man terribly in earnest.

'I have heard about you,' he said. 'You are of those who cry peace when there is no peace; you entice the young men and maidens who ought to be seeking pardon and preaching repentance, and you destroy their souls with dancing and music. I come here to tell you that you are one of the instruments of the devil in this wicked town.'

'Have you really come here, Mr. Coppin, on purpose to tell me that?'

'That,' he said, 'is part of my message.'

'Do you think,' asked Angela, because this was almost intolerable, 'that it is becoming in a preacher like yourself to invade a private and quiet house in order to insult a woman?'

'Truth is not insult,' he said. 'I come here as I would go to a theatre or a singing-hall or any soul-destroying place. You shall hear the plain truth. With your music and your dancing and your pleasant ways, you are corrupting the souls of many. My brother is hardened in his unrepentance since he knew you. My cousin goes on laughing, and dances over the very pit of destruction, through you. These girls—'

'Oh!' cried Rebekah, who had no sympathy with the Salvation Army, and felt herself an authority when the religious question was touched, 'they are all mad. Let him go away.'

'I would,' replied the Captain, 'that you were half as mad. Oh! I know you now; I know you snug professors of a Saturday religion—'

'Your mission,' Angela interrupted, 'is not, I am sure, to argue about another sect. Come, Mr. Coppin, now that you have told us who you are and what is your profession and why you come here, you might like to preach to us. Do so, if you will. We were sitting here quietly when you came, and you interrupt nothing. So that if it would really make you feel any happier, you may preach to us for a few minutes.'

He looked about him in hesitation. This kind of preaching was not in his line; he loved a vast hall with a thousand faces looking at him; or a crowd of turbulent roughs ready to answer the Message with a volley of brickbats; or a chance gathering of unrepentant sinners in a wide thoroughfare. He could lift up his voice to them; but to preach in a quiet room to a dozen girls was a new experience.

And it was not the place which he had expected. His brother, in their last interview, had thrown in his teeth this house and its doings as offering a more reasonable solution of life's problems than his own. 'You want everybody,' he said, 'to join you in singing and preaching every day; what should we do when there was nobody left to preach at? Now, there, what they say is 'let us make ourselves comfortable.' There's a deal in that, come to think of it. Look at those girls now; while you and your Happy Elizas are trampin' in the mud with your flag and your procession, and gettin' black eyes and brickbats, they are singin' and laughin' and dancin', and makin' what fun they can for themselves. It seems to me, Tom, that if this kind of thing gets fashionable you and your army will be played-out.'

Well, he came to see this place which had offered pleasure instead of repentance, as a method of improving life. They were not laughing and singing at all; there were no men present except one old gentleman in a

blue coat with brass buttons. To be sure, he had a fiddle lying on a chair beside him. There was no indication whatever of the red cup, and no smell of tobacco. Now, pleasure without drink, tobacco, and singing, had been in Tom's unregenerate days incomprehensible. 'I would rather,' said Dick, 'see an army of Miss Kennedy's girls than an army of Hallelujah Poles.' Yet they seemed perfectly quiet. 'Make 'em happy, Tom, first,' said Dick, who was still thinking over Harry's speech as a possible point of departure. Happiness is not a word in the dictionary of men like Tom Coppin; they know what it means; they know a spree; they understand drink; they know misery, because it is all around them; the misery of hunger, of disease, of intemperance, of dirt, of evil temper, of violence; the misery which the sins of one bring all; and sins of all upon each. Indeed, we not go to Whitechapel to find out misery. But they know not happiness. For such as Captain Coppin there is, as an alternative for misery, the choice of glory. What they mean by Glory is ecstasy, the rapture, the mysteries of emotional religion; he, they believe, is the most advanced who is most of hysterical. Dick, like many of his followers, yearned honestly and unselfishly to extend this rapture which he himself so often enjoyed; but that there should be any other way out of the misery save by way of the humble stool of Conviction, was a thing which he could not understand. Happiness, calm, peace, content, the sweet enjoyment of innocent recreation—the things he knew nothing of; they had not come his way.

He had come; he had seen; no doubt the moment his back was turned the orgy would begin. But he had delivered his message; he had warned the young woman who had led the girls—that calm, cold woman who looked at him with curiosity and was so unmoved by what he said; he might go. With his whole heart he had spoken and had so far moved no one except the daughter of the Seventh day Independents—and her only a little. This kind of thing is very irritating. Suppose you were to put a red-hot poker into a jug of water without producing any steam or hissing at all, how, as a natural philosopher, would you feel?

'You may preach to us, if you like,' said Miss Kennedy. She sat before him, resting her chin upon her hand. He knew that she was beautiful, although women and their faces, graces, and sweet looks played no part at all in his thoughts. He felt, without putting the thing into words, that she was beautiful. Also, that she regarded him with a kind of contempt, as well as curiosity; also, that she had determined not to be moved by anything he might say; also, that she relied on her own influence over the girls. And he felt for a moment as if his trusty arms were dropping from his hands and his whole armor was slipping from his shoulder. Not her beauty, no; fifty Helens of Troy would not have moved this young apostle; but her position as an impregnable outsider. For against the curious outsider, who regards Captains in the Salvation Army only as so many interesting results of growing civilization, their officers are powerless indeed.

If there is any real difference between the workingman of England and the man who does other work, it is that the former is generally emotional and the latter is not. To the man of emotion things can not be stated too strongly; his leader is he who has the greatest command of adjectives; he is singularly open to the charm of eloquence; he likes audacity of statement; he likes to be moved by wrath, pity, and terror; he has no eye for shades of color; and when he is most moved he thinks he is most right. It is this which makes him so angry with the people who can not be moved.

Angela was one of those persons who could not be moved by the ordinary methods. She looked at Tom as if he was some strange creature, watching what he did, listening to what he said, as if she was not like unto him. It is not quite a fair way of describing Angela's attitude of mind; but it is near enough; and it represents what passed through the brain of the Salvation Captain.

'Will you preach to us?' she repeated the third time.

He mechanically opened his hymn-book.

'Number three hundred and sixty-two,' he said, quietly.

He sang the hymn all by himself, at the top of his voice, so that the windows rattled, to one of those rousing and popular melodies which have been pressed into the service of the Army; it was, in fact, 'Molly Darling,' and the people of Steney Green asked each other in wonder if a meeting of the Salvation Army was actually being held at Miss Kennedy's.

When he had finished his hymn he began to preach.

He stammered at first, because the surroundings were strange; besides, the cold, curious eyes of Miss Kennedy chilled him. Presently, however, he recovered self-possession, and began his address.

There is one merit, at least, possessed by these preachers: it is that of simplicity. Whatever else they may be, they are always

the same; even the words do not vary while there is but one idea.

If you want to influence the dull of comprehension, such as the common donkey, there is but one way possible. He can not be led, or coaxed, or persuaded; he must be thwacked. Father Stick explains and makes apparent, instantly, what the logic of all the schools has failed to prove. In the same way, if you wish to awaken the spiritual emotions among people who have hitherto been strange to them, your chance is not by argument, but by appeals, statements, promises, threats, terrors, and pictures which, in fact, do exactly correspond, and produce the same effect as Father Stick; they are so many knock-down blows; they belabor and they terrify.

The preacher began; the girls composed themselves to listen, with the exception of Rebekah, who went on with her work ostentatiously, partly to show her disapproval of such irregular proceedings and partly as one who, having got the Truth from an independent source, and being already advanced in the narrow way, had no occasion for the Captain's persuasion.

It is one thing to hear the voice of a street preacher in his own church, so to speak, that is, on the curbstone, and quite another thing to hear the same man and the same person in a quiet room. Tom Coppin had only one sermon, though he dressed it up sometimes, but not often, in new words. Yet he was relieved of monotony by the earnestness which he poured into it. He believed in it himself; that goes a long way. Angela began by thinking of the doctrine, but presently turned her attention to the preacher, and began to think what manner of man he was. Personally he was pale and thin, with strong black hair, like his brother, and his eyes were singularly bright.

Here was a man of the people; self-taught, profoundly ignorant as to the many problems of life and its solutions; filled, however, with that noble sympathy which makes prophets, poets, martyrs; wholly possessed of faith in his narrow creed; owning no authority of church or priest; believing himself under direct Divine guidance, chosen and called, the instrument of merciful Heaven to drag guilty souls from the pit; consciously standing as a servant, day and night, before a Throne which other men regard afar off or can not see at all; actually living the life of hardship, privation, and ill-treatment, which he preached; for the sake of others, enduring hardness, poverty, contumely; taking all these things as part and parcel of the day's work; and in the name of duty, searching into corners and holes of this great town for the vilest, the most hardened, the most depraved, the most blinded to a higher life.

This, if you please, is not a thing to be laughed at. What did Wesley more? What did Whitfield? Nay—what did Paul? They paid him for his services, it is true; they gave him five-and-twenty shillings a week; some of this great sum he gave away; the rest provided him with poor and simple food. He had no pleasures or joys of life; he had no recreations; he had no hope of pleasures; some of the officers of his Army—being men and women as well as preachers—loved each other and were married; but this man had no thought of any such thing; he, as much as any monk, was vowed to the service of the Master, without rest or holiday, or any other joy than that of doing the work that lay before him.

A great pity and sympathy filled Angela's heart as she thought of these things.

The man before her was for the moment a prophet; it mattered nothing that his creed was narrow, his truths only half truths, his doctrine commonplace, his language in bad taste, his manner vulgar; the faith of the man covered up and hid these defects; he had a message to mankind; he was delivering that message; to him it was a fresh new message, never before entrusted to any man; he had to deliver it perpetually, even though he went in starvation.

Angela's heart softened as she realized the loyalty of the man. He saw the softening in her eyes and thought it was the first sign of conviction.

But it was not. Meantime, if Angela was thinking of the preacher, the girls, of course, with the exception of Rebekah, were trembling at his words.

(To be Continued.)

Nobody at Home.

He knocked at the back door of a suburban house and the cook opened it. He was a sinister looking fellow, and she held on to the door.

'Lady of the house in?' he inquired gruffly.

No, trembled the cook.

Master of the house here?

No.

None of the people in?

None but me, and she tried to shut the door.

'Aw, come off, he growled, setting his foot against it; I'll come in and have a good eat. Let go that door.'

She let go of the door, and the tramp went in and fell into the arms of a big policeman, who was courting the cook contrary to orders.