

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER XII.

SUNDAY AT THE EAST END.

Sunday morning in and about the White-chapel and Mile End Roads, Angela discovered to be a time of peculiar interest. The closing of the shops adds to the dignity of the broad thoroughfares, because it hides so many disagreeable and even humiliating things. But it by no means put a stop to traffic, which is conducted with an ostentatious disregard of the Fourth Commandment or Christian custom. At one end, the City end, is Houndsditch, crowded with men who come to buy and sell; and while the bells of St. Botolph call upon the faithful with a clanging and clashing which ring like a cry of despair, the footpath is filled with the busy loungers, who have long since ceased to regard the invitation as having anything at all to do with them.

Strange and wonderful result of the gathering of men in great cities! It is not a French, or an English, or a German, or an American result—it is universal; in every great city of the world, below a certain level, there is no religion—men have grown dead to their higher instincts; they no longer feel the possibilities of humanity; faith brings to them no more the evidence of things unseen. They are crowded together, so that they have ceased to feel their individuality. The crowd is eternal—they are part of that eternity; if one drops out, he is not missed; nobody considers that it will be his own turn some day so to drop out. Life is nothing for ever and ever, but work in the week with as much beer and tobacco as their money will run to, and loafing on Sundays with more beer and tobacco. This, my friends, is a truly astonishing thing, and a thing unknown until this century. Perhaps, however, in ancient Rome, the people had ceased to believe in their gods; perhaps, in Babylon, the sacred bricks were kicked about by the unthinking mob; perhaps, in every great city, the same loss of individual manhood may be found.

It was on a Sunday morning in August that Angela took a little journey of exploration, accompanied by the young workman who was her companion in these excursions. He led her into Houndsditch and Minorities, where she had the pleasure of inspecting the great Mercantile Interest of old clothes, and of gazing upon such as buy and sell therein. Then she turned her face northward, and entered upon a journey which twenty years ago would have been full of peril, and is now, to one who loves his fellow-man, full of interest.

The great Boulevard of the East was thronged with the class of men who keep the Sabbath in holy laziness with tobacco. Some of them lounge, some talk, some listen, all have pipes in their mouths. Here was a circle gathered round a man who was waving his arms and shouting. He was an Apostle of Temperance: behind him stood a few of his private friends to act as a clique. The listeners seemed amused but not convinced. 'They will probably,' said Harry, 'enjoy their dinner beer quite as much as if they had not heard this sermon.' Another circle was gathered round a man in a cart, who had a flaming red flag to support him. He belonged, the flag told the world, to the Tower Hamlets Magna Charta Association. What he said was listened to with the same languid curiosity and tepid amusement. Angela stopped a moment to hear what he had to say. He was detailing, with immense energy, the particulars of some awful act of injustice committed upon a friend unknown, who got six months. The Law of England is always trampling upon some innocent victim, according to this sympathizer with virtue. The workmen have heard it all before, and they continue to smoke their pipes, their blood not quickened by a single beat. The ear of the people is accustomed to vehemence; the case must be put strongly before it will listen at all; and listening, as most brawlers discover, is not conviction.

Next to the Magna Charta brethren a cheap-jack had placed his cart. He drove a roaring trade in two-penn'orths, which, out of compliment to a day which should be devoted to good works, consisted each of a bottle of sarsaparilla, which he called 'sassaple,' and a box of pills. Next to him the costers stood beside their carts loaded with cheap ices, ginger-beer, and lemonade—to show that there was no deception, a great glass jar stood upon each cart with actual undeniable slices of lemon floating in water and a lump of ice upon the top; there were also piles of plums, plums without end, early August apples, and windfall pears; also sweet things in foot-long lumps sticky and grewsome to look upon; Brazil nuts, always a favorite article of commerce in certain circles, though not often met with at the tables of the luxurious; late

oranges, more plums, many more plums, plums in enormous quantities; an peri-winkles, which last all the year round, with whelks and vinegar, and the toothsome shrimp. Then there came another circle, and in the midst stood a young man with long fair hair and large blue eyes. He was preaching the Gospel, as he understood it; his face was the face of an enthusiast: a little solitude, a little meditation among the mountains, would have made this man a seer of visions and a dreamer of dreams. He was not ridiculous, though his grammar was defective and his pronunciation had the cockney twang and his aspirates were wanting: nothing is ridiculous that is in earnest. On the right of the street they had passed the head-quarters of the Salvation Army; the brave warriors were now in full blast, and the fighting, 'knee-drill,' singing, storming of the enemy's fort were at their highest and most enjoyable point; Angela looked in and found an immense hall crammed with people who, came to fight, or look on, to scoff, or gaze. Higher up, on the left, stands a rival in red-hot religion, the Hall of the Jubilee Singers, where another vast crowd was worshiping, exhorting, and singing.

'There seems,' said Angela, 'to be too much exhorting; can they not sit down somewhere in quiet for praise and prayer?'

'We working-people,' replied her companion, 'like everything loud and strong. If we are persuaded to take a side, we want to be always fighting on that side.'

Streams of people passed them, lounging or walking with a steady purpose. The former were the indifferent and the callous, the hardened and the stupid, men to whom preachers and orators appealed in vain; to whom Peter the Hermit might have bawled himself hoarse, and Bernard would have thrown all his eloquence away; they smoked short pipes, with their hands in their pockets, and looked good-tempered; with them were boys, also smoking short pipes, with their hands in their pockets. Those who walked were young men dressed in long frock-coats of a shiny and lustrous black, who carried Bibles and Prayer Books with some ostentation. They were on their way to church; with them were their sisters, for the most part well-dressed, quiet girls, to whom the noise and the crowds were a part of life, a thing not to be avoided, hardly felt as a trouble.

'I am always getting a new sensation,' said Angela.

'What is the last?'

'I have just realized that there are thousands and thousands of people who never, all their lives, get to a place where they can be quiet. Always noise, always crowds, always buying and selling.'

'Here, at least,' said Harry, 'there is no noise.'

They were at the wicket gate of the Trinity Almshouse.

'What do you think, Miss Kennedy?'

'It is a haven of rest,' she replied, thinking of a certain picture. 'Let us, too, seek peace awhile.'

It was just eleven o'clock, and the almshouse were going to their chapel. They entered the square, and joined the old men in their weekly service. Angela discovered to her disappointment, that the splendid flight of steps leading to the magnificent portal was a dummy, because the real entrance to the chapel was a lowly door beneath the stone steps, suited, Mr. Bunker would have said, to the humble condition of the moneyless.

It is a plain chapel, with a small organ in the corner, a tiny altar, and over the altar the Ten Commandments in a black wood frame—rules of life for those whose life is well-nigh done—and a pulpit, which serves for reading the service as well as delivering the sermon. The congregation consisted of about thirty of the almshouse, with about half as many old ladies; and Angela wondered why these old ladies were all dressed in black, and all wore crapes. Perhaps they desired by the use of this material to symbolize mourning for the loss of opportunities for making money; or for the days of beauty and courtship, or for children dead and gone, or to mark the humility which becomes an inmate, or to do honor to the day which is still revered by many English women as a day of humiliation and rebuke, or in the belief that crape confers dignity. We know not we know nothing; the love which women bear for crape is a mystery; man can but speculate idly on their ways. We are like the philosopher picking up pebbles by the sea-side. Among the old people sat Nelly Sorensen, a flower of youth and loveliness, in her simple black dress, and her light hair breaking out beneath her bonnet. The Catholics believe that no church is complete without a bone of some dead saint or beautiful person, Angela

made up her mind, on the spot, that no act of public worship is complete without the assistance of youth as well as of age.

The men were all dressed alike in blue coats and brass buttons, the uniform of the place; they seemed all, with the exception of one who was battered by time, and was fain to sit while the rest stood, to be of the same age, and that might be anything between a hearty sixty-five and a vigorous eighty. After the manner of sailors, they were all exact in the performance of their share in public worship, following the prayers in the book and the lessons in the Bible. When the time came for listening they straightened themselves out, in an attitude comfortable for listening. The Scotch elder assumes, during the sermon, the air of a hostile critic; the face of the British rustic becomes vacant; the eyes of the ordinary listener in church show that his thoughts are far away; but the expression of a sailor's face, while he is performing the duty—part of the day's duty—of listening to the sermon, shows respectful attention, although he may have heard it all before.

Angela did not listen much to the sermon she was thinking of the old men for whom that sermon was prepared. There was a fresh color upon their faces, as if it was not so very long since their cheeks had been fanned by the strong sea breeze; their eyes were clear, they possessed the bearing which comes of the habit of command, and they carried themselves as if they were not ashamed of their poverty. Now Bunker, Angela reflected, would have been very much ashamed, and would have hung his head in shame. But then Bunker was one of the nimble-footed hunters after money, while these ignoble persons had contented themselves with the simple and slavish record of duty done.

The service over, they were joined by Captain Sorensen and his daughter, and for half an hour walked in the quiet court behind the church, in peaceful converse. Angela with the old man, and Nelly with the young man. It matters little what they talked about, but it was something good, because when the captain went home to his dinner, he kissed his daughter, and said it seemed to him that it was the best day's work he ever did when he let her go to Miss Kennedy.

In the evening Angela made another journey of exploration with the same escort. They passed down Stepney Green, and plunged among the labyrinth of streets lying between the Mile End Road and the Thames. It is as unlovely a collection of houses as may be found anywhere, always excepting Hoxton, which may fairly be considered the Queen of Unloveliness. The houses in this part are small, and they are almost all of one pattern. There is no green thing to be seen; no one plants trees, there seem to be no gardens; no flowers are in the windows; there is no brightness of paint or of clean windows; there is nothing of joy, nothing to gladden the eyes.

'Think,' said Harry, almost in a whisper, as if in homage to the Powers of Dirt and Dreariness, 'think what this people could be made if we could only carry out our scheme of the Palace of Delight.'

'We could make them discontented, at least,' said Angela. 'Discontent must come before reform.'

'We should leave them to reform themselves,' said Harry. 'The mistake of philanthropists is to think that they can do for people what can only be done by the people. As you said this morning, there is too much exhorting.'

Presently they struck out of a street rather more dreary than its neighbors, and found themselves in a broad road with a great church.

'This is Limehouse Church,' said Harry. 'All round you are sailors. There is East India Dock Road. Here is West India Dock Road. There is the Foreign Sailors' Home: and we will go on further, if you please, because the streets are all full, you perceive, of the foreign sailors and the English sailors' and the sailors' friends.'

Angela had seen enough of the sailors. They turned back. Harry led her through another labyrinth into another broad street, also crowded with sailors.

'This is Shadwell,' said her guide; 'and if there is anything in Shadwell to interest you, I do not know what it is. Survey Shadwell!'

Angela looked up the street and down the street; there was nothing for the eye in search of the beautiful or the picturesque to rest upon. But a great bawling of rough voices came from a great tent stuck up oddly beside the road. A white canvas sheet with black letters proclaimed this as the place of worship of the 'Happy Gypsies.' They were holding their Sunday Function.

'More exhorting!' said Angela.

'Now, this,' he said, as he walked along, 'is a more interesting place. It used to be called Ratcliffe Highway, and had the reputation of being the wickedest place in London. I dare say it was all brag, and that really it was not much worse than its neighbors.'

It is a distinctly squalid street, that now called St. George's-in-the-East. But it has

its points; it is picturesque, like a good many dirty places; the people are good-tempered, though they do not wash their faces even on Sundays. They have quite left off knocking down, picking pockets, kicking, and robbing the harmless stranger; they are advancing slowly toward civilization.

'Come this way,' said Harry.

He passed through a narrow passage, and led the way into a place at the sight of which Angela was fain to cry out in surprise.

In it was nothing less than a fair and gracious garden planted with flowers, and these in the soft August sunshine showed sweet and lovely. The beds were well kept; the walks were of asphalt; there were seats set about, and on them old women and old men sat basking in the evening sun. The young men and maidens walked along the paths—an Arcadian scene.

'This little strip of Eden,' said Harry, 'was cut out of the old church-yard.'

The rest of the church-yard was divided from the garden by a railing, and round the wall were the tombstones of the departed obscure. From the church itself was heard the rolling of the organ and the soft singing of a hymn.

'This,' said Angela, 'is better than exhortation. A garden for meditation and the church for prayer. I like this place better than the Whitechapel Road.'

'I will show you a more quiet place still,' said her guide. They walked a little way further down the main street, then he turned into a narrow street on the north, and Angela found herself in a square of clean houses round an inclosure of grass. Within the inclosure was a chapel, and tombs were dotted on the grass.

They went into the chapel, a plain edifice of the Georgian kind with round windows, and the evening sun shone through the windows in the west. The high pews were occupied by a congregation of forty or fifty, all men. They all had light-brown hair, and as they turned round to look at the new-comers, Angela saw that they all had blue eyes. The preacher, who wore a black gown and bands, was similarly provided, as to hair and eyes. He preached in a foreign tongue, and as it is difficult to be edified by a sermon not in one's native speech, they shortly went out again. They were followed by the verger, who seemed not indisposed to break the monotony of the service by a few minutes' walk.

He talked English imperfectly, but he told them that it was the Church of the Swedes. Angela asked if they were all sailors. He said, with some seeming contempt for sailors, that only a few of them were sailors. She then said that she supposed they were people engaged in trade. He shook his head again, and informed her with a mysterious air that many of the Swedish nobility lived in that neighborhood. After this they came away, for fear of greater surprises.

They followed St. George's-in-the-East to the end of the street. Then they turned to the right, and passed through a straight and quite ignoble road leading north. It is a street greatly affected by Germans. German names are over every shop and on every brass plate. They come hither, these honest Germans, because to get good work in London is better than going after it to New York or Philadelphia, and nearer home. In the second generation their names will be Anglicised, and their children will have become rich London merchants, and very likely Cabinet ministers. They have their churches, too, the Reformed and the Lutheran, with nothing to choose between them on the score of ugliness.

'Let us go home,' said Angela; 'I have seen enough.'

'It is the joylessness of the life,' she explained, 'the ignorant, contented joylessness, which weighs upon one. And there is so much of it. Surely there is no other city in the world which is so utterly without joy as this East London.'

'No,' said Harry, 'there is not in the whole world a city so devoid of pleasant things. They do not know how to be happy. They are like your workgirls when you told them to dance.'

'Look!' she cried, 'what is that?'

There was a hoarse roar of many voices from a court leading out of the main road; the road became louder; Harry drew the girl aside as a mob of men and boys and women rushed headlong out of the place. It was not a fight apparently, yet there was beating with sticks and kicking. For those who were beaten did not strike back in return. After a little the beaters and kickers desisted, and returned to their court as to a stronghold whose rights they had vindicated.

Those who had been beaten were a band of about a dozen, men and women. The women's shawls were hanging in tatters, and they had lost their bonnets. The men were without hats, and the coats were grievously torn. There was a thing among them which had been a banner, but the pole was broken and the flag was dragged in the dirt and smirched.

One of them who seemed to be the leader—he wore a uniform coat something like a volunteer's coat—stepped to the front and called upon them all to form. Then with a loud voice he led off a hymn, in which all joined as they marched down the street.

He was hatless, and his cheek was bleeding from an open wound. Yet he looked undaunted, and his hymn was a song of triumph. A well set-up young fellow with thick black hair and black beard, but pale cheeks. His forehead was square and firm; his eyes were black and fierce.

'Good heavens!' cried Harry. 'It is my cousin Tom, Captain in the Salvation Army. An that, I suppose, is his regiment. Well, if standing still to be kicked means victory, they have scored one to-night.'

The pavement was even more crowded than in the morning. The political agitators bawled more fiercely than in the forenoon to their circle of apathetic listeners; the preachers exhorted the unwilling more fervently to embrace the Faith. Cheap-jack was dispensing more volubly his two penn'orths of 'sassaple.' The workmen lounged along, with their pipes in their mouths, more lazily than in the morning. The only difference was that the shop-boys were now added to the crowd, every lad with a 'two-penny smoke' between his lips; and that the throng was increased by those who were going home from church.

'Let us, too, go home,' said Angela; 'there is too much humanity here: we shall lose ourselves among the crowd.'

(To be Continued.)

Bad Joke on the Deacon.

Every country place has its queer character, and George Stowe played this part in a little Vermont hamlet. George was of uncertain age and of uncertain mental capacity. He seemed simple, but in reality was endowed with a full share of shrewd Yankee cunning, and he eked out a precarious livelihood by driving a hack to the railway station and trading on his deafness, which was as unreliable as his mental capacity.

He also drank stale and bewildering draughts of beer whenever he could inveigle any one into buying it for him.

'What'll you have, George?' asked a stranger whom he had just brought down from the village, 'a glass of beer or a piece of pie?'

'Yes, yes, thank you,' replied George, affecting to misunderstand the question, 'I'll drink the beer and take the pie right in my hand.'

Another favorite coup of George's was whenever any one said 'Good day' to him to promptly reply:

'Yes, thank you; don't care if I do,' and steer straight away for the bar.

One day while riding down to the station with a deacon of the church George was seized with a fit of repentance.

'Deacon,' said he, 'I would like to brace up and do better—stop drinking and show all the folks that I am a good deal more of a man than they thought. I can do it if I try, I know, only, you see, I have said I was going to stop so many times and didn't do it that they won't none of them believe me now.'

'I am very glad to hear it; but how can you convince them?'

'I've got an idea. Now when we get down to the station you ask me to have a drink, and then I'll have a chance to refuse right before them all, and show them that I mean business this time.'

'All right, George; we'll do it, and I hope you'll stick to your intentions.'

They reached the depot and went into the eating room. A large crowd was there waiting for the train. The deacon in his brisk and hearty way spoke up so that all could hear.

'Come, George, have a drink?' he said. 'Yes, thank you, don't care if I do,' replied George, and he promptly walked up to the bar.

He had the drink and the deacon paid for it, but the deacon lost a good deal of faith in mankind thereby.

The Burglar Alarm.

Customer—Is this the latest style of burglar alarm?

Clerk—Yes, sir.

'What is the principle of it?'

'It rings a bell when the burglar raises the window, and by means of an indicator tells in what part of the house an entrance is being attempted.'

'And am I supposed to get out of bed and grapple hand to hand in the darkness with the burglar or burglars?'

'Yes, unless you can get your wife to do it instead.'

'Humph, I guess we'll make the old style burglar alarm, the dog, last a little longer.—Yankee Blade.'

An Appropriate Name.

'A fast horse, is he?'

'Trots like a streak of greased lightning.'

'Well, that's fast enough. What do you call him?'

'What Ma Says.'

'What Ma Says! That's a strange name. Why do you call him that?'

'Because what ma says goes.'—Cape Cod Item.