

CHAPTER XXXVI

LESLIE was a clergyman of the Evangelical school, full of literalness and noble aspirations. He meant very well indeed, and was genuinely desirous of bringing the masses to his own particular conception of truth. To this end he had of recent years entered into the amusements of the people, even when his rather refined soul revolted at their coarseness. There was a good deal of the Salvation Army instinct about Leslie, though he would have been offended had anyone told him so. It was this instinct and a desire to secure his mother's aid, moral and financial, which led him to propose to her a certain project.

"Hampstead Heath on Easter Monday? Leslie, Leslie, I am too old. You should have asked me twenty years before to-day."

"It will be all right. I shall look after you, mother. I want to study the people in their simple amusements," said Leslie, rather priggishly. "I want to see their ways that I may more easily bring them to mine. Mother, you have never seen Hampstead Heath on a Bank Holiday, and neither have I. People in our station of life do not. It will be a novel experience, and I shall take care of you."

"What would your father say?"

"Father would not mind. It is just the sort of thing he would do."

Angeline reflected that this was true. She consented.

Easter Monday, April 18th, 1892, was a lovely April day, but cold. Angeline and her son mingled with the crowds of East End holiday makers. It was all so novel to

them—the swings, the roundabouts, the coconut-shies, the shooting galleries.

“I think it is going to rain, Leslie, and I am rather tired. Dear, is it not time that we were going home?”

The skies were now grey. As they neared the railway station it began to hail.

“Just in time,” said Angeline, as they descended the stairs to the platform. “How annoying; the gates are shut! When will they let us in?”

The entrance to the platform was closed. Already many stood before it; above a crowd of people were rushing in to shelter from the hailstorm.

“I wish they would not crush so; I cannot breathe,” said Angeline.

The pressure increased. At the top of the stairs they were chanting a popular chorus:

“*Ta-ra-rab-boom-de-ay. Ta-ra-rab-boom-de-ay.*”

At the bottom they were becoming more closely wedged minute by minute. Already women were screaming and men were fighting.

“Git a move on, dahn there——”

“*Ta-ra-rab-boom-de-ay*” from the top.

“Nah, then, all togevver, boys.”

Leslie was fighting below to save his mother. The crush increased. Angeline went white.

And when the gates were opened, they carried out the dead, and amongst them was Angeline. . . .

The April sun streamed into the rooms in New York. John, dozing in the dining-room, was awakened by a shrill scream. Diane was clinging to him, and her face was white.

“She is not real—and I am frightened.”

“What on earth’s the matter, Diane?”

“I went into the kitchen and there was a girl—all in white, and she carried a candle. I spoke to her, and then—

she had gone. It is a ghost. John, you will take care of me ? ”

“ Once more,” said John, and despite himself, was cold at heart. “ What now ? ”

“ I do not understand what you say. But you will take care of me, and keep me from the ghost ? ”

“ There is no ghost,” said John, slowly, “ at any time, and certainly not now at half-past two o’clock in the afternoon.”

It was half-past six in London, and they were just taking the dead Angeline to the waiting-room at Hampstead Heath Station.

“ I am frightened,” said Diane, and clung to him again.

“ There is no cause for worry,” said John, but somehow the light and glow seemed to have gone from the sunshine.

“ Must I give in to him for Angeline’s sake ? What will she say when she knows ? ” John asked himself.

Then they handed him Leslie’s cable. His head sank forward on the table, and suddenly he felt very old.

Old memories came to him. That night in Vienna long ago, the little white ghost flitting on in front of him, the small bare foot peeping from under her “ nighty.” *Little Miss One-Shoe-Off-and-One-Shoe-On*—as he had loved to call her. He thought of the green wood at Redehall and her white body outlined against the trees, as she played “ wood-syrups.”

She was gone and he would never see her again. She had inspired him through life, and he was old now and alone.

When Harry came in, exulting in new-found power, John quietly handed him the cablegram. The boy staggered back and went white.

“ Mother dead ? ”

“ Yes. I do not wish to say anything much to you now,

Harry, but I have decided that you are to leave New York. There is a steamer leaving for Cape Town on Wednesday ; I shall book a berth for you. Instructions for your future will be given you on your arrival."

" I say——"

" There is no need to say anything now, Harry. I am sick at heart, and desire to be alone."