

***GEORGE MADDEN
MARTIN***



***THE ANGEL
OF THE TENEMENT***

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The Angel of the Tenement

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CHAPTER I.

THE ADVENT OF THE ANGEL.

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The ladies of the Tenement felt that it was a matter concerning the reputation of the house. Therefore on this particular hot July morning they were gathered in the apartment of Miss Mary Carew and Miss Norma Bonkowski, if one small and dingy room may be so designated, and were putting the matter under discussion.

Miss Carew, tall, bony, and more commonly known to the Tenement as Miss C'rew, of somewhat tart and acrid temper, being pressed for her version of the story, paused in her awkward and intent efforts at soothing the beautiful, fair-haired child upon her lap and explained that she was stepping out her door that morning with her water-bucket, thinking to get breakfast ready before Miss Bonkowski awoke, when a child's frightened crying startled her, coming from a room across the hall which for some weeks had been for rent.

"At that," continued Miss Carew, moved to unwonted loquacity, and patting the child industriously while she addressed the circle of listening ladies, "at that, 'sure as life!' says I, and stepped across and opened the door, an' there, settin' on this shawl, its eyes big like it had jus' waked up, an' cryin' like to break its heart, was this here baby. I picked her right up an' come an' woke Norma, but it's

nothin' we can make out, 'ceptin' she's been in that there room all night."

Many were the murmurs and ejaculations from the circle of wondering ladies, while Miss Bonkowski, a frowzy-headed lady in soiled shirt waist and shabby skirt, with a small waist and shoulders disproportionately broad; and with, moreover, a dab of paint upon each high-boned cheek,—nothing daunted by previous failures, leaned forward and putting a somewhat soiled finger beneath the child's pretty chin, inquired persuasively, "And isn't the darling going to tell its Norma its name?"

Miss Bonkowski spoke airily and as if delivering a part. But this the good ladies forgave, for was not this same Miss Norma the flower that shed an odor of distinction over the social blossoming of the whole Tenement? Was not Miss Bonkowski a chorus lady at The Garden Opera House?

So her audience looked on approvingly while Miss Norma snapped her fingers and chirruped to the baby encouragingly. "And what is the darling's name?" she repeated.

The little one, her pitiful sobbing momentarily arrested, regarded Miss Bonkowski with grave wonder. "Didn't a know I are Angel?" she returned in egotistical surprise.

"Sure an' it's the truth she's spakin', fer it's the picter of an angel she is," cried Mrs. O'Malligan, she of the first-floor front, who added a tidy sum to her husband's earnings by taking in washing, and in consequence of the size of these united incomes, no less than that of her big heart, was regarded with much respect by the Tenement, "just look at

the swate face of her, would ye, an' the loikes of her illegant gown!"

"Won't it tell its Norma where it came from? Who brought the dearie here and left it in the naughty room? Tell its Norma," continued Miss Bonkowski, on her knees upon the bare and dirty floor, and eyeing the dainty embroidery and examining the quality of the fine white dress while she coaxed.

"Yosie brought Angel—" the child began, then as if the full realization of the strangeness of it all returned at mention of that familiar name, the baby turned her back on Norma and pulling at Mary Carew's dress imperatively, gazed up into that lady's thin, sharp face, "Angel wants her mamma,—take Angel to her mamma," she commanded, even while her baby chin was quivering and the big eyes winking to keep back the tears.

"Sure an' it shall go to its mammy," returned Mrs O'Malligan soothingly, "an' whir was it ye left her, me Angel?"

"Yes, tell its Norma where it left its mamma," murmured Miss Bonkowski coaxingly.

"Yosie bring Angel way a way," explained the baby obediently. "Yosie say Angel be a good girl and her come yite back. Where Yosie,—Angel wants Yosie to come now," and the plaintive little voice broke into a sob, as the child looked from one to the other of the circle beseechingly.

The ladies exchanged pitying glances while the persevering Miss Norma rattled an empty spool in a tin cup violently to distract the baby's thoughts. "And how old is Angel?" she continued.

Again the tears were checked, while the grave, disapproving surprise which Miss Bonkowski's ignorance seemed to call forth, once more overspread the small face, "Didn't a know her are three?" she returned reprovngly, reaching for the improvised and alluring plaything.

"Yes, yes," murmured Miss Bonkowski apologetically, "Angel is three years old, of course, a great, big girl."

"A gwate, big girl," repeated the baby, nodding her pretty head approvingly, "that what Yosie say," then with abrupt change of tone, "where her breakfast, her wants her milk!"

"An' she shall have it, sure," cried Mrs. O'Malligan promptly, and retired out the door with heavy haste, while Miss Bonkowski hospitably turned to bring forth what the apartment could boast in the way of breakfast.

Meanwhile the other ladies withdrew to the one window of the small room to discuss the situation.

"That's it, I'm sure," one was saying, while she twisted up her back hair afresh, "for my man, he says he saw a woman pass our door yesterday afternoon, kinder late, an' go on up steps with a young 'un in her arms. He never seen her come back, he says, but Mis' Tomlin here, she says, she seen a woman dressed nice, come down afterwards seemin' in a hurry, but she didn't have no child, didn't you say, Mis' Tomlin?"

Thus appealed to, timid little Mrs. Tomlin shifted her wan-faced, fretting baby from one arm to the other and asserted the statement to be quite true.

"An'ther case of desartion," pronounced Mrs. O'Malligan, having returned meanwhile with a cup filled with a thin blue

liquid known to the Tenement as *milk*, "a plain case of desartion, an' whut's to be done about it, I niver can say!"

"Done!" cried Miss Bonkowski, on her knees before Mary and the child, crumbling some bread into the milk, "and what are the police for but just such cases?"

The other ladies glanced apprehensively at Mrs. O'Malligan, that lady's bitter hatred of these guardians of the public welfare being well known, since that day when three small O'Malligans were taken in the act of relieving a passing Italian gentleman of a part of his stock of bananas. Mrs. O'Malligan had paid their fines in the City Court, had thrashed them around as many times as her hot Irish temper had rekindled at the memory, but had never forgiven the police for the disgrace to the family of O'Malligan. And being the well-to-do personage of The Tenement, it should be remarked that Mrs. O'Malligan's sentiments were generally deferred to, if not always echoed by her neighbors.

"An' is it the polace ye'd be a-callin' in?" she burst forth volubly, reproach and indignation written upon the round red face she turned upon Miss Norma, "the polace? An' would ye be turnin' over the darlin' to the loikes of thim, to be locked up along with thaves an' murtherers afore night?" And, as a chorus of assenting murmurs greeted her, with her broad, flat foot thrust forward and hands upon her ample hips, Mrs. O'Malligan hurried on.

"The polace is it ye say? An' who but these same polace, I ask ye, was it, gettin' this Tiniment,—as has always held it's head up respectable,—a-gettin' this Tiniment in the noospapers last winter along of that case of small-pox, an'

puttin' a yellow flag out, an afther that nobody a-willin' to give me their washin', an Miss C'rew here as could get no pants to make, an' yerself, Miss Norma, darlint, an' no disrespect to you a-spakin' out so bold, a-layin' idle because of no thayater a-willin' to have ye. An' wasn't it thim same polace crathurs, too, I'm askin' ye, as took our rainwather cistern away along of the fevers breakin' out, they made bold to say, the desaivin' crathers,—an' me a-niver havin' me washin' white a-since, for ye'll aisy see why, usin' the muddy wather as comes from that hydranth yirselves!"

Mrs. O'Malligan glanced around triumphantly, shook her head and hurried on. "An' agin, there's little Joey. Who was it but the polace as come arristin' the feyther of the boy for batin' of his own wife, and him sint up for a year, an' she a-dyin' along of bein' weakly an' nobody to support her, an' Joey left in this very Tiniment an orphan child! Don't ye be a-callin' in no polace for the loikes of this swate angel choild, Miss Norma darlint, don't ye be doin' it! An' the most of thim once foine Irish gintlemen, bad luck to the loikes of thim!"

Mrs. O'Malligan paused,—she was obliged to,—for breath, whereupon Miss Bonkowski very amiably hastened to declare she meant no harm, having absolutely no knowledge of the class whatever, "except," with arch humor, "as presented on the stage, where, as everybody who had seen them there knew, they were harmless enough, goodness knows!" And the airy chorus lady shrugged her shoulders and smiled at her own bit of pleasantry. "But for the matter of that, I still think something ought to be done, and what other means can we find for restoring the lost innocent?" and Miss Norma tossed her