

HIGHLAND PARK NEWS-LETTER

Volume 18

HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS, JULY 1, 1905

Number 5

MIDDLETON'S MODEL

MIDDLETON was doing very well; everybody admitted that—some patronizingly, others enviously. And yet Middleton aimed high. He eschewed pot-boilers, and devoted himself to important subject pictures, often of an allegorical description. Nevertheless, his works sold, and that so well that Middleton thought himself justified in taking a wife. Here, again, good fortune attended him. Miss Angela Dove was fair to see, possessed of a nice little income, and, finally, a lady of taste, for she accepted Middleton's addresses. Decidedly a lucky fellow all round was Middleton. But, in spite of all his luck, his face was clouded with care as he sat in his studio one summer evening. Three

By ANTHONY HOPE

flattering commission from that wealthy and esteemed connoisseur, the Earl of Moneyton. The Earl desired two panels for his hall. "I want," he wrote, "two full-length female figures—the one representing Heavenly Love, the other Earthly Love. Not a very new subject, you will say; but I have a fancy for it, and I can rely on your talent to impart freshness even to a well-worn theme."

Of course there was no difficulty about Heavenly Love. Angela filled the bill (the expression was Middleton's own) to a nicety. Her pretty golden hair, her sweet smile, her candid blue eyes, were exactly what was wanted. Middleton clapped on a pair of wings, and felt that he had done his duty. But when he came to Earthly Love the path was not so smooth. The Earl demanded the acme of physical beauty, and that was rather hard to find. Middleton tried all the models in vain; he frequented the theatres and music halls to no purpose; he tried to combine all the beauties of his acquaintance in one harmonious whole, but they did not make what tea-dealers call a "nice blend." Then he tried to evolve Earthly Love out of his own consciousness, but he could get nothing there but Angela again; and although he did violence to his feelings by giving her black hair and an evil cast in her eye, he knew that, even thus transformed, she would not satisfy the Earl. Middleton was in despair; his reputation was at stake. The thought of Angela could not console him.

"I'd give my soul for a model!" cried he, flinging aside his pencil in despair.

At this moment he heard a knock at the door. He existed on the charwoman system, and after six o'clock in the evening had to open his own door. A lady stood outside, and a neat brougham was vanishing round the corner. Even in the darkness Middleton was struck by the grace and dignity of his visitor's figure.

"Mr. Middleton's, is it not?" she asked in a very sweet voice.

Middleton bowed. It was late for a call, but if the lady ignored that fact he could not remind her of it. Fortunately there was no chance of Angela coming at such an hour. He led the way to his studio.

SPECIAL TRAIN SERVICE During June and July for the Damrosch Concerts at Ravinia Park

In addition to the regular service a special train for the accommodation of Lake Forest and Highland Park patrons will run daily as follows:

Leave Lake Forest, Deerpath Ave., 7:45 p. m.

" Highland Park, Moraine Station, 7:55 p. m.

" " " Central Ave., 8:00 p. m.

Arriving Ravinia Park..... 8:05 p. m.

There will also be special train service after the concert with ample accommodations for all.

"May I ask," he began, "to what I am indebted for this honor?"

"I see you like coming to business directly," she answered, her neatly gloved hands busy underpinning her veil. She seemed to find the task a little difficult.

"You see, it's rather late," said Middleton.

"Not at all. I am only just up. Well, then, to business. I hear you want a model for an Earthly Love."

"Exactly. May I ask if you—"

"If I am a model? Oh, now and then—not habitually."

"You know my requirements are somewhat hard to fulfil?"

"I can fulfil them," and she raised her veil.

She certainly could. She realized his wildest dreams, the wildest dreams of poets and painters since the world began. Middleton stood half stupefied before her.

"Well, shall I do?" she asked, turning her smile on him.

Middleton felt as if it were a battery of guns, as he answered that he would be the happiest painter in the world if she would honor him.

"Of course," said he hastily; unless, that is, you will give me hands and arms too."

"I think not. My hands are not so good." And she glanced at her kid gauntlets with a smile.

"And—er—as to terms?" he stammered.

"Oh, the usual terms," she answered briskly.

Middleton hinted at prepayment.

"I'm not allowed to take that," she said.

"Come, I will ask for what I want when the time comes. You won't refuse me?"

"It's a little vague," he said, with an uneasy laugh.

"Oh, I can go away." And she turned toward the door.

"Whatever you like," he cried hastily.

"Ah, that's better. I shall not take anything of great value."

She gave him her hand. He ventured on a slight pressure. The lady did not seem to notice it, and her hand lay quite motionless in his.

"To-morrow, then?" he said.

"Yes. I won't trouble you to call a cab. I shall walk."

"Have you far to go?"

"Oh, some little way; but it's an easy road."

"Can't I escort you?"

"Not to-night. Some day, I hope"—and she stepped into the street and disappeared round the corner.

Punctually the next day she reappeared. Apart from her incomparable beauty—and every time she

incomparable—she was a charming companion. She was very well read, and her knowledge of the world was wonderful.

"I wish it wasn't rude to ask your age!" he exclaimed one day.

"Ah, I am older than I look. My work keeps me young."

"Are you very busy, then?"

"I am always busy. But I don't grudge the time I give to you. No, don't thank me. I am to be paid, you know." And she laughed merrily. If there were a flaw in her, it was her laugh. Middleton thought it rather a cruel laugh.

"Do you know," he resumed, "you have never told me your name yet?"

"I am here *incognita*."

"You will tell me some day?"

"Yes, you shall know some day."

"Before we part forever?"

"Perhaps we shall not part—forever."

Middleton said he hoped not; but what would Angela say?

"My name is not so pretty a one as your *fiancee's*," the lady continued.

"How do you know I am engaged?"

"I always know that sort of thing. It's so useful. Angela Dove, isn't it?"

"Yes; I hope you like it?"

"To be candid, not very much. It happens to have unpleasant associations."

It was fortunate that Angela was staying out of town. Middleton felt that the two ladies would not have got on well together; and—He checked himself in shame; for his thought had been that even for Angela could he send the stranger away. Middleton struggled against the treacherous passion that grew upon him; but he struggled in vain. He was guilty of postponing the finishing of his panel as long as he could. At last the lady grew impatient.

"I shall not come after to-day," she announced.

"You can finish it to-day."

"Oh, hardly!" he protested.

"I'll stay late; but I can't come again."

Middleton worked hard, and by evening the panel was finished.