

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER X.—Continued.

On this evening, after they had walked over the whole house, visited the asphalted garden, and looked into the great glass room, Angela unfolded her plans.

It was in the work-room. She stood at the head of the table, looking about her with an air of pride and anxiety. It was her own design—her own scheme; small as it was, compared with that other vast project, she was anxious about. It had to succeed; it must succeed.

All its success, she thought, depended upon that sturdy little fanatical dress-maker. And now she was to be told.

'Now,' said Angela, with some hesitation, 'the time has come for an explanation of the way we shall work. First of all, will you, Rebekah, undertake the management and control of the business?'

'I, Miss Kennedy? But what is your department?'

'I will undertake the management of the girls'—she stopped and blushed—'out of their work-time.'

At this extraordinary announcement the two girls looked blankly at their employer. 'You do not quite understand,' Angela went on. 'Wait a little. Do you consent, Rebekah?'

The girl's eyes flashed and her cheeks became aflame. Then she thought of the sudden promotion of Joseph, and she took confidence. Perhaps she really was equal to the place; perhaps she had actually merited the distinction.

'Very well, then,' Miss Kennedy went on, as if it was the most natural thing in the world that a humble workwoman should be suddenly raised to the proud post of manager. 'Very well; that is settled. You, Nelly, will try to take care of the work-room when Rebekah is not there. As regards the accounts—'

'I can keep them, too,' said Rebekah. 'I shall work—on Sundays,' she added, with a blush.

Miss Kennedy then proceeded to expound her views as regards the management of her establishment.

'The girls will be here at nine,' she said. Rebekah nodded. There could be no objection to that.

'They will work from nine till eleven,' Rebekah started. 'Yes, I know what I mean. The long hours of sitting and bending the back over the work are just as bad a thing for girls of fifteen or so as could be invented. At eleven, therefore, we shall have, all of us, half an hour's exercise.'

Exercise? Exercise in a dress-maker's shop? Was Miss Kennedy in her senses? 'You see that asphalt. Surely some of you can guess what it is for?' She looked at Harry.

'Skittles?' he suggested, frivolously. 'No. Lawn tennis. Well! why not?' 'What is lawn tennis?' asked Nelly. 'A game, my dear; and you shall learn it.'

'I never play games,' said Rebekah. 'A serious person has no room in her life for games.'

'Then call it exercise, and you will be able to play it without wounding your conscience.' This was Harry's remark. 'Why not, indeed, Miss Kennedy? The game of lawn tennis, Nelly,' he went on to explain, 'is greatly in vogue among the bloated aristocracy, as my cousin Dick will tell you. That it should descend to you and me and the likes of us is nothing less than a social revolution.'

Nelly smiled, but she only half understood this kind of language. A man who laughed at things, and talked of things as if they were meant to be laughed over, was a creature she had never before met with. My friends, lay this to heart, and ponder. It is not until a certain standard of cultivation is reached that people do laugh at things. They only began in the last century, and then only in a few salons. When all the world laughs, the perfection of humanity will have been reached, and the comedy will have been played out.

'It is a beautiful game,' said Angela, meaning Law Tennis, not the Comedy of Humanity. 'It requires a great deal of skill and exercises a vast quantity of muscles; and it costs nothing. Asphalt makes a perfect court, as I know very well.' She blushed, because she was thinking of the Newham courts.

'We shall be able to play there, whenever it does not rain.' When it does, there is the glass house.'

'What are you going to do in the glass house?' asked Harry; 'throw stones at other people's windows? That is said to be very good exercise.'

'I am going to set up a gymnasium for the girls.'

Rebekah stared, but said nothing. This was revolutionary indeed.

'If they please, the girls can bring their friends; we will have a course of gymnastics as well as a school for lawn tennis. You see, Mr. Goslett, that I have not forgotten what you said once.'

'What was that, Miss Kennedy? It is very good of you to remember anything that I have said. Do you mean that I once, accidentally, said a thing worth hearing?'

'Yes; you said that money was not wanted here so much as work. That is what I remembered. If you can afford it, you may work with us, for there is a great deal to do.'

'I can afford it for a time.'

'We shall work again from half past eleven until one. Then we shall stop for dinner.'

'They bring their own dinner,' said Rebekah. 'It takes them five minutes to eat it. You will have to give them tea.'

'No; I shall give them dinner too. And because growing girls are dainty and sometimes can not fancy things, I think a good way will be for each of them, even the youngest, to take turns in ordering the dinner and seeing it prepared.'

Rebekah groaned. What profits could stand up against such lavish expenditure as this?

'After an hour for dinner we shall go to work again. I have thought a good deal about the afternoon, which is the most tedious part of the day, and I think the best thing will be to have reading aloud.'

'Who is to read?' cried Rebekah.

'We shall find somebody or other. Tea at five, and work from six to seven. That is my programme.'

'Then, Miss Kennedy,' cried her forewoman, 'you will be a ruined woman in a year.'

'No'—she shook her head with her gracious smile—'no, I hope not. And I think you will find that we shall be very far from ruined. Have a little faith. What do you think, Nelly?'

'Oh, I think it is beautiful!' she replied, with a gaze of soft worship in her limpid eyes. 'It is so beautiful that it must be a dream, and can not last.'

'What do you say, Mr. Goslett?'

'I say that cabinet-making ought to be conducted in the same liberal spirit. But I'm afraid it won't pay.'

Then Miss Kennedy took them to the room on the first floor. The room at the back was fitted as a dining-room, quite simply, with a dozen chairs and a long table. Plates, cups, and things were ranged upon shelves as if in a kitchen.

She led them to the front room. When her hand was on the lock she turned and smiled, and held up her finger as if to prepare them for a surprise.

The floor was painted and bare of carpet; the windows were dressed with pretty curtains. There were sconces on the walls for candles; in the recess stood her piano; and for chairs there were two or three rout seats ranged along the wall.

'What is this?' asked Rebekah.

'My dear girls want play as well as work. The more innocent play they get, the better for them. This is a room where we shall play all sorts of things; sometimes we shall dance; sometimes we shall act; sometimes we shall sing; sometimes we shall read poetry or tales; sometimes we shall romp; the girls shall bring their friends here as well as to the gymnasium and the lawn tennis, if they please.'

'And who is to pay for all this?' asked Rebekah.

'My friends,' said Angela, coloring, because this was a crisis, and to be suspected at such a point would have been fatal—'my friends, I have to make a confession to you. I have worked out the design myself. I saw how the girls in our work-shops toil for long hours and little pay. The great shops whose partners are very rich men, treat them no better than do the poor traders whose living has to be got by scraping it off their wages. Now, I thought that if we were to start a shop in which there was to be no mistress, but to be self-governed, and to share the proceeds among all in due order and with skill and industry, we might adjust our own hours for the general good. This kind of shop has been tried by men, but I think it has never succeeded, because they wanted the capital to start with. What could we three girls have done with nothing but our hands to help us? So I wrote to a young lady who has much money. Yes, Mr. Goslett, I wrote to that Miss Messenger of whom we have so often talked.'

'Miss Messenger! Rebekah gasped; 'she who owns the Great Brewery?'

'The same. She has taken up our Cause. It is she who finds the funds to start us, just as well as if I had capital. She gives us the rent for a year, the furniture, the glass house—everything, even this piano. I have

a letter from her in my pocket.' She took it out and read it. 'Miss Messenger begs to thank Miss Kennedy for her report of the progress made in her scheme. She quite approves of the engagements made, particularly those of Rebekah Hermitage and Nelly Sorensen. She hopes, before long, to visit the house herself and make their acquaintance. Meanwhile she will employ the house for all such things as she requires, and begs Miss Kennedy to convey Miss Hermitage the first order for the work-shop.' This gracious letter was accompanied by a long list of things, at sight of which the forewoman's eyes glistened with joy.

'Oh, it is a splendid order!' she said. 'May we tell everybody about this Miss Messenger?'

'I think,' Angela replied, considering carefully, 'that it would be better not. Let people only know that we have started, that we are a body of workwomen governing ourselves, and working for ourselves. The rest is for our private information.'

'While you are about it,' said Harry, 'you might persuade Miss Messenger to start the Palace of Delight and the College of Art.'

'Do you think she would?' asked Angela. 'Do you really think it would be of any use at all?'

'Did she haggle about your Co-operative Association?'

'No, not at all. She quite agreed with me from the beginning.'

'Then, try her for the Palace. See, Miss Kennedy—the young man had become quite earnest and eager over the Palace—it is only a question of money. If Miss Messenger wants to do a thing unparalleled among the deeds of rich men, let her build the Palace of Delight. If I were she, I should tremble for fear some other person with money got to hear of the idea, and should step in before her. Of course, the grand thing in these cases is to be the first.'

'What is a Palace of Delight?' asked Nelly.

'Truly wonderful it is,' said Harry, 'to think how monotonous are the gifts and bequests of rich men. Schools, churches, almshouses, hospitals—that is all; that is the monotonous round. Now and again, a man like Peabody remembers that men want houses to live in, not hovels; or a good woman remembers that they want sound and wholesome food, and builds a market; but, as a rule, schools, churches, almshouses, hospitals. Look at the lack of originality. Miss Kennedy, go and see this rich person; ask her if she wants to do the grandest thing ever done for men; ask her if she will, as a new and startling point of departure, remember that men want joy. If she will ask me, I will deliver a lecture on the necessity of pleasure, the desirability of pleasure, the beauty of pleasure.'

'A Palace of Delight!' Rebekah shook her head. 'Do you know that half the people never go to church?'

'When we have got the Palace,' said Harry, 'they will go to Church, because religion is a plant that flourishes best where life is happiest. It will spring up among us, then, as luxuriantly as the wild honey suckle. Who are the most religious people in the world, Miss Hermitage?'

'They are the worshippers in Redman's Lane, and they are called the Seventh Day Independents.'

The worst of the Socratic method of argument is that, when the wrong answer is given, the whole thing comes to grief. Now Harry wanted her to say that the people who go most to church are the wealthy classes. Rebekah did not say so, because she knew nothing of the wealthy classes; and in her own circle of sectarian enthusiasts nobody had any money at all.

CHAPTER X.

THE GREAT DAVENANT CASE.

'Oh! you obstinate old man! Oh! you lazy old man!'

It was the high-pitched voice of her ladyship in reediest tones, and the time was eleven o'clock in the forenoon, when, as a rule, she was engaged in some needle-work for herself, assisting Mrs. Bormalack with the pudding, in a friendly way, while her husband continued the statement of the Case, left alone in the enjoyment of the sitting-room—and his title.

'You lazy old man!'

The words were overheard by Harry Goslett. He had been working at his miraculous Cabinet, and was now following the example of Miss Kennedy's workgirls, 'knocking off' for half an hour, and thinking of some excuse for passing the rest of the morning with that young lady. He stood in the doorway, looking across the Green to the sacred windows of the Dress-makers' Association. Behind them at this moment were sitting, he knew, the Queen of the mystery, with that most beautiful nymph, the matchless Nelly, fair and lovely to look upon; and with her, too, Rebekah the downright, herself a Mystery; and half a dozen more, some of them, perhaps, beautiful. Alas! in working hours these doors were closed. Perhaps, he thought, when the Cabinet was finished he might make

some play by carrying it backward and forward, measuring, fitting, altering.

'You lazy, sinful, sleepy old man!'

A voice was heard feebly remonstrating. 'Oh! oh! oh!' she cried again, in accents that rose higher and higher, 'we have come all the way from America to prove our Case. There's four months gone out of six—oh! oh! and you with your feet upon a chair—oh! oh!—do you think you are back in Canaan City?'

'Clara Martha,' replied his lordship, in clear and distinct tones—the window was wide open, so that the words floated out upon the summer air and struck gently upon Harry's ear—'Clara Martha, I wish I was—it is now holiday time, and the boys are out in the woods. And the school-room'—he stopped, sighed deeply, and yawned—'it was very peaceful.'

She groaned in sheer despair.

'He is but a Carpenter,' she said, 'he grovels in the shavings; he wallows in the sawdust, fy upon him! This man a British Peer? Oh! shame—shame!' Harry pictured the quivering shoulders and the finger of reproach. 'Oh! ch! He is not worthy to wear a coronet. Give him a chunk of wood to whittle, and a knife, and a chair in the shade, and smother him with his feet upon. That's all he wants, though Queen Victoria and all the angels was callin' for him across the ocean to take his seat in the House of Lords. Shame on him! Shame upon him!'

These taunts apparently had no effect. His lordship was understood by the listener to say something disrespectful of the Upper House, and to express regret at having exchanged his humble but contented position of school-teacher and his breakfasts, where a man could look around him and see hot rolls and muffins and huckleberry pies, for the splendor of a title, with the meagre fare of London and the hard work of drawing up a Case.

'I will rouse him!' she cried, as she executed some movement the nature of which could only be guessed by the young man outside. The windows, it is true, were open, but one's eyes can not go outside to look in without the rest of the head and body going too. Whatever it was that she did, his lordship apparently sprang into the air with a loud cry, and, if sounds mean anything, ran hastily round the table, followed by his illustrious consort.

The listener says and always maintains—'Hairpin.' Those who consider her ladyship incapable of behavior which might appear undignified reject that interpretation. Moral, not physical, were, according to these thinkers, the means of awakening adopted by Lady Davenant. Even the officers of the Salvation Army, they say, do not use hair-pins.

'In the name of common humanity,' said Harry to himself, 'one must interfere.' He knocked at the door, and allowed time for the restoration of dignity and the smoothing of ruffled plumes.

He found his lordship seated, it is true, but in the wrong chair, and his whole frame was trembling with excitement, terror, or some other strong emotion, while the effort he was making to appear calm and composed caused his head to nod and his cheeks to shake. Never was a member of the Upper House placed in a more uncomfortable position. As for her ladyship, she was standing bolt upright at the other side of the room at the window. There was a gleam in her eye and a quivering of her lip which betokened wrath.

'Pardon me, Lady Davenant,' said Harry, smiling sweetly. 'May I interrupt you for a few moments?'

'You may,' replied her husband, speaking for her. 'Go on, Mr. Goslett. Do not hurry yourself, pray. We are glad to see you'—he cleared his throat—'very glad indeed.'

'I came to say,' he went on, still addressing the lady, 'that I am a comparatively idle man; that is, for the moment I have no work, and am undecided about my movements, and that, if I can be of any help in the preparation of the Case, you may command my services. Of course, Lady Davenant, everybody knows the importance of your labors and of his lordship's, and the necessity of a clear Statement of your Case.'

Lady Davenant replied with a cry like a sea-gull. 'Oh! his lordship's labors, indeed! Yes, Mr. Goslett, pretty labors! Day after day goes on—I don't care, Timothy—I don't care who knows it—day after day goes on, and we get no further. Four months and two weeks gone of the time, and the Case not even written out yet.'

'What time?' asked Harry.

'The time that Nephew Nathaniel gave us to prove our claim. He found the money for our passage; he promised us six dollars a week for six months. In six months, he said, we should find whether our claim was allowed or not. There it was, and we were welcome for six months. Only six weeks left, and he goes to sleep!'

'But, Lady Davenant—only six weeks! It is impossible—you can not send in a claim and get it acknowledged in six weeks. Why, such claims may drag on for years before a Committee of the House of Lords.'

He wastes all the time; he has got no ambition; he goes to sleep when he ought to be waking. If we have to go home again, with nothing done, it will be because he is so lazy. Shame upon you, obstinate old man! Oh! lazy and sleepy old man! She shook her finger at him in so terrifying a manner, that he was fain to clutch at the arms of the chair, and his teeth chattered.

'Aurelia Tucker,' her ladyship went on, warming to her work as she thought of her wrongs—'Aurelia Tucker always said that lord or no lord, my husband was too lazy to stand up for his rights. Everybody in Canaan City knew that he was too lazy. She said that if she was me, and trying to get the family title, she wouldn't go across the water to ask for it, but she would make the American Minister in London tell the British Government that they would just have to grant it, whether they liked it or not, and that a plain American citizens was to take his place in their House of Lords. Otherwise, she said, let the Minister tell that Mr. Gladstone that Canada would be annexed. That's fine talkin', but as for me I want things done friendly, an' I don't want my husband walkin' into his proper place in Westminster with Stars and Stripes flyin' over his head and a volunteer Fire Brigade Band playin' 'Hail, Columbia' before him. No. I said that justice was to be got in the old country, and we only had to cross over and ask for it. Then Nephew Nathaniel said that he didn't expect much more justice was to be expected in England than in New Hampshire. And that what you can't always get in a free country isn't always got where there's lords and bishops and a queen. But we might try if we liked for six months. And he would find the dollars for that time. Now there's only six weeks left, and we haven't even begun to ask for that justice.'

'Clara Martha,' said his lordship; 'I've been thinking the matter over, and I've come to the conclusion that Aurelia Tucker is a sensible woman. Let us go home again, and send the Case to the Minister. Let us frighten them.'

'It does not seem bad advice,' said Harry. 'Hold a meeting in Canaan City, and promise the British Lion that he shall be whipped into a cocked hat unless you get your rights. Make a national thing of it.'

'No!' She stamped her foot, and became really terrible. 'We are here, and we will demand our rights on the spot. If the Minister likes to take up the Case, he may; if not, we will fight our own battles. But oh! Mr. Goslett, it's a dreadful hard thing for a woman and a stranger to do all the fightin' while her husband goes to sleep.'

'Can't you keep awake till you have stated your Case?' asked Harry. 'Come, old boy, you can take it out in slumber afterward; and if you go on sleeping till the Case is decided, I expect you will have a good long refreshing rest.'

'It was a beautiful morning, Clara Martha,' his lordship explained in apology, 'quite a warm morning. I didn't know people ever had such warm weather in England. And somehow it reminded me of Canaan City in July. When I think of Canaan, my dear, I always feel sleepy. There was a garden, Mr. Goslett, and trees and flowers, at the back of the school-house. And a bee came in. I didn't know there were bees in England. While I listened to that bee, bummin' around most the same as if he was in a Free Republic, I began to think of home, Clara Martha. That is all.'

'Was it the bee,' she asked, with asperity, 'that drew your handkerchief over your head?'

'Clara Martha,' he replied, with a little hesitation, 'the bee was a stranger to me. He was not like one of our New Hampshire bees. He had never seen me before. Bees sting strangers.'

Harry interrupted what promised to be the beginning of another lover's quarrel, to judge by the twitchings of those thin shoulders and the frowning of those bead-like eyes.

'Lady Davenant,' he said, 'let us not waste the time in reiteration; accept my services. Let me help you to draw up the Statement of your Case.'

This was something to the purpose; with a last reproachful glance upon her husband, her ladyship collected the papers and put them into the hands of her new assistant.

'I'm sure,' she said, 'it's more a kind of you, Mr. Goslett. Here are all the papers. Mind, there isn't the least doubt about it, not the shadow of a doubt; there never was a claim so strong and clear. Timothy Clitheroe Davenant is as much Lord Davenant by right of lawful descent, as—as—you are your father's son.'

(To be Continued.)

The Plain Truth.

Unions should ever remember that the protection of the humblest member in all just demands is the foremost of all duties; it is the only thing above all others that gives members confidence in the union. It is never to the best interests of any union to pass over with indifference a wrong done a member by an employer; at all times assert your manhood, and demand justice for each member.—United Labor.