

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE PALACE OF DELIGHT.

During this time the Palace of Delight was steadily rising. Before Christmas its walls were completed and the roof on. Then began the painting, the decorating, and the fittings. And Angela was told that the building would be handed over to her, complete according to the contract, by the first of March.

The building was hidden away, so to speak, in a corner of vast Stepney, but already rumors were abroad concerning it, and the purposes for which it was erected. They were conflicting rumors. No one knew at all what was intended by it; no one had been within the walls; no one knew who built it. The place was situated so decidedly in the very heart and core of Stepney, that the outside public knew nothing at all about it, and the rumors were confined to the small folk round it. So it rose in their midst without being greatly regarded. No report or mention of it came to Harry's ears, so that he knew nothing of it, and suspected nothing, any more than he suspected Miss Kennedy of being some other person.

The first of March in this present year of grace 1882 fell upon a Wednesday. Angela resolved that the opening day should be on Thursday, the second, and that she would open it herself; and then another thought came into her mind; and the longer she meditated upon it, the stronger hold did the idea take upon her.

The Palace of delight was not, she said, her own conception; it was that of the man—the man she loved. Would it not be generous, in giving this place over to the people for whom it was built, to give its real founder the one reward which he asked?

Never any knight of old had been more loyal. He obeyed in the spirit as well as the letter her injunction not to speak of love; not only did he refrain from those good words which he would fain have uttered, but he showed no impatience, grumbled not, had no fits of sulking; he waited, patient. And in all other things he did her behest, working with a cheerful heart for her girls, always ready to amuse them, always at her service for things great and small, and meeting her mood with a ready sympathy.

One evening, exactly a fortnight before the proposed opening day, Angela invited all the girls, and, with them, her faithful old captain, and her servant Harry, to follow her because she had a thing to show them. She spoke with great seriousness, and looked overcome with the gravity of this thing. What was she going to show them?

They followed, wondering, while she led the way to the church, and then turned to the right among the narrow lanes of a part where, by some accident, none of the girls belonged.

Presently she stopped before a great building. It was not lighted up, and seemed quite dark and empty. Outside, the planks were not yet removed, and they were covered with gaudy advertisements, but it was too dark to see them. There was a broad porch above the entrance, with a generously ample ascent of steps like unto those of St. Paul's Cathedral. Angela rang the bell and the door was opened. They found themselves in an entrance hall of some kind, imperfectly lighted by a single gas-jet. There were three or four men standing about, apparently waiting for them, because one stepped forward, and said:

'Miss Messenger's party?'

'We are Miss Messenger's party,' Angela replied.

'Whoever we are,' said Harry, 'we are a great mystery to ourselves.'

'Patience,' Angela whispered; 'part of the mystery is going to be cleared up.'

'Light up, Bill,' said one of the men.

Then the whole place passed suddenly into daylight, for it was lighted by the electric globes.

It was a lofty vestibule. On either side were cloak rooms; opposite were entrance doors. But what was on the other side of these entrance rooms none of them could guess.

'My friend,' said Angela to Harry, 'this place should be yours. It is of your creation.'

'What is it, then?'

'It is your Palace of Delight. Yes; nothing short of that. Will you lead me into your palace?'

She took his arm while he marveled greatly and asked himself what this might mean. One of the men then opened the doors, and they entered, followed by the wondering girls.

They found themselves in a lofty and very spacious hall. At the end was a kind of throne—a red velvet divan, semicircular,

under a canopy of red velvet. Statues stood on either side; behind them was a great organ; upon the walls were pictures. Above the pictures were trophies in arms; tapestry carpets—all kinds of beautiful things. Above the entrance was a gallery for musicians; and on either side were doors leading to places of which they knew nothing.

Miss Kennedy led the way to the semicircular divan at the end. She took the central place, and motioned the girls to arrange themselves about her. The effect of this little group sitting by themselves, and in silence, at the end of the great hall, was very strange and wonderful.

'My dears,' she said, after a moment—and the girls saw that her eyes were full of tears—'my dears, I have got a wonderful story to tell you. Listen:

'There was a girl once, who had the great misfortune to be born rich. It is a thing which many people desire. She, however, who had it, knew what a misfortune it might become to her. For the possessor of great wealth, more especially if it be a woman, attracts all the designing and wicked people in the world, all the rogues and all the pretended philanthropists to her, as wasps are attracted by honey; and presently, by sad experience, she gets to look on all mankind as desirous only of robbing and deceiving her. This is a dreadful condition of mind to fall into, because it stands in the way of love and friendship and trust, and all the sweet confidences which make us happy.'

'This girl's name was Messenger. Now, when she was quite young she knew what was going to happen, unless she managed somehow differently from other women in her unhappy position. And she determined as a first step to get rid of a large quantity of her wealth, so that the cupidity of the robbers might be diverted.'

'Now, she had a humble friend—only a dress-maker—who, for reasons of her own, loved her, and would have served her if she could. And this dress-maker came to live at the East End of London.'

'And she saw that the girls who have to work for their bread are treated in such a way that slavery would be a better lot for most of them. For they have to work twelve hours in the day, and sometimes more; they sit in close, hot rooms, poisoned by gas; they get no change of position as the day goes on; they have no holiday, no respite, save on Sunday; they draw miserable wages, and they are indifferently fed. So that she thought one good thing Miss Messenger could do was to help those girls, and this is how our Association was founded.'

'But we shall thank you, all the same,' said Nelly.

'Then another thing happened. There was a young gentleman,' Angela went on, 'staying at the East End too. He called himself a workingman, said he was the son of a sergeant in the army, but everybody knew that he was a gentleman. This dress-maker made his acquaintance, and talked with him a great deal. He was full of ideas, and one day he proposed that we should have a Palace of delight. It would cost a great deal of money; but they talked as if they had that sum, and more at their disposal. They arranged it all; they provided for everything. When the scheme was fully drawn up, the dress-maker took it to Miss Messenger. Oh, my dear girls! this is the Palace of Delight. It is built as they proposed; it is finished; it is our own; and here is its inventor.'

She took Harry's hand. He stood beside her, gazing upon her impassioned face; but he was silent. 'It looks cold and empty now, but when you see it on the opening day; when you come here night after night; when you get to feel the place to be a part, and the best part, of your life, then remember that what Miss Messenger did was nothing compared with what this young gentleman did. For he invented it.'

'Now,' she said, rising—they were all too much astonished to make any demonstration—'now let us examine the building. This hall is your great reception room. You will use it for the ball nights, when you give your great dances; a thousand couples may dance here without crowding. On wet days it is to be the play ground of the children. It will hold a couple of thousand without jostling against each other. There is the gallery for the music, as soon as you have got any.'

She led the way to a door on the right.

'This,' she said, 'is your Theatre.'

It was like a Coman theatre, being built in the form of a semicircle, tier above tier, having no distinction in places, save that some were nearer the stage and some further off.

'Here,' she said, 'you will act. Do not think that players will be found for you. If you want a theatre you must be your own actors. If you want an orchestra you must

find your own for your theatre, because in this place everything will be done by yourselves.'

They came out of the theatre. There was another door on that side of the hall.

'This,' said Angela, opening it, 'is the Concert room. It has an organ and a piano and a platform. When you have got people who can play and sing, you will give concerts.'

They crossed the hall. On the other side were two more great rooms, each as big as the theatre and the concert room. One was a gymnasium, fitted up with bars and ropes, and parallel rods and trapezes.

'This is for the young men,' said Angela. 'They will be stimulated by prizes to become good gymnasts. The other room is the Library. Here they may come, when they please, to read and study.'

It was a noble room, fitted with shelves and the beginning of a great library.

'Let us go upstairs,' said Angela.

Upstairs the rooms were all small, but there was a great many of them.

Thus there were billiard rooms, card rooms, rooms with chess, dominoes, and backgammon tables laid out, smoking rooms for men alone, tea and coffee rooms, where women could sit by themselves if they pleased, and a room where all kinds of refreshments were to be procured. Above these was a second floor, which was called the School. This consisted of a great number of quite small rooms, fitted with desks, tables, and whatever else might be necessary. Some of these rooms were called music rooms, and were intended for instruction and practice on different instruments. Others were for painting, drawing, sculpture, modeling, wood carving, leather work, brass work, embroidery, lace work, and all manner of small arts.

'In the Palace of Delight,' said Angela, 'we shall not be like a troop of revelers thinking of nothing but dance and song and feasting. We shall learn something every day; we shall all belong to some class. Those of us who know already will teach the rest. And oh! the best part of all has to be told. Everything in the Palace will be done for nothing except the mere cleaning and keeping in order. And if anybody is paid anything, it will be at the rate of a workingman's wage—no more. For this is our own Palace, the club of the working-people; we will not let anybody make money out of it. We shall use it for ourselves, and we shall make our enjoyment by ourselves. All this is provided in the deed of trust by which Miss Messenger hands over the building to the people. There are three trustees. One of these, of course, is you—Mr. Goslett.'

'I have been so lost in amazement,' said Harry, 'that I have been unable to speak. Is this, in very truth, the Palace of Delight that we have battled over so long and so often?'

'It is none other. And you are a trustee to carry out the intentions of the founder—yourself.'

They went down-stairs again to the great hall.

'Captain Sorensen,' Angela whispered, 'will you go home with the girls? I will follow in a few minutes.'

Harry and Angela were left behind in the hall.

She called the man in charge of the electric light, and said something to him. Then he went away and turned down the light, and they were standing in darkness, save for the bright moon which shone through the windows and fell upon the white statues and made them look like two ghosts themselves standing among rows of other ghosts.

'Harry,' said Angela.

'Do not mock me,' he replied; 'I am in a dream. This is not real. The place—'

'It is your own Palace of Delight. It will be given to the people in a fortnight. Are you pleased with your creation?'

'Pleased? And you?'

'I am greatly pleased. Harry—it was the first time she had called him by his Christian name—I promised you—I promised I would tell you—I would tell you—if the time should come—'

'Has the time come? Oh, my dear love, has the time come?'

'There is nothing in the way. But oh!—Harry—are you in the same mind? No—wait a moment.' She held him by the wrist. 'Remember what you are doing. Will you choose a life-time of work among working people? You can go back now, to your old life; but—perhaps—you will not be able to go back, then.'

'I have chosen long ago. You know my choice—oh! love—my love.'

'Then Harry, if it will make you happy—are you quite sure it will?—you shall marry me on the day when the Palace is opened.'

'You are sure,' she said, presently, 'that you can love me, though I am only a dress-maker?'

'Could I love you,' he replied, passionately, 'if you were anything else?'

'You have never told me,' he said, presently, 'your Christian name.'

'It is Angela.'

'Angela! I should have known it could have been no other. Angela, kind Heaven surely sent you down to stay awhile with me. If, in time to come, you should be ever unhappy with me, dear, if you should not be able to bear any longer with my faults, you will leave me and go back to the heaven whence you came.'

They parted that night on the steps of Mrs. Bormalack's dingy old boarding house, to both so dear. But Harry, for half the night, paced the pavement, trying to calm the tumult of his thoughts. 'A life of work—with Angela—with Angela? Why, how small, how pitiful seemed all other kinds of life in which Angela was not concerned!'

CHAPTER XLVIII.

MY LADY SWEET.

My story, alas! has come to an end, according to the nature of all earthly things. The love vows are exchanged, the girl has given herself to the man—rich or poor. My friends, if you come to think of it, no girl is so rich that she can give more, or so poor that she can give less, than herself; and in love one asks not for more or less. Even the day is appointed, and nothing is going to happen which will prevent the blessed wedding-bells from ringing, or the clergyman from the sacred joining together of man and of maid, till death do part them. What more to tell? We ought to drop the curtain while the moonlight pours through the windows of the silent palace upon the lovers, while the gods and goddesses, nymphs, naiads, and oreads in marble look on in sympathetic joy. They, too, in the far-off ages, among the woods and springs of Hellas, lived and loved, though their forests knew them no more. Yet, because this was no ordinary marriage, and because we are sorry to part with Angela before the day when she begins her wedded life, we must fain tell of what passed in that brief fortnight before the Palace was opened, and Angela's great and noble dream became a reality.

There was, first of all, a great deal of business to be set in order. Angela had interviews with her lawyers, and settlements had to be drawn up about which Harry knew nothing, though he would have to sign them; then there were the trusts, deeds for the Palace. Angela named Harry, Dick Coppin, the old Chartist, now her firm and fast friend, and Lord Jocelyn, as joint trustees. They were to see, first of all, that no one got anything out of the Palace unless it might be workmen's wages for work done. They were to carry out the spirit of the house in making the place support and feed itself, so that whatever amusements, plays, dances, interludes, or mummeries were set afoot, all might be by the people themselves for themselves; and they were to do their utmost to keep out the discordant elements of politics, religion, and party controversy.

All the girls knew by this time that Miss Kennedy was to be married on the second of March—the day when the Palace was to be opened. They also learned, because the details were arranged and talked over every evening, that the opening would be on a grand scale indeed. Miss Messenger herself was coming to hand it over in person to the trustees on behalf of the people of Stepney and Whitechapel. There was to be the acting of a play in the new theatre, a recital on the new organ, the performance of a concert in the new concert room, playing all the evening long by a military band, some sort of general entertainment; and the whole was to be terminated by a gigantic supper given by Miss Messenger herself, to which fifteen hundred guests were bidden—namely, first, all the employees of the brewery with their wives, if they had any, from the chief brewer and the chief accountant down to the humblest boy in the establishment; and secondly, all the girls in the Association, with two or three guests for each; and thirdly, a couple of hundred or so chosen from a list drawn up by Dick Coppin, and the cobbler, and Harry.

As for Harry, he had now, by Angela's recommendation, resigned his duties at the Brewery, in order to throw his whole time into the arrangement for the opening day; and this so greatly occupied him that he sometimes even forgot what the day would mean to him. The invitations were sent in Miss Messenger's own name. They were all accepted, although there was naturally some little feeling of irritation at the Brewery when it became known that here was to be a general sitting down of all together. Miss Messenger also expressed her wish that the only beverage at the supper should be Messenger's beer, and that of the best quality. The banquet, in imitation of the lord mayor's dinner on the ninth of November, was to be a cold one, and solid, with plenty of ices, jellies, puddings, and fruit. But there was something said about glasses of wine for every guest after supper.

'I suppose,' said Angela, talking over this pleasant disposition of things with Harry, 'that she means one or two toasts to be proposed. The first should be to the success of the Palace. The second, I think—and she blushed—will be the health of you, Harry, and of me.'

'I think so much of you,' said Harry, 'all day long, that I never think of Miss Messenger at all. Tell me what she is like, this giver and dispenser of princely gifts. I suppose she really is the owner of boundless wealth?'

'She has several millions, if you call that boundless. She has been a very good friend to me, and will continue so.'

'You know her well?'

'I know her very well. Oh, Harry, do not ask me any more about her or myself. When we are married I will tell you all about the friendship of Miss Messenger to me. You trust me, do you not?'

'Trust you! Oh, Angels!'

'My secret, such as it is, is not a shameful one, Harry; and it has to do with the very girl, this Miss Messenger. Leave me with it till the day of our wedding. I wonder how far your patience will endure my secrets? For here is another. You know that I have a little money?'

'I am afraid, my Angela,' said Harry, laughing, 'that you must have made a terrible hole in it since you came here. Little or much, what does it matter to us? Haven't we got the Two Thousand? Think of that tremendous lump!'

'What can it matter?' she cried. 'Oh, Harry, I thank Heaven for letting me, too, have this great gift of sweet and disinterested love. I thought it would never come to me.'

'To whom, then, should it come?'

'Don't, Harry, or—yes—go on thinking me all that you say, because it may help to make me all that you think. But that is not what I wanted to say. Would you mind very much, Harry, if I asked you to take my name?'

'I will take any name you wish, Angela. If I am your husband, what does it matter about any other name?'

'And, then one other thing, Harry. Will your guardian give his consent?'

'Yes, I can answer for him that he will. And he will come to the wedding if I ask him.'

'Then ask him, Harry.'

(To be Continued.)

A Richer Existence.

The labor movement, in its broadest terms, is the effort of men to live the lives of men. It is the systematic, organized struggle of the masses to obtain primarily more leisure and larger economic resources; but that is not by any means all, because the end and purpose of it all is a richer existence for the toilers and that with respect to mind, soul and body. Half conscious though it may be, the labor movement is a force pushing on towards the attainment of the purpose of humanity; in other words, the end of the true growth of mankind, namely, the full and harmonious development in each individual of all human faculties—the faculties of working, perceiving, knowing, loving; the development, in short, of whatever capabilities of good there may be in us. And this development of human powers in the individual is not to be entirely for self, but it is to be for the sake of their beneficent use in the service of one's fellows in a Christian civilization. It is for self and others; it is the realization of the ethical aim expressed in that command which contains the secret of all true progress, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It is direct against oppression in every form, because oppression carries with it the idea that persons of classes live, not to fulfill a destiny of their own, but primarily and chiefly for the sake of the welfare of other persons or classes. The true significance of the labor movement, on the contrary, is this: it is an attempt to bring to pass the idea of human development which has animated sages, prophets, and poets of all ages—the idea that a time must come when warfare of all kinds shall cease, and when a peaceful organization of society shall find a place within its framework for the best growth of each personality, and shall abolish all servitude, in which one but subverts another's gain. Nor should it excite surprise to discover the movement from its true path into destructive byways. False guides are ever found combating true leaders, and there is backward motion as well as advance. But frequent whirlpools and innumerable eddies do not prevent the onward flow of the mighty stream—Richard T. Ely, in the Winfield (Ks.) Free Press.

The Strike of To-day.

It is useless to talk of harmony between labor and capital when capitalists as a class possess privileges under the laws which laborers do not. A never ceasing struggle against encroachments is absolutely necessary for the part of labor to preserve what freedom and comfort has been secured. The lines are being closer drawn. People are fast arraying themselves on one side or the other. A strike is no longer an idle affair. It is an encounter in which definite issues are involved, decided stands are taken, desperate measures resolved upon. No one concerned is neutral or wavering, and the great public takes active part in the contest.—Lizzie M. Holmes.