LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER XLIV.

A FOOL AND HIS MONEY.

Mr. Pike, the solicitor of the Mile End Road, does not belong to the story—which is a pity, because he has many enviable qualities—further than is connected with Harry's interview with him.

He read the documents and heard the story from beginning to end. When he had quite mastered all the details he began mildly to express astonishment and pity that any young man could be such a fool. This was hard, because Harry really thought he had done a mighty clever thing. 'You have been taken in, sir,' said Mr. Pike, 'in a most barefaced and impudent manner. Two thousand pounds! Why, the mere rent alone, without counting interest, is three thousand. Go away, sir; find out this fraudulent imposter, and tell him that you will have nothing to do with him short of a full account and complete restitution.'

'I can not do that,' said Harry.

'Why not?'

'Because I have passed my word.'

'I think, young man, you said you were a cabinet-maker—though you look something better.'

'Yes, I belong to that trade.'

'Since when, may I ask, have cabinet-makers been so punctilious as to their promises?'

'The fact is,' said Harry, gravely, 'we have turned over a new leaf, and are now all on the side of truth and honor.'

'Humph! Then thore is nothing to do but to give the man a receipt in full and a discharge. You are of age; you can do this if you like. Shall I draw it up for you, and receive the money, and take over the houses?'

This was settled, therefore, and in this way Harry became a rich man, with houses and money in the Funds.

As for Bunker, he made the greatest mistake of his life when he sent his nephew to Mr. Pike. He should have known, but he was like the ostrich when he runs his head into the sand, and believes from the secure retreat that he is invisible to his hunters. For his own version of the incident was palpably absurd; and, besides, Mr. Pike heard Harry's account of the matter. Therefore, though Bunker thought to heap coals of fire upon his enemy's head, he only succeeded in throwing them under his feet, which made him kick—'for who can go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?' The good man is now, therefore, laboring under a cloud of prejudice which does not seem to lift, though perhaps he will live it down. Other events have happened since, which have operated to his prejudice. Everybody knows how he received his nephew; what wicked things he said everywhere about him; and what rumors he spread about Miss Kennedy; everybody knows that he had to disgorge houses—actually, houses—which he had appropriated. This knowledge is common property; and it is extremely unpleasant for Mr. Bunker when he takes his walks abroad to be cruelly assailed by questions which hit harder than any brickbat; they are hurled at him by workingmen and by street boys. 'Who stole the 'ouse?' for instance, is a very nasty thing to be said to a gentleman who is professionally connected with house property. I know not how this knowledge came to be so generally known. Certainly Harry did not spread it abroad. People, however, are not fools, and can put things together; where the evil doings and backslidings of their friends are concerned they are surprisingly sharp.

Now when the ownership of the house in Stepney Green became generally known, there immediately sprung up, as always happens on occasions of discovery, rooting-out of facts, or exposure of wickedness, quite a large crop of old inhabitants ready to declare that they knew all along that the house on Stepney Green was one of those belonging to old Mr. Coppin. He bought it, they said, of Mr. Messenger, who was born there; and it was one of three left to Caroline, who died young. Who would believe that Mr. Bunker could have been so wicked? Where is faith in brother man since so eminent a professor of honesty has fallen?

Mr. Bunker suffers, but he suffers in silence; he may been seen any day in the neighborhood of Stepney Green, still engaged in his usual business; people may talk behind his back, but talk breaks no bones; they don't dare talk before his face; though he has lost two thousand pounds, there is still money left—he feels that he is a warm man, and has money to leave behind him; it will be said of him that he cut up well. Warmth of all kinds comforts a man; but he confessed with a pang that he did wrong to send his nephew to that lawyer, who took the opportunity, when he drew up the discharge and receipt, of giving him an opinion—unasked and unpaid for—as to his conduct in connection with the trust. There could be no mistake at all about the meaning and force of that opinion. And, oddly enough, whenever Mr. Bunker sees the queen's omnibus—that dark-painted vehicle, driven by a policeman—pass along the road, he thinks of Mr. Pike, and that opinion returns to his memory, and he feels just exactly as if a bucket of cold water was trickling down his back by the nape of the neck. Even in warm weather this is disagreeable. And it shows that the lawyer must have spoken very strong words indeed, and that although Mr. Bunker, like the simple ones and the scorners, wished for for none of the lawyer's counsel, unlike them he did not despise their reproof. Yet he is happier, now that the blow has fallen, than he was while he was waiting it and dreaming of handcuffs.

We anticipate; but we have indeed seen almost the last of Mr. Bunker. It is sad to part with him but we have no choice.

In the evening Harry went as usual to the drawing-room. He stayed, however, after the girls went away. There is nothing unusual in his doing so. 'Girls in my position,' said the dress-maker, 'are not tied by the ordinary rules.' To-night, however, he had something to say.

'Congratulate me,' he cried, as soon as they were alone. 'I have turned out, as the story-books say, to be the heir to vast sums of money.'

Angela turned pale. She was reassured, however, on learning the extent of the heritage.

'Consider my romantic story,' said Harry. 'Instead of finding myself the long-lost heir, strawberry-mark and all, to an earldom, I am the son of a sergeant in the Line. And then, just as I am getting over the blow, I find myself the owner of three houses and two thousand pounds. What workman ever got two thousand pounds before? There was an under gardner I knew,' he went on, meditatively, 'who once got a hundred; he called it a round hundred, I remember. He and his wife went on the Hospitable Drink for a fortnight; then they went to the hospital for a whole month with Trimmings; and then went back to work—the money all gone—and joined the Primitive Methodists. Can't we do something superior in the shape of a burst, or a boom, for the girls, with two thousand pounds?'

'Tell me,' said Angela, 'how you got it.'

He narrated the whole story, for her instruction and amusement, with some dramatic force, impersonating Bunker's wrath, terror, and entreaties, and final business like collapse.

'So that,' said Angela, 'you are now a man of property, and will, I suppose, give up the work at the Brewery.'

'Do you think I should?'

'I do not like to see any man idle, and'—she hesitated—'especially you.'

'Thank you,' said Harry. 'Then I remain. The question of the two thousand pounds—my cool Two Thousand—I am the winner of the Two Thousand—in reserve. As for this house, however, decided steps must be taken. Listen, Queen of the Mystery of Dress! You pay Bunker sixty-five pounds a year or so for the rent of this house; that is a good large deduction from the profits of the Association. I have been thinking, if you approve, that I will have this house conveyed to you in trust for the Association. Then you will be rent free.'

'But that is a very, very generous offer. You really wish to give us this house altogether for ourselves!'

'If you will accept it.'

'You have only these houses, and you give us the best of them. Is it right and just to strip yourself?'

'How many houses should I have? Now there are two left, and their rent brings in seventy pounds a year, and I have two thousand pounds which will will bring in another eighty pounds a year. I am rich—much too rich for a common cabinet-maker.'

'Oh!' she said, 'what can we do but accept? And how shall we show our gratitude? But, indeed, we can do nothing.'

'I want nothing,' said Harry. 'I have had so much happiness in this place that I want for nothing. It is for me to show my gratitude.'

'Thank you,' she replied, giving him her hand. He stooped and kissed it, but humbly, as one who accepts a small favor gratefully and asks for no more.

They were alone in the drawing-room; the fire was low; only one lamp was burning; Angela was sitting beside the fire; her face was turned from him. A mighty wave of love was mounting in the young man's brain; but a little more, a very little more, and he would have been kneeling at her feet. She felt the danger; she felt it the more readily because she was so deeply moved herself. What had she given the girls, out of her abundance, compared with what he had given, out of his slender portion? Her eyes filled with tears. Then she sprung to her feet and touched his hand again.

'Do not forget your promise,' she said.

'My promise! Oh! how long—'

'Patience,' she replied. 'Give me a little while—a little while—only—and—'

'Forgive me,' he said, kissing her hand again. 'Forgive me.'

'Let me go,' she went on. 'It is eleven o'clock.' They put out the lamp and went out. The night was clear and bright.

'Do not go in just yet.' said Harry. 'It is pleasant out here, and I think the stars are brighter than they are at the West End.'

'Everything is better here,' said Angela, 'than at the West End. Here we have hearts, and can feel for each other. Here we are all alike—workmen and workwomen together.'

'You are a prejudiced person. Let us talk of the Palace of Delight—your dream.'

'Your invention,' said Angela.

'Won't my two thousand go some way in starting it? Perhaps, if we could just start it, the thing would go on of its own accord. Why, see what you have done with your girls already.'

'But I must have a big Palace—a noble building, furnished with everything that we want. No, my friend, we will take your house because it is a great and noble gift, but you shall not sacrifice your money. Yet we will have that Palace. and before long. And when it is ready—'

'Yes, when it is ready.'

'Perhaps the opening of the Palace will be, for all of us, the beginning of a new happiness.'

'You speak in a parable.'

'No,' she said, 'I speak in sober earnestness. Now let me go. Remember what I say: the opening of the Palace may be, if you will—for all of us—'

'For you and me?'

'For—yes—for you—and for me. Goodnight.'

CHAPTER XLV.

LADY DAVENANT'S DINNER-PARTY.

Lady Davenant had been in full enjoyment of her title in Portman Square, where one enjoys such things more thoroughly than on Stepney Green, for four or five weeks. She at first enjoyed it so much that she thought of nothing but the mere pleasure of the greatness. She felt an uplifting of heart every time she walked up and down the stately stairs; another every time she sat at the well-furnished dinner-table; and another whenever she looked about her in the drawing-room. She wrote copious letters to her friend Aurelia Tucker during these days. She explained with fullness of detail, and in terms calculated to make that lady expire of envy, the splendor of her position; and for at least five weeks she felt as if the hospitality of Miss Messenger actually brought with it a complete recognition of her claim. Her husband, not so sanguine as herself, knew very well that the time would come when the Case would have to be taken up again and sent in to the proper quarter for examination. Meantime he was resigned, and even happy. Three square meals a day, each of them abundant, each a masterpiece of art, were enough to satisfy that remarkable twist which, as her ladyship was persuaded, one knows not on what grounds, had always been a distinguishing mark of the Davenants. Familiarity speedily reconciled him to the presence of the footmen; he found in the library a most delightful chair in which he could sleep all the morning; and it pleased him to be driven through the streets in a luxurious carriage under the soft warm furs, in which one can take the air and get a splendid appetite without fatigue.

They were seen about a great deal. It was a part of Angela's design that they should, when the time came for going back again, seem to themselves to have formed a part of the best society in London. Therefore she gave instructions to her maid thatthe visitors were to go to all the public places, the theatres, concerts, exhibitions, and places of amusement. The little American lady knew so little what she ought to see and whither she ought to go, that she fell back on Campion for advice and help. It was Campion who suggested a theatre in the evening, the Exhibition of Old Masters of the Grosvenor Gallery in the morning, and Regent Street in the afternoon; it was Campion who pointed out the recognized superiority of Westminister Abbey, considered as a place of worship for a lady of exalted rank, over a chapel up a back street, the Baptist persuasion, to which at her own home Lady Davenant had belonged. It was Campion who went with her and showed her the shops, and taught her the delightful art of spending her money—the money 'lent' her by Miss Messenger—in the manner becoming to a peeress. She was so clever and sharp, that she caught at every hint dropped by the lady's-maid; she reformed her husband's ideas of evening dress; she humored his weaknesses; she let him keep his eyes wide open on a farce or a ballet on the understanding that at a concert or a sermon he might blamelessly sleep through it; she even began to acquire rudimentary ideas on the principles of Art.

'I confess, my dear Aurelia,' she wrote, 'that habit soon renders even thes marble halls familiar. I have become perfectly reconciled to the splendor of English patrician life, and now feel as if I had been born to it. Tall footmen no longer frighten me, nor the shouting of one's name after the theatre. Of course the outward marks of respect one receives as one's due, when one belongs, by the gift of Providence, to a great and noble house.'

This was all very pleasant; yet Lady Davenant began to yearn for somebody, if it were only Mrs. Bormalack, with whom she could converse. She wanted a long chat. Perhaps Miss Kennedy or Mrs. Bormalack, or the sprightly Mr. Goslett, might be induced to come and spend a morning with her, or a whole day, if only they would not feel shy and frightened in so splendid a place.

Meantime some one 'connected with the Press' got to hear of a soi-disant Lord Davenant who was often to be seen with his wife in boxes at theatres and other places of resort. He heard, this intellectual connection of the Press, people asking each other who Lord Davenant was; he inquired of the Red Book, and received no response; he thereupon perceived that here was an opportunity for a sensation and a mystery. He found out where Lord Davenant was living, by great good luck—it was through taking a single four of whiskey in a bar frequented by gentlemen in plush; and he proceeded to call upon his lordship and to interview him.

The result appeared in a long communique which attracted general and immediate interest. The journalist set forth at length and in the most graphic manner the strange and romantic career of the Condescending Wheelwright; he showed how the discovery was made, and how, after many years, the illustrious pair had crossed the Atlantic to put forward their claim; and how they were offered the noble hospitality of a young lady of princely fortune. It was a most delightful god-send to the paper in which it appeared, and it came at a time when the House was not sitting, and there was no wringle-wrangle of debates to furnish material for the columns of big type which are supposed to sway the masses. The other papers therefore seized upon the topic and had leading articles upon it, in which the false Demetrius, the pretending Palæologus, Perkin Warbeck, Lambert Simnel, George Psalmanazer, the Languishing Nobleman, the Earl of Mar, the Count of Albany, with other claims and claimants, furnished illustrations to the claims of the Davenants. The publicity given to the Case by these articles delighted her ladship beyond everything, while it abashed and confounded her lord. He saw in it the beginning of more exertion, and strenuous efforts after the final recognition. And she carefully cut out all the articles and sent them to her nephew Nathaniel, to her friend Aurelia Tucker, and to the editor of the 'Canaan City Express,' with her compliments. And she felt all the more, in the midst of this excitement, that if she did not have some one to talk to she must go back to Stepney Green and spend a day. Or she would die.

It was at this juncture that Campion, perhaps inspired by secret instructions, suggested that her ladyship must be feeling a little lonely, and must want to see her friends. Why not, she said, ask them to dinner?

A dinner-party, Lady Davenant reflected, would serve not only to show her old friends the reality of her position, but would also please them as a mark of kindly remembrance. Only, she reflected, dinner at Stepney Green had not the same meaning that it possessed at the West End. The best dinner in that locality, is that which is most plentiful, and there are no attempts made to decorate a table. Another thing, dinner is taken universally between one o'clock and two. 'I think, Clara Martha,' said his lordship, whom she consulted in this affair of state, 'that at any time of day such a Feast of Belshazzar as you will give them will be grateful; and they may call it dinner or supper, whichever they please.'

Thereupon Lady Davenant wrote a letter to Mrs. Bormalack inviting the whole party. She explained that they had met with the most splendid hospitality from Miss Messenger, in whose house they were still staying; that they had become public characters, and had been the subject of discussion in the papers, which caused them to be much stared at and followed in the streets, and in concert rooms; that they were both convinced that their Case would soon be triumphant; that they frequently talked over old friends of Stepney, and regretted that the distance between them was great—through distance, she added kindly, can not divide hearts; and that, if Mrs. Bormalack's party would come over together and dine with them, it would be taken as a great kindness, both by herself and by his lordship. She added that she hoped they would all come, including Mr. Fagg and old Mr. Maliphant, and Mr. Josephus, 'though,' she added, with a little natural touch, 'I doubt whether Mr. Maliphant ever gave me a thought; and Mr. Josephus was always too much occupied with his own misfortunes to mind any business of mine. And, dear Mrs. Bormalack, please remember that when we speak of dinner we mean what you call supper. It is exactly the same thing, only served a little earlier. We take ours at eight o'clock instead of nine. His lordship desires me to add that he shall be extremely disappointed if Mr. Goslett does not come; and you will tell Miss Kennedy, whose kindness I can never forget, the same from me, and that she must bring Nelly and Rebekah and Captain Sorensen.'

The letter was received with great admiration. Josephus, who had blossomed into a completely new suit of clothes of juvenile cut, declared that the invitation did her ladyship great credit, and that now his misfortunes were finished he should be rejoiced to take his place in society. Harry laughed, and said that of course he would go. 'And you, Miss Kennedy?'

Angela colored. Then she said that she would try to go.

'And if Mr. Maliphant and Daniel only go too,' said Harry, 'we shall be as delightful a party as were ever gathered together at one dinner table.'

It happened that about this time Lord Jocelyn remembered the American claimants, and his promise to call upon them. He therefore called, and was received with the greatest cordiality by her little ladyship, and with wondrous affability, as becomes one man of rank toward another, by Lord Drvenant.

It was her ladyship who volubly explained their claim to him, and the certainty of the assumption that their Timothy Clitheroe was the lost heir of the same two Christian names; her husband only folded his fat hands over each other, and from time to time wagged his head.

'You are the first of my husband's brother peers,' she said, 'who has called upon us. We shall not forget this kindness from your lordship.'

'But I am not a peer at all,' he explained; 'I am only a younger son with a courtesy title. I am quite a small personage.'

'Which makes it all the kinder,' said her ladyship; 'and I must say that, grand as it is in this big house, one does get tired of hearin' no voice but your own—and my husband spends a good deal of his time in the study. Oh! a man of great literary attainments, and a splendid mathematician. I assure your lornship not a man or boy in Canaan City can come near him in algebra.'

'Up to a certain point, Clara Martha,' said her husband, meaning that there might be lofty heights in science to which even he himself could not soar. 'Quadratic equations, my lord.'

Lord Jocelyn made an original remark about the importance of scientific pursuits.

'And since you are so friendly,' continued her ladyship, 'I will venture to invite your lordship to dine with us.'

'Certainly. I shall be greatly pleased.'

'We have got a few friends coming to-morrow evening,' said her ladyship, rather grandly. 'Friends from Whitechapel.'

Lord Jocelyn looked curious.

'Yes, Mr. Josephus Coppin and his cousin Mr. Goslett, a sprightly young man who respects rank.'

'He is coming, is he?' asked Lord Jocelyn, laughing.

'And then there is Miss Kennedy—'

'Is she coming too?' He arose with alacrity. 'Lady Davenant, I shall be most happy to come, I assure you.'

(To be Continued.)

THE BLARNEY STONE.

Five miles west of the city of Cork, Ireland, in a little valley where two streams meet, stands the little village of Blarney. The fame of Blarney is worldwide. It has a castle, and in the walls of the castle the famous "Blarney Stone" is set. The stone is a part of the solid masonry, is 50 feet from the ground, and about 20 feet below the projecting roof of the building. To kiss the "Blarney Stone" is supposed to endow one with captivating witchery of manner, to loosen his or her tongue so that the whole of his conversation will be one solid stream of honeyed words. The situation of this talisman is such that the kissing of it is a rather dangerous feat, it being necessary to let the votary down over the walls by means of ropes. On the top of the castle there is a stone which many claim is the "true Blarney," because the feat of kissing is more easily accomplished. This spurious stone has been in its present situation for only seventy years; the true blarney, mentioned as being set in the wall, bears date of the building of the castle, which is 1446.

Enforced walking is at an end in New Orleans and so is the street car strike. The Car Drivers' Union won the accession of every demand, and hereafter none but union men will be employed.