

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER III.—Continued.

Josephus groaned. 'A junior clerk,' he murmured.

'The professor is not allowed in the Brewery. He might conjure among the vats, and vats have never been able to take a practical joke; but he amuses the Brewery people. As for Mr. Maliphant, he carves figure-heads for the ships that carry away the Brewery beer; and perhaps when the Brewery wants cabinets made they will come to me.'

'It is the biggest Brewery in all England,' said the landlady. 'I can never remember—because my memory is like a sieve—how much beer they brew every year; but somebody once made a calculation about it, compared with Niagara Falls, which even Mr. Bunker said was surprising.'

'Think, Miss Kennedy,' said Harry, 'of an Entire of Messenger's Entire.'

'But how can this Mr. Bunker be of use to me?' asked the young lady.

'Why!' said Mrs. Bormalack. 'There is not a shop or a street nor any kind of place within miles Mr. Bunker doesn't know, who they are that live there, how they make their living, what the rent is, and everything. That's what made him so useful to old Mr. Messenger.'

Miss Kennedy for some reason changed color. Then she said that she thought she would like to see Mr. Bunker.

When she was gone Harry sat down beside his lordship and proceeded to smoke tobacco in silence, refusing the proffered decanters. Said the professor, softly:

'She'd be a fortune—a gem of the first water—upon the boards. As pianoforte player between the feats of magic, marvel, and mystery, or a medium under the magnetic influence of the operator, or a clairvoyant, or a thought-reader—or—' Here he relapsed into silence without a sigh.

'She looks intelligent,' said Daniel Fagg.

'When she hears about my Discovery she will! Here he caught the eye of Harry Goslett, who was shaking a finger of warning, which he rightly interpreted to mean that dress-makers must not be asked to subscribe to learned books. This abashed him.

'Considered as a figure-head,' began Mr. Maliphant, 'I remember—'

'As a dress-maker, now—' interrupted Harry. 'Do Stepney dress makers often play the piano like—well, like Miss Kennedy? Do they wear gold watches? Do they talk and move and act so much like real ladies, that no one could tell the difference? Answer me that, Mrs. Bormalack.'

'Well, Mr. Goslett, all I can say is, that she seems a very proper young lady to have in the house.'

'Proper, ma'am? If you were to search the whole of Stepney, I don't believe you could find such another. What does your ladyship say?'

'I say, Mr. Goslett, that in Canada City the ladies who are dress-makers set the fashions to the ladies who are not; I was myself a dress-maker. And Aurelia Tucker, though she turns up her head at our elevation, is, I must say, a lady who would do credit to any circle, even yours, Mrs. Bormalack. And such remarks about dress-makers I do not understand, and I expected better manners, I must say. Look at his lordship's manners, Mr. Goslett, and his father was a carpenter, like you.'

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE BUNKER.

'My Uncle!'

It was the sprightly young cabinet-maker who sprang to his feet and grasped the hand of the new-comer with an effusion not returned.

'Allow me, Miss Kennedy, to present to you my uncle, my uncle Bunker, whose praise you heard us sing with one consent last night. We did, indeed, revered one! Whatever you want bought, Miss Kennedy, from a piano to a learned pig, this is the man who will do it for you. A percentage on the cost, with a trifling charge for time, is all he seeks in return. He is generally known as the Benevolent Bunker; he is everybody's friend; especially he is beloved by persons behind with their rents, he is—'

Here Mr. Bunker drew out his watch, and observed with severity that his time was valuable, and that he came about business. Angela observed that the sallies of his nephew were received with disfavor.

'Can we not,' pursued Harry, regardless of the cloud upon his uncle's brow—'can we not escape from affairs of urgency for one moment? Show us your lighter side, my uncle. Let Miss Kennedy admire the gifts and graces which you hide as well as the sterner qualities which you exhibit.'

'Business, young lady,' the agent repeated, with a snort and a scowl. He took off his hat and rubbed his bald head with a silk pocket-handkerchief until it shone like polished marble. He was short of stature

and of round figure. His face was red and puffy as if he was fond of hot brandy and water, and he panted, being a little short of breath. His eyes were small and close together, which gave him a cunning look; his whiskers were large and gray; his lips were thick and firm, and his upper lip was long; his nose was broad, but not humorous; his head was set on firmly, and he had a square chin. Evidently he was a man of determination, and he was probably determined to look after his own interests first.

'I want,' said Angela, 'to establish myself in this neighborhood as a dress-maker.'

'Very good,' said Mr. Bunker. 'That's practical. It is my business to do with practical people, not sniggers and idle gigglers.' He looked at his nephew.

'I shall want a convenient house, and a staff of work-women, and—and some one acquainted with business details and management.'

'Go on,' said Mr. Bunker. 'A forewoman you will want, of course.'

'Then, as I do not ask you to give me your advice for nothing, how are you generally paid for such services?'

'I charge,' he said, 'as arranged for beforehand. Time for talking, arranging, and house-hunting, half a crown an hour. That won't break you. And you won't talk too much, knowing you have to pay for it. Percentage on the rent, ten per cent on the first year, nothing afterward; if you want furniture, I will furnish your house from top to bottom on the same terms, and find you work-girls at five shillings a head.'

'Yes,' said Angela. 'I suppose I must engage a staff. And I suppose—here she looked at Harry, as if for advice—I suppose that you are the best person to go to for assistance.'

'There is no one else,' said Mr. Bunker. 'That is why my terms are so low.'

His nephew whistled softly.

Mr. Bunker, after an angry growl at people who keep their hands in their pockets, proceeded to develop his views. Miss Kennedy listened languidly, appearing to care very little about details, and agreeing to most expensive things in a perfectly reckless manner. She was afraid, for her part, that her own ignorance would be exposed if she talked. The agent, however, quickly perceived how ignorant she was, from this very silence, and resolved to make the best of so promising a subject. She could not possibly have much money—who ever heard of a Stepney dress-maker with any?—and she evidently had no experience. He would get as much of the money as he could, and she would be the gainer in experience! A most equitable arrangement, he thought, being one of those—too few—'alas!—who keep before their eyes a lofty ideal, and love to act up to it.

When he had quite finished and fairly embarked his victim on a vast ocean of expenditure, comparatively, and with reference to Stepney and Mile End customs, he put up his pocket book and remarked, with a smile, that he would want references of respectability.

'That's usual,' he said, 'I could not work without.'

Angela changed color. To be asked for references was awkward.

'You can refer to me, my uncle,' said Harry.

'You see, miss,' he said, 'we don't know you, nor where you come from, nor what money you've got, nor how you got it. No doubt it is all right, and I'm sure you look honest. Perhaps you've got nothing to hide, and very likely there's good reasons for wanting to settle here.'

'My grandfather was a Whitechapel man by birth,' she replied. 'He left me some money. If you must have references, of course I could refer you to the lawyers who manage my little affairs. But I would rather, to save trouble, pay for everything on the spot, and the rent in advance.'

Mr. Bunker consented to waive his objection on payment of a sum of ten pounds down, it being understood and concluded that everything bought should be paid for on the spot, and a year's rent, when the house was fixed upon, paid in advance; in consideration for which the said young lady might, in subsequent transactions with strangers, refer to himself, a privilege which was nothing less than the certain passport to fortune.

'As for me,' he added, 'my motto is, 'Think first of your client.' Don't spare yourself for him; toil for him; think of him; rise up early and lie down late for him, and you reap your reward from grateful hearts. Lord! the fortunes I have made!'

'Virtuous Uncle Bunker!' cried Harry, with enthusiasm. 'Noble indeed!'

The good man for the moment forgot the existence of his frivolous nephew, who had retired up the stage, so to speak. He opened his mouth as if to say something in anger, but refrained, and snorted.

'Now that we've settled that matter, Mr. Bunker,' the girl said, without noticing the interruption, 'let us talk about other matters.'

'Are they business matters?'

'Not exactly; but still—'

'Time is money; an hour is half a crown.' He drew out his watch, and made a note of the time in his pocket-book. 'A quarter to eleven, miss. If I didn't charge for time, what would become of my clients? Neglected; their interests ruined; the favorable moment gone. If I could tell you of a lady I established two years ago in one of the Brewery Houses and what she's made of it, and what she says of me you would be astonished. A grateful heart! and no better brandy and water, hot, with a slice of lemon, in the Whitechapel Road. But you were about to say, miss—'

'She was going to begin with a hymn of praise, Uncle Bunker paid in advance, like the rest. Gratitude for favors to come. But if you like to tell about the lady, do. Miss Kennedy will only charge you half a crown an hour. I'll mark time.'

'I think, young man,' said Mr. Bunker, 'that it is time you should go to your work. Stepney is not the place for sniggerin' peacocks; they'd better have stayed in the United States.'

'I am waiting till you have found me a place, too,' the young man replied. 'I too wish to experience the grateful heart. It is peculiar to Whitechapel.'

'I was going to say,' Angela went on, 'that I hear you were connected with old Mr. Messenger for many years.'

'I was,' Mr. Bunker replied, and straightened his 'back with pride. 'I was—everybody knows that I was his confidential factotum and his familiar friend, as David was unto Jonathan.'

'Indeed! I used to—to—hear about him, formerly, a great deal.'

'Which made his final behavior the more revolting,' Mr. Bunker continued, completing his sentence.

'Really! How did he finally behave?'

'It was always—ah! for twenty years, between us, 'Bunker, my friend,' or, 'Bunker, my trusted friend,' tell me this, go there, find out that. I bought his houses; I let his houses; I told him who were responsible tenants; I warned him when shooting of moons seemed likely; I found out their antecedents and told their stories. He had hundreds of houses, and he knew everybody that lived in them, and what their fathers were and their mothers were, and even their grandmothers. For he was a Whitechapel man by birth, and was proud of it.'

'But—the shameful behavior?'

'All the time'—he shook his head and looked positively terrible in his wrath—'all the time I was piling up his property for him, houses here, streets there, he would encourage me in his way. 'Go on, Bunker, he would say, 'go on. A man who works for duty, like yourself, and to please his employers, and not out of consideration for the pay, is one of a million; as I certainly was, Miss Kennedy. 'One of a million,' he said; 'and you will have your reward after I am gone.' Over and over again he said this, and of course I reckoned on it, and wondered how much it would sum up to. Something, I thought in four figures.' Here he stopped and rubbed his bald head again.

Angela caught the eyes of his nephew, who in his seat was silently laughing. He had caught the situation which she herself now readily comprehended. She pictured to herself this blatant Professor of Disinterestedness and Zeal buzzing and fluttering about her grandfather, and the quiet old man egging him on to more protestations.

'Four figures, for certain, it would be. Once I asked his advice as to how I should invest that reward when it did come. He laughed, miss. Yes, for once he laughed, which I never saw him do before or after. I often think he must be sorry now to think of that time he laughed. Yah! I'm glad of it.'

So far as Angela could make it, his joy grew out of a persuasion that this particular fit of laughter was somehow interfering with her grandfather's present comforts, but perhaps she was wrong.

'He laughed,' continued Mr. Bunker, 'and he said that house property, in a rising neighborhood, and if it could be properly looked after, was the best investment for money. House property, he said, as far as the money would go.'

'And when he died?' asked the listener, with another glance at Harry, the unsympathetic, whose face expressed the keenest enjoyment.

'Nothing, if you please; not one brass farthing. Hunks! Hunks! He grew perfectly purple, and clutched his fist as if he would fain be punching of heads. 'Not one word of me in his will. All for the girl: millions—millions—for her; and for me who had done his work—nothing.'

'You have the glow of virtue,' said his nephew.

'It seems hard,' said Angela, quickly, for the man looked dangerous, and seemed capable of transferring his wrath to his nephew—it seems hard to get nothing if anything was promised.'

'It seems a pity,' Harry chimed in, 'that so much protesting was in vain. Perhaps Mr. Messenger took him at his word. What a dreadful thing to be believed!'

'A Hunks,' replied Mr. Bunker; 'a miserable Hunks.'

'Let me write a letter for you,' said Harry, 'to the heiress; we might forward it with a deputation of grateful hearts from Stepney.'

'Mind your own business,' growled his uncle. 'Will, miss, you wanted to hear about Mr. Messenger, and you have heard. What next?'

'I should very much like, if it were possible,' Angela replied, 'to see this Great Brewery, of which one hears so much. Could you, for instance, take me over, Mr. Bunker?'

'At a percentage,' whispered his nephew, loud enough for both to hear.

'Messenger's Brewery,' he replied, 'is as familiar to me as my own fireside. I've grown up beside it. I know all the people in it. They all know me. Perhaps they respect me. Fer it was well known that a handsome legacy was promised, and expected. And nothing, after all. As for taking you over, of course I can. We will go at once. It will take time; and time is money.'

'May I go to?' asked Harry.

'No, sir; you may not. It shall not be said in the Mile End Road that an industrious man like myself, a Worker for Clients, was seen in working time with an Idler.'

The walk from Stepney Green to Messenger & Marsden's Brewery is not far. You turn to the left if your house is on one side, and to the right if it is on the other; then you pass a little way down one street, and a little way, turning again to the left, up another—a direction which will guide you quite clearly. You then find yourself before a great gate-way, the portals of which are closed; beside it is a smaller door, at which, in a little lodge, sits one who guards the entrance.

Mr. Bunker nodded to the porter, and entered unchallenged. He led the way across a court to a sort of outer office.

'Here,' he said, 'is the book for the visitors' names. We have them from all countries: great lords and ladies; foreign princes; and all the brewers from Germany and America, who come to get a wrinkle. Write your name in it, too. Something, let me tell you, to have your name in such noble company.'

She took a pen and wrote hurriedly.

Mr. Bunker looked over her shoulder.

'Ho! ho! he said, 'that is a good one! See what you've written.'

In fact she had written her own name—Angela Marsden Messenger.

She blushed violently.

'How stupid of me! I was thinking of the heiress—they said it was her name.'

She carefully effaced the name, and wrote under it, 'A. M. Kennedy.'

'That's better. And now come along. A good joke, too! Fancy their astonishment if they had come to read it!'

'Does she often come—the heiress?'

'Never once been aigh the place; never seen it; never asks after it; never makes an inquiry about it. Draws the money and despoises it.'

'I wonder she has not got more curiosity.'

'Ah! it's a shame for such a Property to come to a girl—a girl of twenty-one. Thirteen acres it covers—think of that! Seven hundred people it employs, most of them married. Why, if it was only to see her own vats, you'd think she'd get off her luxurious pillows for once, and come here.'

They entered a great Hall remarkable at first for a curious smell, not offensive, but strong and rather pungent. In it stood half a dozen enormous vats, closed by wooden slides, like shutters, fitting tightly. A man standing by opened one of these, and presently Angela was able to make out, through the volumes of steam, something bright going round, and a brown mess going with it.

'That is hops. Hops for the biggest Brewery, the richest in all England. And all belonging to a girl who, likely enough, doesn't drink more than a pint and a half a day.'

'I dare not say,' said Angela; 'it must be a dreadful thing indeed to have so much beer, and to be able to drink so little.'

He led the way upstairs to another great Hall, where there was the grinding of machinery and another smell, sweet and heavy.

'This is where we crush the malt,' said Mr. Bunker—'see!' He stooped, and picked out a handful of the newly crushed malt.

'I suppose you thought it was roasted. Roasting, young lady,' he added with severity, 'is for Stout, not for Ale!'

Then he took her to another place, and showed her where the liquor stood to ferment; how it was cooled, how it was passed from one vat to another, how it was stored and kept in vats, dwelling perpetually on

the magnitude of the business, and the irony of fortune in conferring this great gift upon a girl.

'I know now,' she interrupted, 'what the place smells like. Is it fusel oil.' They were standing on a floor of open iron bars, above a row of long covered vats, within which the liquor was working and fermenting. Every now and then there would be a heaving of the surface, and a quantity of the malt would move suddenly over.

'We are famous,' said Mr. Bunker; 'I say we, having been the confidential friend and adviser of the late Mr. Messenger, deceased; we are famous for our Stout; also for our Mild; and we are now reviving our Bitter, which we had partially neglected. We use the Artesian Well, which is four hundred feet deep, for our Stout, but the Company's water for our Ales, and our water rate is two thousand pounds a year. The Artesian Well gives the Ale a gray color, which people don't like. Come into this room, now,'—it was another great Hall covered with sacks. 'Hops again, Miss Kennedy; now, that little lot is worth ten thousand pounds—ten—thousand—think of that; and it is all spoiled by the rain, and has to be thrown away. We think nothing of losing ten thousand pounds here, nothing at all!'—he snapped his fingers—it is a mere trifle to the girl who sits at home and makes the profits!'

He spoke as if he felt a personal animosity to the girl. Angela told him so.

'No wonder,' he said; 'she took all the legacy that ought to have been mine; no man can forgive that. You are young, Miss Kennedy, and are only beginning business; mark my words, one of these days you will feel how hard it is to put a little by—work as hard as you may—while here is this one having it put away for her, thousands a day, and doing for it—nothing at all!'

Then they went into more great Halls, and up more stairs, and on to the roof, and saw more piles of sacks, more malt, and more hops. When they smelled the hops, it seemed as if their throats were tightened; when they smelled the fermentation, it seemed as if they were smelling fusel oil; when they smelled the plain crushed malt, it seemed as if they were getting swiftly, but sleepily, drunk. Everywhere and always the steam rolled backward and forward, and the grinding of the machinery went on, and the roaring of the furnaces; and the men went about too and fro at their work. They did not seem hard worked, nor were they pressed; their movements were leisurely, as if beer was not a thing to hurry; they were all rather pale of cheek, but fat and jolly, as if the beer was good and agreed with them. Some wore brown paper caps, for it was a pretty drouthy place; some went bareheaded, some wore the little round hat in fashion. An they went to another part, where men were rolling barrels about, as if they had been skittles, and here they saw vats holding three thousand barrels; and one thought of giant armies—say two hundred and fifty thousand thirsty Germans—beginning the Loot of London with one of these royal vats. And they went through stables, where hundreds of horses were stalled at night, each as big as an elephant and much more useful.

In one great room, where there was the biggest vat of all, a man brought them beer to taste; it was Messenger's Stout. Angela took her glass and put it to her lips with a strong emotion—she felt as if she should like a quiet place to sit down in and cry. The great place was hers—all hers—and this was the beer with which her mighty fortune had been made.

'Is it,' she asked, looking at the heavy foam of the frothing stout; 'is this Messenger's Entire?'

Bunker sat down and drank off his glass before replying. Then he laid his hands upon his stick and made answer, slowly, remembering that he was engaged at half a crown an hour, which is one halfpenny a minute.

'This is not Entire,' he said. 'You see, Miss Kennedy, there's fashions in beer, same as in clothes; once it was all Cooper, now you never hear of Cooper. Then it was Half-an-ard—you never hear of any one ordering Half-an-ard now. Then it was stout. Nothing would go down but Stout, which I recommended myself, and find it nourishing. Next Bitter came in, and honest Stout was despised; now, we're all for Mild. As for Entire, why—bless my soul!—Entire went out before I was born. Why, it was Entire which made the fortune of the first Messenger that was—a poor little brewer he had, more than a hundred years ago, in this very place, because it was cheap for rent. In those days they used to brew Strong Ale, Old and Strong; Stout same as now; and Twopenny, which was small beer. And because the Old ale was too strong, and the Stout too dear, and the Twopenny too weak, the people used to mix them all three together, and they called them 'Three Threads'; and you may fancy the trouble it was for the pot boys to go to one cask after another, all day long, because they had no beer engines then. Well, what did Mr. Messenger do? He brewed a beer as strong as the Three Threads, and he called it Messenger's Entire Three Threads, meaning that here you had 'em all in one, and that's what made his fortune; and now, young lady, you've seen all I've got to show you, and we will go. I make bold, young woman,' he said, as they went away, 'to give you a warning about my nephew. He's a good-looking chap, for all he's worthless, though it's a touch-and-go style that's not my idea of good looks. Still, no doubt some would think him handsome. Well, I warn you.'

(To be Continued.)