

## LADY BOUNTIFUL.

STORY WITH A MORAL FOR SOCIAL THEORISTS TO ACT UPON.

## CHAPTER XL.—Continued.

'Let us talk, Nelly,' she began; 'we are quite alone. Tell me, my dear, what is on your mind?'

'Nothing,' said Nelly.

'Yes, there is something—tell me what it is.'

'Oh, Miss Kennedy, I cannot tell you. It would be rudeness to speak of it.'

'There can be no rudeness, Nelly, between you and me. Tell me what you are thinking.'

Angela knew already what was in her mind, but after the fashion of her sex she dissembled. The brutality of truth among the male sex is sometimes very painful; and yet we are so proud, some of us, of our earnest attachment to truth.

'Oh, Miss Kennedy, can you not see that he is suffering?'

'Nelly!' but she was not displeased.

'He is getting thinner. He does not laugh as he used to; and he does not dance as much as he did. Oh, Miss Kennedy, can you not take pity on him?'

'Nelly, you have not told me whom you mean. Nay—as with a sudden change of tone she threw her arms about Nelly's neck and kissed her—'nay. I know very well whom you mean, my dear.'

'I have not offended you?'

'No, you have not offended me. But, Nelly, answer me one question—answer it truthfully. Do you, from your own heart, wish me to take pity on him?'

Nelly answered frankly and truthfully: 'Yes; because how can I wish anything but what will make you happy? Oh, how can any of us help wishing that; and he is the only man who can make you happy. And he loves you.'

'You want him to love me for my sake; for my own sake. Nelly, dear child, you humble me.'

But Nelly did not understand. She had secretly offered up her humble sacrifice—her pair of turtle doves; and she knew not that her secret was known.

'She loves him herself,' Angela was thinking, 'and she gives him up for my sake.'

'He is not,' Nelly went on, as if she could by any words of hers persuade Angela, 'he is not like any of the common workmen. See how he walks, and how independent he is, and he talks like a gentleman. And he can do all the things that gentlemen learn to do. Who is there among us all that he could look at, except you?'

'Nelly—do not make me vain.'

'As for you, Miss Kennedy, there is no man fit for you in all the world. You call yourself a dress-maker, but we know better; oh, you are a lady. My father says so. He used to have great ladies sometimes on board his ship. He says that never was any one like you for talk and manner. Oh! we don't ask your secret—if you have one—only some of us—not I, for one—are afraid that some day you will go away, and never come back to us again. What should we do then?'

'My dear, I shall not desert you.'

'And if you marry him, you will remain with us? A lady should marry a gentleman, I know; she could not marry any common man. But you are, so you tell us, only a dress-maker. And he, he says, only a cabinet-maker; and Dick Coppin says that, though he can use the lathe, he knows nothing at all about the trade—not even how they talk, or anything about them. If you two have secrets, Miss Kennedy, tell them to each other.'

My secrets, if I have any, are very simple. Nelly, and very soon you shall know them; and, as for his, I know them already. Angela was silent awhile, thinking over this thing; then she kissed the girl, and whispered, 'Patience yet a little while, dear Nelly. Patience, and I will do, perhaps, what you desire.'

'Father,' said Nelly, later on that night, sitting together by the fire, 'father, I spoke to Miss Kennedy to-night.'

'What did you speak to her about, my dear?'

'I told her that we knew—you and I—that she is a lady, whatever she may pretend.'

'That is quite true, Nelly.'

'And I said that Mr. Goslett is a gentleman, whatever he may pretend.'

'That may be true—even though he is not a gentleman born—but that's a very different thing, my dear.'

'Why is it different?'

'Because there are many ladies who go about among poor people; but no gentlemen, unless it's the clergymen. Ladies seem to like it—they do it, however hard the work, for nothing—and all because it is their duty, and an imitation of the Lord. Some of them go out nursing. I have told you how I took them out to Scutari. Some

of them go, and not a bit afraid, into the foul courts, and find out the worst creatures in the world, and help them. Many of them give up their whole lives for the poor and miserable. My dear, there is nothing that a good woman will shrink from—no misery, no den of wickedness—nothing. Sometimes I think Miss Kennedy must be one of those women. Yes, she's got a little money, and she has come here to work in her own way among the people here.'

'And Mr. Goslett, father?'

'Men don't do what women do. There may be something in what Mr. Bunker says—that he has reasons of his own for coming here and hiding himself.'

'Oh, father, you don't mean it; and his own uncle, too, to say such a thing.'

'Yes, his own uncle. Mr. Goslett, certainly, does belong to the place; though why Bunker should bear him so much malice is more than I can tell.'

'And, father, there is another reason why he should stay here.' Nelly blushed, and laughed merrily.

'What is that, my dear?'

Nelly kissed him, and laughed again. 'It is your time for a pipe—let me fill it for you. And the Sunday ration, here it is; and here is a light. Oh, father, to be a sailor so long and have no eyes in your head!'

'What?—he understood now—'you mean Miss Kennedy! Nell, my dear, forgive me—I was thinking that perhaps you—'

'No, father,' she replied hurriedly, 'that could never be. I want nothing but to stay on here with you and Miss Kennedy, who has been so good to us that we can never thank her enough; nor can we wish her too much joy. But, please, never say that again.'

Her eyes filled with tears.

Captain Sorensen took a book from the table—it was that book which so many people have constantly in their mouths; and yet in never seems to get into their hearts—the book which is so seldom read and so much commented upon. He turned it over till he found a certain passage beginning, 'Who can find a virtuous woman?' He read this right through to the end. One passage, 'She stretcheth out her hands unto the poor. Yes, she reacheth forth her hands unto the needy,' he read twice; and the last line, 'Let her own works praise her in the gates,' he read three times.

'My dear,' he concluded, 'to pleasure Miss Kennedy you would do more than give up a lover; ay, and with a cheerful heart.'

## CHAPTER XLI.

## BOXING NIGHT.

'Let us keep Christmas,' said Angela, 'with something like original treatment. We will not dance, because we do that nearly every night.'

'Let us,' said Harry, 'dress up and act. What were they to act? That he would find for them. How were they to dress? That they would have to find for themselves. The feature of the Christmas festival was that they were to be mummers, and that there was to be mummicking, and, of course, there would be a little feasting, and perhaps a little singing.'

'We must have just such a programme,' said Angela to their master of ceremonies, 'as if you were preparing it for the Palace of Delight.'

'This is the only Palace of Delight,' said Harry, 'that we shall ever see. For my own part I desire no other.'

'But, you know, we are going to have another one, much larger than this little place. Have you forgotten all our projects?'

Harry laughed; it was strange how persistently Miss Kennedy returned to the subject again and again; how seriously she talked about it; how she dwelt upon it.

'We must have,' she continued, 'sports which will cost nothing, with dresses which we can make for ourselves. Of course we must have guests to witness them.'

'Guests cost money,' said Harry. 'But, of course, in a Palace of Delight money must not be considered. That would be treason to your principles.'

'We shall not give our guests anything except the cold remains of the Christmas dinner. As for champagne, we can make our own with a few lemons and a little sugar. Do not forbid us to invite an audience.'

Fortunately, a present which arrived from their patron, Miss Messenger, the day before Christmas-day, enabled them to give their guests a substantial supper at no cost whatever. The present took the form of several hampers, addressed to Miss Kennedy, with a note from the donor conveying her love to the girls and best wishes for the next year, when she hoped to make their

acquaintance. The hampers contained turkeys, sausages, ducks, geese, hams, tongues, and the like.

Meantime, Harry, as stage manager and dramatist, had devised the tableaux, and the girls between them devised the dresses from a book of costumes. Christmas-day, as everybody remembers, fell last year on a Sunday. This gave the girls the whole of Saturday afternoon and evening, with Monday morning for the conversion of the trying-on-room into the stage and the show-room for the audience. But the rehearsals took a fortnight, for some of the girls were stupid and some were shy, though all were willing to learn, and Harry was patient. Besides there was the chance of wearing the most beautiful dresses, and no one was left out; in the allegory, a pastoral, invented by their manager, there was a part for every one.

The gift of Miss Messenger made it possible to have two sets of guests; one set consisting of the girls' female relations, and a few private friends of Miss Kennedy's who lived and suffered in the neighborhood, for the Christmas dinner, held on Monday; and the other set was carefully chosen from a long list for the select audience in the evening. Among them were Dick and his friend, the ex-Chartist cobbler, and a few leading spirits of the Advanced Club. They wanted an audience who would read between the lines.

The twenty-sixth day of last December was, in the neighborhood of Stepney, dull and overcast; it promised to be a day of rebuke for all quiet folk, because it was a general holiday, one of those four terrible days when the people flock in droves to favorite haunts if it is in the summer, or hang about public-houses if it is winter; when, in the evening, the air is hideous with the shouts of those who roll about the pavements; a day when even Comus and his rabble rout are fain to go home for fear of being hustled and evilly treated by the holiday-makers of famous London town: a day when the peaceful and the pious, the temperate and the timid, stay at home. But to Angela it was a great day, sweet and precious—to use the language of an ancient Puritan and modern prig—because it was the first attempt toward the realization of her great dream; because her girls on this night for the first time showed the fruits of her training in the way they played their parts, their quiet bearing and their new refinement. After the performances of this evening she looked forward with confidence to her palace.

The day began, then, at half past one with the big dinner. All the girls could bring their mothers, sisters, and female relations generally, who were informed that Miss Messenger, the mysterious person who interfered perpetually, like a goddess out of a machine, with some new gift, or some device for their advantage, was the giver of the feast.

It was a good and ample Christmas dinner served in the long work-room by Angela and the girls themselves. There were the turkeys of the hamper, roasted with sausages, and roast beef and roast fowls, and roast geese and roast pork, with an immense surplus of the vegetables dear to London people; and after this first course, there were plum pudding and mince pies. Messenger's ale, with the stout so much recommended by Bunker, flowed freely, and after dinner there was handed to each a glass of port. None but women and children—no boy over eight being allowed—were present at the feast, and when it was over most of the women got up and went away, not without some little talk with Angela and some present in kind from the benevolent Miss Messenger. Then they cleared all away and set out the tables again, with the same provisions for the supper in the evening, at which there would be hungry men.

All the afternoon they spent in completing their arrangements. The guests began to arrive at five. The music was supplied by Angela herself, who did not act, with Captain Sorensen and Harry. The piano was brought down-stairs and stood in the Hall outside the trying-on-room.

The performance was to commence at six, but everybody had come long before half past five. At a quarter to six the little orchestra began to play the old English tunes dear to pantomimes.

At the ringing of a bell, the music changed to a low monotonous plaint and the curtain slowly rose on the tableau.

There was a large, bare, empty room: its sole furniture was a table and three chairs; in one corner was a pile of shavings; upon them sat, crouching with her knees drawn up, the pale and worn figure of a girl; beside her were the crutches which showed that she was a cripple; her white cheek was wasted and hollow; her chin was thrust forward as if she was in suffering almost intolerable. During the tableau she moved not, save to swing slowly backward and forward upon the shavings which formed her bed.

On the table, for it was night, was a candle in a ginger-beer bottle, and two girls sat at the table working hard; their needles were running a race with starvation; their

clothes were in rags; their hair was gathered up in careless knots; their cheeks were pale; they were pinched and cold and feeble with hunger and privation.

Said one of the women present, 'Two-pence an hour they can make. Poor things! poor things!'

'Dick,' whispered the cobbler, 'you make a note of it; I guess what's coming.'

The spectators shivered with sympathy, they knew so well what it meant: some of them had themselves dwelt amid these garrets of misery and suffering.

Then voices were heard outside in the street singing.

They were the waits, and they sung the joyful hymns of Christmas. When the working girls hear the singing, they paid no heed whatever, plying the needle fast and furiously; and the girl in the shavings paid no heed, slowly swinging to and fro in her pain and hunger. At the sight of this callous contempt, this disregard of the invitation to rejoice, as if there were neither hope nor joy for such as themselves, with only a mad desire to work for something to stay the dreadful pains of hunger, some of the women among the spectators wept aloud.

Then the waits went away; and there was silence again.

Then one of the girls—it was Nelly—stopped, and leaned back in her chair, with her hand to her heart, the work fell from her lap upon the floor; she sprang to her feet, threw up her hands, and fell in a lifeless heap upon the floor. The other girl went on with her sewing; and the cripple went on swinging backward and forward. For they were all three so miserable that the misery of one could no more touch the other two.

The curtain dropped. The tableau represented, of course, the girls who work for an employer.

After five minutes it rose again. There were the same girls and others; they were sitting at work in a cheerful and well-furnished room; they were talking and laughing. The clock struck six, and they laid aside their work, pushed back the table and advanced to the front, singing all together. Their faces were bright and happy; they were well dressed; they looked well fed; there was no trouble among them at all; they chatted like singing-birds; they ran and played.

Then Captain Sorensen came in with his fiddle, and first he played a merry tune, at the sound of which the girls caught each other by the waist, and fell to dancing the old Greek ring. Then he played a quadrille, and they danced that simple figure, and as if they liked it; and then he played a waltz, and they whirled round and round.

This was the labor of girls for themselves. Everybody understood perfectly what was meant without the waste of words. Some of the mothers present wiped their eyes and told their neighbors that this was no play-acting, but the sweet and blessed truth; and that the joy was real, because the girls were working for themselves, and there were no nagging, no fines, no temper, no bullying, no long hours.

After this there was a concert, which seemed a falling off in point of excitement. But it was pretty. Captain Sorensen played some rattling sea ditties; then Miss Kennedy and Mr. Goslett played a duet; then the girls sang a madrigal in parts, so that it was wonderful to hear them, thinking how ignorant they were six months before. Then Miss Kennedy played a solo, and then the girls sang another song. By what magic, by what mystery, were girls so transformed? Then the audience talked together, and whispered that it was all the doing of that one girl—Miss Kennedy—who was believed by everybody to be a lady born and bred, but pretended to be a dress-maker. She it was who got the girls together, gave them the house, found work for them, arranged the time and duties, and paid them week by week for shorter hours better wages. It was she who persuaded them to spend their evenings with her instead of trapesing about the streets, getting into mischief; it was she who taught them the singing, and all manner of pretty things; and they were not spoiled by it, except that they would have nothing more to say to the rough lads and shopboys who had formerly paid them rude court and jested with them on Stepney Green. Uppish they certainly were; what mother would find fault with a girl for holding up her head and respecting herself? And as for manners, why, no one could tell what a difference there was.

The Chartist looked on with a little suspicion at first, which gradually changed to the liveliest satisfaction.

'Dick,' he whispered to his friend and disciple, 'I am sure that if the workingmen like, they may find the swells their real friends. See, now we've got all the power; they can't take it from us; very good, then, who are the men we should suspect? Why, those who've got to pay the wages—the manufacturers and such. Not the swells. Make a note of that, Dick. It may be the best card you've got to play. A thousand places such as this—planted all about England—started at first by a swell, why, man, the working classes would have not only all

the power but all the money. Oh! if I were ten years younger! What are they going to do next?'

The next thing they did pleased the women, but the men did not seem to care much about it, and the Chartist went on developing the new idea to Dick, who drank it all in, seeing that here indeed, was a practical and attractive idea even though it meant a new departure. But the preacher of a new doctrine has generally a better chance than one who only hammers away at an old one.

The stage showed one figure. A beautiful girl, her hair bound in a fillet, clad in Greek dress, simple, flowing, graceful, stood upon a low pedestal. She was intended—it was none other than Nelly—to represent woman dressed as she should be. One after the other there advanced upon the stage and stood beside this statue, women dressed as women ought not to be; there they were, the hideous fashions of generation; the pinched waists, monstrous hats, high peaks, hoops, and crinolines, hair piled up, hair stuffed out, gigot sleeves, high waists, tight skirts, bending, boots with high heels—an endless array.

When Nelly got down from her pedestal and the show was over, Harry advanced to the front and made a little speech. He reminded his hearers that the Association was only six months old; he begged to consider what was its position now. To be sure, the girls had been started, and, that, he said, was the great difficulty; but, the start once made and prejudice removed, they found themselves with work to do, and they were now paying their own way and doing well; before long they would be able to take in more hands; it was not all work with them, but there was plenty of play, as they knew. Meantime the girls invited everybody to have supper with them, and after supper there would be a little dance.

They stayed to supper, and they appreciated the gift of Miss Messenger; then they had the little dance—Dick Coppin now taking his part without shame. While the dancing went on the Chartist sat in the corner of the room, and talked with Angela. When he went away, his heart—which was large and generous—burned within him, and he had visions of a time when the voices of the poor shall not be raised against the rich nor the minds of the rich hardened against the poor. Perhaps he came unconsciously nearer Christianity, this man who was a scoffer, and an unbeliever, that night than he had ever before. To have faith in the future forms, indeed, a larger part of the Christian religion than some of us ever realize. And to believe in a single woman is one step, however small, toward believing in the Divine Man.

(To be Continued.)

## She Was Mad.

Why, my dear, what on earth is the matter with you? You look as if you could bite a ten-penny nail in two, said Mr. Day when he came home the other evening and found his wife with her hat and gloves on standing in the vestibule of their house.

Don't ask me a word about it, Ralph Day, and don't you dare laugh or I'll—I'll—leave you! I never was so mad in all the mortal days of my life! I—I—oh, I could swear!

Well, please don't do that, said Mr. Day. What are you standing here for? Why have I been standing here for three wretched hours? Oh, I could fly! Haven't you any eyes. Can't you see why I am standing here?

No, I can't.

Can't you see that the back part of my dress is caught in these miserable inside doors and that I can't—oh, you go to laughing and I'll use this parol on you! I started out to make some calls nearly three hours ago, and while I was standing here a draft of wind banged the door shut and caught the back part of my dress in it, and I just couldn't get away. It's Thursday, and the girl's out, and there's no one in the house, and the outside doors were shut so I couldn't make anyone hear me from the street. As usual, I'd forgotten my latch key, and here I've stood and stood and stood until I thought I'd die, and—Ralph Day, if you don't stop laughing and giggling like an idiot I'll—I'll—you hurry and open this door and let me get away from here or I'll never speak to you again on earth. Oh, I'm so mad!

She—With what were you particularly struck when you first went on the stage? He—Two bricks and a cabbage.

No Cause for alarm—Mrs. Van Neering (hiring her first butler)—And you are sure you are fully conversant with the duties of a butler, and will not need any instructions? 'Ennery 'Obbs (reassuringly)—That's hall right, me laddy. No von shall hever know but what you've been used to a butler hall your life.

Her Lawyer—Now, madam, don't you think that if we brought a little pressure to bear on him we could render the divorce proceedings unnecessary? Mrs. Mulvaney—Indade, an' we couldn't, judge. Oi had him under th' kitchen shivewid me settin' on top av it four hours yisterday, an' divil the more dacinter he bekem.