

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER I.—Continued.

Two millions of people, or thereabouts, live in the East End of London. That seems a good-sized population for an utterly unknown town. They have no institutions of their own to speak of, no public buildings of any importance, no municipality, no gentry, no carriages, no soldiers, no picture-galleries, no theatres, no opera—they have nothing. It is the fashion to believe that they are all paupers, which is a foolish and mischievous belief, as we shall presently see. Probably there is no such spectacle in the whole world as that of this immense, neglected, forgotten great city of East London. It is even neglected by its own citizens, who have never yet perceived their abandoned condition. They are Londoners, it is true, but they have no part or share of London; its wealth, its splendors, its honors exist not for them. They see nothing of its splendors; even the Lord Mayor's show goes westward; the city lies between them and the greatness of England. They are beyond the wards, and can not become aldermen; the rich London merchants go north and south and west; but they go not east; no one wants to see the place; no one is curious about the way of life in the east. Books on London pass it over; it has little or no history; great men are not buried in its church-yards, which are not even ancient, and crowded by citizens as obscure as those who now breathe the upper airs about them. If anything happens in the east, people at the other end have to stop and think before they can remember where the place may be.

The house was old, built of red bricks with a "shell" decoration over the door. It contained room for about eight boarders, who had one sitting-room in common. This was the breakfast-room, a meal at which all were present; the dining-room—but nobody except his lordship and wife dined at home; the tea-room—but tea was too early for most of the boarders; and the supper-room. After supper tobacco was tolerated. The boarders were generally men, and mostly elderly men of staid and quiet manners, with whom the evening pipe was the conclusion and solace of the day. It was not like the perpetual incense of the tap-room, and yet the smell of tobacco was never absent from the room; lingering about the folds of the dingy curtain, which served for both summer and winter, clinging to the horsehair sofa, to the leather of the chairs, and to the russet tablecloth.

The furniture was old and mean. The wall-paper had once been crimson, but now was only dark; the ceiling had for many years wanted whitewashing badly; the door and windows wanted painting; the windows always wanted cleaning; the rope of one of the blinds was broken; and the blind itself not nearly so white as it might have been; was pinned half way up. Everything was shabby; everything wanted polishing, washing, brightening up.

A couple of arm chairs stood, when meals were not going on, one on either side of the fire-place—one being reserved for his lordship, and the other for his wife; they were, like the sofa, of horsehair, and slippery. There was a long table covered by a faded red cloth; the carpet was a Brussels once of a warm crimson, now worn threadbare; the hearth-rug was worn into holes; one or two of the chairs had broken out and showed glimpses of stuffing. The sideboard was of old-fashioned build, and a shiny black by reason of its age; there were two or three hanging-shelves, filled with books, the property of his lordship, who loved reading; the mantle-shelf was decorated by a small collection of pipes; and above it hung the portrait of the late Samuel Bormalack, formerly a Collector in the great Brewing House of Messenger, Marsden & Company.

His widow, who carried on the house, was a comfortable—a serenely comfortable woman, who regarded the world from the optimist's point of view. Perfect health and a tolerably prosperous business, where the returns are regular though the profits are small, make the possessor agree with Pope and Candide that everything is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. Impossible not to be contented, happy, and religious, when your wishes are narrowed to a tidy dinner, a comfortable supper with a little something hot, boarders who pay up regular, do not grumble, and go to bed sober; and a steady hope that you will not get "something," by which of course is meant that you may not fall ill of any disagreeable or painful disease. To "get something" is one of the petty euphemisms of our daily speech.

She had had one or two unlucky accidents, such as the case of captain Saffrey, who stayed two months, and drank enough beer to float a three-decker, and then sailed away promising to pay, and would have done so—for he was an honest man—but had the mis-

fortune to fall overboard while in liquor. But her present boarders seemed most respectable, and she was at ease.

Of course, the persons of greatest consideration among them were the noble pair who enjoyed the title. Rank is respected, if you please, even at the East End of London, and perhaps more than in fashionable quarters, because it is so rare. King John, it is true, had once a palace at Stepney; but that is a long time to look back upon, and even the oldest inhabitant can not now remember to have been kicked by the choleric monarch. Then the Marquis of Worcester had once a great house here, that time the sainted Charles was ripening things for a row Royal. That house is gone too, and I do not know where it used to stand. From the time of this East End marquis to the arrival of Lord and Lady Davenant, last year, there have been no resident members of the English aristocracy, and no member of the foreign nobility, with the exception of a certain dusky Marquis of Chouffleur, from Hayti, who is reported on good authority to have once lived in these parts for six months, thinking he was in the politest and most fashionable suburb of London. He is further said to have carried on with Satanic wildness in Limehouse and the West India Dock Road of an evening. A Japanese, too, certainly once went to a hotel in America Square, which is not quite the East end, and said he was a prince in his own country. He stayed a week, and drank champagne all day long. Then he decamped without paying the bill; and when the landlord went to the Embassy to complain, he thought it was the ambassador himself, until he discovered that all Japanese are exactly alike. Wherefore he desisted from any further attempt to identify the missing prince for want of the missing link, namely some distinctive feature.

The illustrious pair had now been in the House for six weeks. Previously they had spent some time in Wellclose Square, which is no doubt well known to fashionable readers, and lies contiguous to St. George's Street. Here happened that accident of the back-slapping so frequently alluded to by her ladyship. They were come from America to take up an old family title which had been in abeyance for two or three generations. They appeared to be poor, but able to find the modest weekly sum asked by Mrs. Bormalack; and in order to secure her confidence and good will, they paid every week in advance. They drank nothing but water, but, to make up, his lordship eat a great deal, especially at breakfast, and they asked for strange things, unknown to the English households. In other respects they gave no kind of trouble, were easily satisfied, never grumbled, and were affable. For their rank they certainly dressed shabbily, but high social station is sometimes found coupled with eccentricity. Doubtless Lord Davenant had his reasons for going about in a coat white at the seams and shiny at the back, which, being made of sympathetic stuff, and from long habit, had assumed the exact shape of his noble back and shoulders, with a beautiful model of his illustrious elbows. For similarly good and sufficient reasons Lady Davenant wore that old black gown and those mended gloves and —; but it is cruel to enumerate the shortcomings of her attire.

Perhaps on account of this public character, the professor would rank in the House after his lordship. Nothing confers greatness more quickly than an unabashed appearance upon a platform. Mr. Maliphant, however, who had traveled and could relate tales of adventure, might dispute precedence with him. He was now a carver of figure-heads for ships. It is an old and honorable trade but in these latter days it had decayed. He had a small yard at Limehouse, where he worked all by himself, turning out heads in the rough, so that they might be transformed into a beautiful goddess, or a Saucy Poll, or a bearded Neptune as the owners might prefer. He was now an old man, with a crumpled and million-lined face, but active still and talkative. His memory played him tricks, and he took little interest in new things. He had a habit, too, which disconcerted people unaccustomed to him, of thinking one part of a reminiscence to himself and saying the rest aloud, so that one got only the torso or mangled trunk of the story, or the head, or the feet, with or without the tail, which is the point.

The learned Daniel Fagg, wrapped always in contemplation, was among them but not of them. He was lately arrived from Australia, bringing with him a discovery which took away the breath from those who heard it, and filled all the scholars and learned men with envy and hatred, so that they combined and formed a general conspiracy to keep him down, and to prevent the publication of his great book, lest the world

should point the finger of scorn at them, and laugh at the blindness of its great ones. Daniel himself said so, and an oppressed man generally knows his oppressor. He went away every morning after breakfast and returned for tea. He was believed to occupy the day in spreading a knowledge of his Discovery, the nature of which was unknown at the boarding-house, among clergymen and other scholars. In the evening he sat over a Hebrew Bible and a dictionary, and spoke to no one. A harmless man, but soured and disappointed with the cold reception of his Great Discovery.

Another boarder was the unfortunate Josephus Coppin, who was a clerk in the great brewing-house of Messenger, Marsden & Company. He had been there for forty years, being now fifty-five years of age, gray, and sad of face, because, for some reason unknown to the world, he was not advanced, but remained forever among the juniors at a salary of thirty shillings a week. Other men of his own standing were Chief Brewers, Contractors, and Chief Accountants. He was almost where he had started. The young men came and mounted the ladder of promotion, passing him one after the other; he alone remained upon the rung which he had reached one day, now thirty years by-gone, when a certain thing happened, the consequences of which were to keep him down, to ruin his prospects, to humiliate and degrade him, to sadden and embitter his whole life. Lastly, there was a young man, the only young man among them, one Harry Goslett by name, who had quite recently joined the boarding-house. He was a nephew of Mr. Coppin, and was supposed to be looking for a place of business.

But he was an uncertain boarder. He paid for his dinner, but never dined at home; he had brought with him a lathe, which he set up in a little garden-house, and here he worked by himself, but in a fitful lazy way, as if it mattered nothing whether he worked or not. He seemed to prefer strolling about the place, looking around him as if he had never seen things before, and he was wont to speak of familiar objects as if they were strange and rare. These eccentricities were regarded as due to his having been to America. A handsome young man and cheerful, which made a greater pity that he was so idle.

On this morning the first to start for the day's business was Daniel Fagg. He put his Hebrew Bible on the book-shelf, took out a memorandum-book and the stump of a pencil, made an entry, and then counted out his money, which amounted to eight-and-sixpence, with a sigh. He was a little man, about sixty years of age, and his thin hair was sandy in color. His face was thin, and he looked hungry and under-fed. I believe, in fact, that he seldom had money enough for dinner, and so went without. Nothing was remarkable in his face except a pair of very large and thick eyebrows, also of sandy hue, which is unusual, and produces a very curious effect. With these he was wont to frown tremendously as he went along, frightening the little children into fits; when he was not frowning he looked dejected. It must have been an unhappy condition of things which made the poor man alternate between wrath and depression. There were, however, moments—those when he got hold of a new listener—in which he would light up with enthusiasm as he detailed the history of his Discovery. Then the thin, drawn cheek would fill out, and his quivering lips would become firm, and his dejected eyes would brighten with the old pride of discovery, and he would laugh once more, and rub his hands with pride, when he described the honest sympathy of the people in the Australian township, where he first announced the great Revelation he was to make to the world, and received their enthusiastic cheers and shouts of encouragement.

Harry Goslett was his last listener, and, as the enthusiast thought, his latest convert.

As Daniel passed out of the reading-room, and was looking for his hat among the collection of hats as bad as was ever seen out of a Canadian backwoods, Harry Goslett himself came down-stairs as if there was no such thing as work to do or time to keep. He laughed and nodded to the discoverer.

'Oho! Dan!', he said; 'how are the triangles? and are you really going back to the Lion's Den?'

'Yes, Mr. Goslett, I am going back there! I am not afraid of them; I am going to see the Head of the Egyptian Department. He says he will give me a hearing; they all said they would, and they have. But they won't listen; it's no use to hear unless you listen. What a dreadful thing is jealousy among the learned, Mr. Goslett!'

'It is indeed, my Prophet; have they subscribed to the book?'

'No! they won't subscribe. Is it likely that they will help to bring out a work which proves them all wrong? Come, sir, even at your age you can't think so well of poor humanity.'

'Daniel!—the young man laid his hands impressively upon the little man's shoulders — you showed me yesterday a list of forty-five subscribers to your book, at twelve

shillings and sixpence apiece. Where is that subscription money?'

The poor man blushed, and hung his head.

'A man must live,' he said at length, trying to frown fiercely.

'Yes, but unpleasant notice is sometimes taken of the way in which people live, my dear friend. This is not a free country; not by any means free. If I were you, I would take the triangles back to Australia, and print the book there, among your friends.'

'No!' The little man stamped on the ground, and rammed his head into his hat with determination. 'No, Mr. Goslett, and no again. It shall be printed here. I will hurl it at the head of the so-called scholars here, in London—in their stronghold, close to the British Museum. Besides—here he relaxed, and turned a pitiful face of sorrow and shame upon his adviser—'besides, can I forget the day when I left Australia? They all came aboard to say good-bye. The papers had paragraphs about it. They shouted one after the other, and nobblers went around surprising, and they slapped me on the back and said, 'Go, Dan!', or 'Go, Fagg,' or 'Go, Mr. Fagg,' according to their intimacy and the depth of their friendship—'Go where honor and glory and a great fortune, with a pension on the Queen's Civil List, are waiting for you.' On the voyage I even dreamed of a title; I thought Sir Daniel Fagg, Knight or Baronet, or the Right Reverend Lord Fagg, would sound well to go back to Australia with. Honor? Glory? Fortune? What are they? Eight-and-sixpence in my pocket; and the Head of the Greek Department calls me a fool, because I won't acknowledge that truth—yes, TRUTH—is error. Laughs at the triangles, Mr. Goslett!'

He laughed bitterly and went out, slamming the door behind him.

Then Harry entered the breakfast-room, nodding pleasantly to everybody; and without any apology for lateness, as if breakfast could be kept about all the morning to suit his convenience, sat down and began to eat. Jonathan Coppin got up, sighed, and went away to his brewery. The professor looked at the last comer with a meditative air, as if he would like to make him disappear, and could do it, too, but was uncertain how Harry would take it. Mrs. Bormalack hurried away on domestic business. Mr. Maliphant laughed and rubbed his hands together, and then laughed again as if he were thinking of something really comic, and said, 'Yes, I knew the sergeant very well, a well set up man he was, and Caroline Coppin was a pretty girl.' At this point his face clouded and his eyes expressed doubt. 'There was, he added, 'something I wanted to ask you young man, something—here he tapped his forehead—something about your father or your mother, or both; but I have forgotten—never mind, Another time—another time.'

He ran away with boyish activity and a school-boy's laugh, being arrived at that time of life when one becomes light of heart once more, knowing by experience that nothing matters very much. There were none left in the room but the couple who enjoyed the title.

His lordship sat in his arm-chair, apparently enjoying it, in meditation and repose; this, one perceives, is quite the best way of enjoying an hereditary title, if you come to it late in life.

His wife had, meanwhile, got out a little shabby portfolio in black leather, and was turning over the papers with impatience; now and then she looked up to see whether this late young man had finished his breakfast. She fidgeted, arranged, and worried with her papers, so that any one, whose skull was not six inches thick, might have seen that she wanted to be alone with her husband. It was also quite clear to those who thought about things, and watched this little lady, that there may be meaning in certain proverbial expressions touching gray hairs.

Presently Harry Goslett finished his coffee and paying no attention to her little ladyship's signals of distress, began to open up conversation on general subjects with the noble lord.

She could bear it no longer. Here were the precious moments wasted and thrown away, every one of which should be bringing them nearer to the recognition of their rights.

'Young man,' she cried, jumping up in her chair; 'if you've got nothing to do but loll and lop around, all forenoon, I guess we have, and this is the room in which we do that work.'

'I beg your pardon, Lady Davenant—'

'Young man—Git—'

She pointed to the door.

CHAPTER II.

A VERY COMPLETE CASE.

His lordship, left alone with his wife, manifested certain signs of uneasiness. She laid the portfolio on the table, turned over the papers, sorted some of them, picked out some for reference, fetched the ink, and placed the penholder in position.

'Now, my dear,' she said, 'no time to lose. Let us set to work in earnest.'

His lordship sighed. He was sitting with his fat hands upon his knees, contented with the repose of the moment.

'Clara Martha,' he grumbled, 'can not I have one hour of rest?'

'Not one, till you get your rights.' She hovered over him like a little falcon, fierce and prescient. 'Not one. What? You a British peer? You, who ought to be sitting with a coronet on your head—you to shrink from the trouble of writing out your Case? And such a case!'

He only moaned. Certainly he was a very lethargic person. 'You are not the Carpenter, your father. Nor even the Wheelwright, your grandfather, who came down of his own accord. You would rise, you would soar—you have the spirit of your ancestors.'

He feebly flapped with his elbows, as if he really would like to take a turn in the air, but made no verbal response.

'Cousin Nathaniel,' she went on, 'gave us six months at six dollars a week. That's none too generous of Nathaniel, seeing we have no children, and he will be the heir to the title, I guess Aurelia Tucker set him against the thing. Six months, and three of them gone already, and nothing done. What would Aurelia say if we went home again, beaten?'

The little woman gasped, and would have shrugged her shoulders, but they were such a long way down—shoulders so sloping could not be shrugged.

Her remonstrances moved the heavy man who drew his chair to the table with great deliberation.

'We are here,' she continued—always the exhorter and the strengthener of faith—'not to claim a title but to assume it. We shall present our Case to Parliament, or the Queen, or the House of Lords, or the Court of Chancery, or whosoever is the right person, and we shall say, 'I am Lord Davenant,' That is all.'

'Clara Martha,' said her husband, 'I wish that were all we had to do. And, on the whole, I would as soon be back in Canaan City, New Hampshire, and the trouble over. The memoranda are all here,' he said, 'Can't we get some one else to draw up the Case?'

'Certainly not. You must do it. Why, you used to think nothing of writing out a Fourth of July speech.'

He shook his head.

'And you know that you have often said, yourself, that there wasn't a book written that could teach you anything up to Quadratic Equations. And self-raised, too!'

'It isn't that, Clara Martha. It isn't that. Listen!' he sunk his voice to a whisper. 'It's the doubt. That's the point. Every time I face that doubt it's like a bucket of cold water down my back.'

She shivered. Yes; there was always the doubt.

'Come, my dear,' she said, presently; 'we must get the Case drawn up, so that any one may read it. That is the first thing—never think of any doubt.'

He took up one of the loose papers that was covered with writing.

'Timothy Clitheroe Davenant,' he read, with a weary sigh, 'died at Canaan City, New Hampshire, in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-four. By trade he was a Wheelwright. His marriage is recorded in the church register of July 1, 1773. His headstone still stands in the old church-yard, and says that he was born in England in the year one thousand seven hundred and thirty-two—it does not say where he was born—and that he was sixty-two years of age at the day of his death. Also, that long time he bore—'

'Yes, yes, but you needn't put that in. Go on with your Case. The next point is your own father. Courage, my dear; it is a very strong Case.'

'The Case is very strong.' His lordship plucked up courage, and took up another paper. 'This is my father's record. All is clear; Born in Canaan City on October 10, 1776; the year of Independence, the eldest son of the aforesaid Timothy Clitheroe Davenant, Wheelwright, and Dinah, his wife—here is a copy of the register. Married on May 13, 1810, which was late in life, because he didn't somehow get on so fast as some, to Susanna Pegley, of the same parish. Described as Carpenter—but a poor workman, Clara Martha, and fond of chopping yarns, in which he was equalled by none. He died in the year 1830, his tombstone still standing, like his father's before him. It says that his end was peace. Wal—he always wanted it. Give him peace, with a chair in the veranda, and a penknife and a little bit of pine, and he asked for no more. Only that, and his wife wouldn't let him have it. His end was peace.'

'You all want peace,' said his wife. 'The Davenants always did think that they had only to sit still and the plumbs would drop in their mouths. As for you, I believe you'd be content to sit and sit in Canaan City till Queen Victoria found you out and sent you the coronet herself. But you've got a wife as well as your father.'

(To be Continued.)

Railway wrecks or attempts are recorded from London and Paris.