

# THE LADY OF LYNN

By SIR WALTER BESANT

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CONTINUED

"Sam Semple came here this afternoon by order of my lord. Sam gives himself airs now that he is a secretary and companion. He came and demanded conversation with me. It was quite private, he said, and of the utmost importance. So we sat in the parlor, and with a bottle of wine between us we talked over the business. First he told me that his patron, as he calls him, meaning his master, had been greatly taken with the innocence and the beauty of Molly. I replied that unless he was a stock or a stone or an iceberg I expected nothing less. He went on to say that, although a noble earl with a long pedigree and a great estate, his patron was willing to contract marriage with a girl who was not even of gentle birth and had nothing but her beauty and her innocence. I told him that she had, in addition, a very large fortune. He said that his patron scorned the thought of money, being already as rich as most noblemen of his exalted rank; that he was willing also to pass over any defects in manners, conversation and carriage, which would be remedied by a little acquaintance with the polite world. In a word, his lordship offered his hand, his name, his title, his rank and himself to my ward."

"His condescension," I said, "is beyond all praise."

"I think so, too; beyond all praise. I ask his advice touching a husband for my girl. He promises his assistance in the matter, and he then offers himself. Jack, could anything be more fortunate?"

"I hope it may turn out so. What does Molly say?"

"You may go in and ask her yourself. She will tell you more than she will tell anybody else. The matter is to be kept for the present a profound secret between his lordship and ourselves. But since Sam Semple knows it, and Jennifer knows it, and you are one of ourselves, therefore you may as well know it too. But don't talk about it."

"Why should it be kept a secret? Why should it not be proclaimed everywhere?"

"My lord says that the place is a hot-bed of scandal; that he would not have Molly's name passed about in the pump-room, to be the object of common gossip and inventions made up of envy and malice. He would spare Molly this. When she is once married and taken away from the place, they may say what they please. Whatever they say, they cannot do her any harm. Why, some of them even declared that she was one of the company of strolling actresses. There is nothing that they will not say."

"I made no reply because it certainly did seem as if in asking for secrecy his lordship had acted in Molly's interests."

"Well, captain, we must make the best of it. You must find your own happiness in thinking of Molly's."

"What aggravates me, Jack, is the ridiculous behavior of my cousin Jennifer. She is in the kitchen crying, and the black with her. Go and comfort her before you see Molly."

I looked into the kitchen. Molly's mother sat in the great wooden chair beside the fireplace. She held her apron in her hands as if she had just pulled it off her face, and the tears were on her cheeks. When she saw me, they began to flow again. "Jack," she said, "have you heard the news? Has the captain told you? The worst has happened. I have lost my girl. She is to be married. She will go away. She will marry a man who scorns her guardian and despises her mother. A bad beginning, Jack. No good can come of such a marriage. A bad beginning. Oh, I foresee unhappiness! How can Molly become a fine lady? She is but a simple girl, my twin daughter. I have made her a good housewife, and all her knowledge will be thrown away and lost. It is a bad business, Jack. Nigra has been telling her fortune. There is nothing hopeful. All the cards are threatening. And the magpies and the screech owl!"

"She fell to weeping again, after which she broke out anew: 'The captain says he is the most virtuous man in the world. It isn't true. If ever I saw the inside of a man in my life, I have seen the inside of that man. He is corrupt through and through!'"

"But consider. All the world is crying up his noble conduct and his many virtues."

"They may say what they like. It is false. He is heartless. He is cold. He is selfish. He marries Molly for her money. Persuade the captain, if you can. He will not believe me."

"How can I persuade him? I have no knowledge. Are they all in a tale? Are you the only person who knows the truth? How do you know it?"

"I know it because I love my girl, and so I can read the very soul of a man. I have read your soul, Jack, over and over again. You are true and faithful. You would love her and cherish her. But this man—he knows not what love means nor fidelity nor anything. Go, Jack. There is no help."

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In you or in any other—because there is none other." She spoke the words of the prayer book: "None other that fighteth for us but only thou, O God! Only thou, O God!" She covered her face again with her apron and fell to sobbing afresh.

"So I went into the parlor where Molly was sitting. 'Jack!' She jumped up. 'Oh, Jack! I want you so badly.'"

"I know all, Molly—except what you yourself say and think about it." She had a piece of work in her hands, and she began to pull it and pick it as she replied. For the first time in my life I found Molly uncertain and hesitating.

"The captain says that it is the greatest honor that was ever offered to any woman to be raised from a lowly condition to a high rank, and all for love."

"All for love?" I asked.

"Why, what else can it be that made him fight for me with that desperate villain? He risked his life. Whatever happens, Jack, I cannot forget that."

"No. It was doubtless a great thing to do. Has he told you himself that it was all for love?"

"He has not spoken about love at all. He has never once been alone with me. It seems that these great people make love by message. He sent a message by Sam Semple."

"A very fine messenger of Cupid, truly!"

"Offering marriage. The captain cannot contain his satisfaction and sits glum. My mother says that she will never see me again and begins to cry."

"Well, but, Molly, to be sure it is a great thing to become countess. Most women would jump at the chance under any conditions. Do you, however, think that you can love the man?"

"He hasn't asked for love. Oh, Jack, to think that people should marry each other without a word of love! If he loves me, I suppose he thinks that I am bound to give him love in return."

"There again, Molly, do you love the man?"

"Jack, nobody knows me better than you. What reply can I make?"

"He is too cold and too proud for you, Molly. How can you love him?"



"Perhaps," I added, because I was very sure that she would marry him, "after marriage you will find that his coldness is only a cloak to hide his natural warmth and that his pride covers his wife as well as himself."

"He is a good man. Everybody says so. Lady Anastasia declares that he is the most honorable and high principled of men. On that point I am safe. And think, Jack, what a point it is. Why, to marry a drunkard, a sot, a profligate, a gambler—one would sooner die at once, and so on and so on. But I can trust myself with him. I have no fear of such treatment as drives some wives to distraction. Yet he is cold in his manner and proud in his speech. I might find it in my heart to love him if I was not afraid of him." And so she went backward and forward. He was so good and so great; his wife must always respect him. He was of rank so exalted; it was a great honor to become his wife. He was so brave; she

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owed her rescue to his bravery. Yet he had spoken no word of love, nor had she seen any sign of love. I asked her what sign she expected, and she was confused. "Of course," she said, "any girl knows very well when a man is in love with her." "How does she know?" I asked her. "She knows because she knows." I suppose she felt that the man was not in love with her just as her mother felt that his character for virtue and nobility was assumed—"corrupt within," she said. Women are made so. And in the next breath Molly repeated that what his lordship had done was done for love. "How do you know?" I asked again. "Because the captain says so," she replied, with unconscious inconsistency.

"Is the courtship to be conducted entirely by messenger?" I asked.

"No. He will come tomorrow morning and see me. I am to give him an answer then. But the captain has already told him what the answer is to be. Oh, Jack, I am so happy! I am so fortunate that I ought to be happy. Yet I am so downhearted about it. Going away is a dreadful thing. And when shall I see any of you, I wonder, again? Oh, I am so fortunate; I am so happy!" And to show her happiness she dropped a tear, and more tears followed.

What kind of happiness, what kind of good fortune, was that which could fill the mind of the captain with gloom and could dissolve Molly's mother in tears and could braid its approach to the bride by sadness which weighed her down? And, as for me, you may believe that my heart was like a lump of lead within me, partly because I was losing the girl I loved, but had never hoped to marry, and partly because from the outset of the whole affair—yes, from the very evening when the news of the grand discovery was read to the Society of Lynn I had looked forward to coming events with forebodings of the most dismal kind.

"Come to see me tomorrow afternoon Jack," she said. "I must talk about it to some one. With the captain I cannot talk, because he is all for the unequal match, and with my mother I cannot talk, because she foretells trouble and will acknowledge no good thing at all in the man or in the match. Do not forget, Jack. Come tomorrow. I don't know how many days are left to me when I can ask you to come. Oh, Jack, to leave everybody, all my friends! It is hard. But I am the most ungrateful of women because I am the happiest—the happiest—oh, Jack, the happiest and most fortunate woman that ever lived!"

## CHAPTER XI. THE ARDENT LOVER.

BETWEEN 10 and 11 of the clock next morning Molly's suitor—I cannot call him her lover—arrived at the house. At that hour most of the ladies are at morning prayers, and the gentlemen are either at the tavern taking their morning whet or at the coffee house in conversation or engaged in some of the sports to which most of them are so much addicted. Lord Fyngdale, although the streets at such an hour are mostly deserted, had to cross the market place on his way to the captain's house in Hogman's lane and was therefore carried in a chair with the curtains drawn, so as to avoid recognition.

He was received by Captain Crowle in the parlor. For the occasion the old man had put on his Sunday suit, with white silk stockings, and he wore his sword, to which, as the former commander of a ship, he was entitled.

"I am come, captain, to receive in person your answer to the message conveyed to you yesterday by my ambassador. I hope that the message was delivered faithfully and with due respect."

"I believe, my lord, with both." "I assure you, Captain Crowle, that the respect I have conceived for your character and loyalty is more than I can express in words. That you have inspired in the mind of your ward similar virtues I do not doubt, and this confidence, believe me, has much to do with the offer of my hand to that young lady."

"Your lordship does me the greatest honor. My answer is that I accept in Molly's name, and joyfully."

"I am delighted. This should be," he added coldly, "the happiest day of my life."

"When we spread the news abroad, everybody in Lynn will feel that the greatest honor has been done to the town, as well as to this house."

"Sir, you overrate my position. Still, however, we must keep the matter secret for a day or two yet. I engage you, captain, to profound secrecy."

"As long as you please, my lord. The sooner I may speak of it the better I shall like it, for I am bursting with joy and satisfaction."

"Patience, captain, for a day or two." The captain became serious, even melancholy. "You will take her away, I suppose?"

"I fear I must. A married man generally takes away his wife, does he not?"

"You will take her to your country house and to London. Well, I am old. I am 75 already. I cannot expect ever to see her again. Her mother, however, is not so old by 30 years. Perhaps your lordship will at some time or other—we would not remind you of your lady's humble folk—allow her, if she is within an easy journey, to come here to see her mother."

"Surely, surely, captain. Could I be so hard hearted as to refuse? Her mother, certainly, or yourself, but not any of her old friends, not the friends of her childhood, such as that young sailor man, nor the girls of the place."

"I care not for them so that I may comfort her poor mother with that promise. As for myself, who am I

that I should intrude upon her? Let me die happy in the knowledge that she is happy."

"She will be as happy as the day is long, captain."

"I doubt it not. As for Jack Pentecoste, an old playfellow, he is like me. He loves her as if she was his sister, but he desires nothing but the knowledge of the girl's happiness."

"I accept your assurance, captain, that he will not endeavor to seek her or to visit her."

"He will not. My lord—the captain became very serious—"I can promise you a well conditioned, virtuous, modest, obedient and dutiful wife. She will ask for nothing but a continuance of your lordship's affection and consideration. In return for which she will be your willing servant as well as your wife."

"Again, captain, I doubt it not, else I should not be here."

"And when the day comes—when you pass the word, my lord—the bells shall ring, and the music shall play, and all the town shall make holiday, and we will have such a feast and merrymaking that all the country round shall ring with it. My lord, I am so happy!"

"But, captain, I have not yet received the consent of the lady."

CONTINUED

## MANY INVENTIONS HELP THE HOUSEKEEPER.

"Spring" and "Housecleaning" mean much the same to the Housewife, and it is difficult for her to think of one without the other looming large. It is an annual or semi-annual visitation that involves inconvenience and discomforts that make it a period to be anticipated with fear and trembling by the male portion of the household at least, notwithstanding that but a small portion of the work actually falls to their share. Housecleaning is also welcomed by the funny, paper joke-makers who, through years and years of practice, have become adepts in dressing the two or three existing housecleaning jokes up in new raiment to make quite a presentable appearance.

These remarks are intended to bear directly—if briefly—on the changed and improved method of housekeeping in some directions in the average household of to-day. Housecleaning has changed in two ways since the time of our father's father; it has become easier to accomplish, and more productive of results. The housewife has many inventions and appliances that simplify the work which once was done by elbow grease and that alone. Progress and ingenuity have solved some disagreeable questions for her in the last decade or two.

Unquestionably, the most distasteful part of housecleaning is the taking up of carpets with their multitudinous tacks, beating and relaying them. Nevertheless, sanitation requires that it be done. Nowadays, the tendency is for painted or varnished floors covered with rugs and mats and their use is continually growing. It is a simple matter to take up rugs from the floor and clean them. Not only are "finished" floors more sanitary but decidedly better-looking for even the most ordinary wood floor can be transformed at a small expense into one having the appearance of costly hardwood by the application of one or two coats of varnish stain which are now made in imitation Cherry, Oak, Mahogany, Walnut and so on, and are so durable that they will successfully withstand a great deal of wear and tear occasioned by the constant walking and the movement of furniture over them.

Wall papering is being largely supplanted by wall paints and finishes in beautiful colors and shades that will stand scrubbing with soap and water and come out of the operation bright and fresh as the day they were put on. This avoids "mussy" papering operations. Woodwork such as wainscoting and cupboards, given one coat of paint, specially prepared for the surface, which will dry over night, enables the housewife to keep the kitchen and pantries fairly shining with cleanliness. "Last year's" fly screens after receiving a coat of enamel are as good as new again. Furniture, too, both in the kitchen and in the other rooms of the house need not remain shabby long. The process of cleaning it with polish, or refinishing it with paint or varnish is so simple, and the furniture so improved in appearance thereby, that most housewives include a course of refinishing furniture in their Spring housecleaning operations. This applies not only to drawing and dining room chairs, but to the rough kitchen and laundry chairs and to those wicker and cane ones that spend a good deal of their time on the veranda or lawn, and not only to the tables, bookcases and lounges of more or less expensive woods, but to the home-made things of rough lumber, and so on throughout the entire house. Whereas painting about the house was once a considerable undertaking now it is a matter of very little expense and a small inconvenience. As one thrifty dame was heard to remark "The use of paints and varnishes at housekeeping time has become almost a mania with me; actually I look forward to housecleaning just because it gives me an excuse to fuss with paint."

These remarks, of course, do not begin to outline the improvements and changes that have come about in the housekeeping. They are simply intended as straws to show which way the wind is blowing. For instance, there is electric light and gas where there once were lamps to clean. There are the improvements in plumbing and heating arrangements, the telephone and the gas stove, and so on, until a book almost could be written on improvements along these lines.

She who has charge of the "home" has a high mission, and inventions that go to make her work less laborious and productive of greater results, are as momentous as discoveries in any other branch of modern life. It can no longer truthfully be said that invention in things that pertain to domestic life is lagging behind in the march of progress.

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