

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER XXV.—Continued.

'I shall never forget old friends, my dear,' she said, kindly, when Angela had read it through, 'never! and your kindness in my distress I could not forget if I tried.' The tears stood in her eyes as she spoke. 'We are standing now on the very threshold of Greatness; this is the first step to Recognition; a short time more and my husband will be in his right place among the British Peers. As for myself, I don't seem to mind any, Miss Kennedy. It's for him that I mind. Once in his own place, he will show the world what he is capable of. You only think of him as a sleepy old man, who likes to put up his feet and shut his eyes. So he is—so he is. But wait till he gets his own. Then you will see. As for eloquence, now, I remember one fourth of July—but of course we were Americans then.'

'Indeed, Lady Davenant, we shall all be rejoiced if you succeed. But do not forget Miss Messenger's warning. There is a moral success, and there is a legal success. You may have to be contented with the former. But that should be enough for you, and you would then return to your own people with triumph.'

'Aurelia Tucker,' said her ladyship, smiling, gently, 'will wish she hadn't taken up the prophesying line. I shall forgive her, though envy is indeed a hateful passion. However, we can not all have illustrious ancestors, though, since our own elevation, there's not a man, woman, or child in Canada City, except the Dutchman, who hasn't connected himself with an English family, and the demand for Red books and books of the County families is more than you could believe, and they do say that many a British peer will have to tremble for his title.'

'Come,' said Angela, interrupting these interesting facts, 'come, Lady Davenant, I knew beforehand of this letter, and Miss Messenger has given me work in anticipation of your visit.'

She led the little lady to the show-room, and here, laid on chairs, were marvels. For there were dresses in silk and in velvet: dresses of best silk, moire antique, brocaded silk, silk that would stand upright of itself, without the aid of a chair-back, and velvet of the richest, the blackest, and the most costly. There could be no doubt whatever as to the person for whom these dresses had been designed, because nobody else had such sloping shoulders. Never in her dreams had her ladyship thought it possible that she should wear such dresses.

'They are a present from Miss Messenger,' said Miss Kennedy. 'Now, if you please, we will go into the trying-on-room.'

Then Lady Davenant discovered that these dresses were trimmed with lace, also of the most beautiful and delicate kind. She had sometimes seen lace during her professional career, but she never possessed any, and the sight of it created a kind of yearning in her heart to have it on, actually on her sleeves and round her neck.

When she dressed in her velvet with the lace trimming, she looked a very stately little lady. When Angela had hung about her neck a heavy gold chain with a watch and seals; when she had deftly added a touch to her luxuriant hair, and set in it a small aigrette of brilliants; when she had put on her a pair of gloves and given her a large and beautifully painted fan, there was no nobler-looking lady in the land, for all she was so little.

Then Angela courtesied low and begged her ladyship to examine the dress in the glass. Her ladyship surveyed herself with an astonishment and delight impossible to be repressed, although they detracted somewhat from the dignity due to the dress.

'Oh, Aurelia!' she exclaimed, as if in the joy of her heart, she could have wished her friend to share her happiness.

Then Miss Kennedy explained to her that the velvet and magnificent silk dresses were for the evening only, while for the morning there were other black silk dresses, with beautiful fur cloaks and things for carriage exercise, and all kinds of things provided, so that she might make a becoming appearance in Portman Square.

'As for his lordship,' Miss Kennedy went on, 'steps have been taken to provide him also with garments due to his position. And I think, Lady Davenant, if I may venture to advise—'

'My dear,' said her ladyship, simply, 'just tell me, right away what am I to do.'

'Then you are to write to Miss Messenger and tell her that you will be ready to-morrow morning, and say any kind of thing that occurs to your kind heart. And then you will have undisturbed possession of the big house in Portman Square, with all its servants, butler, coachman, footman, and the rest of them that are your orders. And I beg—that is, I hope—that you will make use of them. Remember that a nobleman's

servant expects to be ordered, not asked. Drive every day; go to the theatres to amuse yourself—I am sure, after all this time, you want amusement.'

'We had lectures at Canada City,' said her ladyship. 'Shall we go to lectures?'

'N—no. I think there are none. But you should go to concerts, if you like them, and to picture galleries. Be seen about a good deal; make people talk about you, and do not press your Case before you have been talked about.'

'Do you think I can persuade Timothy—I mean, his lordship—to go about with me?'

'You will have the carriage, you know; and if he likes he can sleep at the theatre, you have only to take a private box—but be seen and talked about.'

This seemed very good advice. Lady Davenant laid it to her heart. Then she took off her magnificent velvet and put on the humble stuff again, with a sigh. Happily it was the last day she would wear it.

On returning to the boarding-house, she found her husband in great agitation, for he, too, had been 'trying on,' and he had been told peremptorily that the whole of the existing wardrobe must be abolished, and changed for a new one which had been provided for him. The good old coat, whose sleeves were so shiny, whose skirts so curly, whose cuffs so worn, must be abandoned; the other things, which long custom had adapted to every projection of his figure, must go too; and, in place of them, the new things which he had just been trying on.

'There's a swallow-tail, Clara Martha, for evening wear. I shall have to change my clothes, they tell me, every evening; and frock-coats to button down the front like a congressman in a statue; and—oh! Clara Martha, we are going to have a terrible time!'

'Courage, my lord,' she said. 'The end will reward us. Only hold up your head, and remember that you are enjoying the title.'

The evening was rather sad, though the grief of the noble pair at leaving their friends was shared by none but their landlady, who really was attached to the little bird-like woman, so resolute and full of courage. As for the rest, they behaved as members of a happy family are expected to behave—that is to say, they paid no heed whatever to the approaching departure of two out of their number, and Josephus leaned his head against the wall, and Daniel Fagg plunged his hands into his hair, and old Mr. Maliphant sat in the corner with his pipe in his mouth and narrated bits of stories to himself, and laughed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LORD DAVENANT'S GREATNESS.

Probably no greater event had ever happened within the memory of Stepney Green than the arrival of Miss Messenger's carriage to take away the illustrious pair from the boarding-house. Mrs. Bormalack felt, with a pang, when she saw the pair of grays, with the coachman and footman on the box, actually standing before her own door, for all to see, as if she had not thoroughly appreciated the honor of having a peer and his consort residing under her roof, and paying every week for board and lodging the moderate sum of—but she could not bear to put it into words. Now, however, they were going.

His lordship, in his new frock-coat tightly buttoned, stood, looking constrained and stiff, with one hand on the table and the other thrust into his breast, like a certain well-known statue of Washington. His wife had instructed him to assume this attitude. With him were Daniel Fagg, the professor, and Harry, the rest of the boarders being engaged in their several occupations. Mrs. Bormalack was putting the final touches to Lady Davenant's morning toilet.

'If I was a lord,' said Daniel, 'I should become a great patron to discoverers. I would publish their works for them.'

'I will, Mr. Fagg, I will,' said his lordship; 'give me time to look around and see how the dollars come in. Because, gentlemen, as Clara Martha—I mean her ladyship—is not ready yet, there is time for me to explain that I don't quite know what is to happen next, nor where those dollars are to come from, unless it is from the Davenant estates. But I don't think, Mr. Fagg, that we shall forget old friends. A man born to a peerage, that is an accident, or the gift of Providence, but to be a Hebrew scholar comes from genius. When a man has been a school-teacher for near upon forty years he knows what genius means—and it's skuroe, even in America.'

'Then, my lord,' said Daniel, producing his note-book, 'I may put your lordship's name down for— How many copies?'

'Wal, Mr. Fagg, I don't care how many

copies you put my name down for, provided you don't ask for payment until the way is clear. I don't suppose they will play it so low on a man as to give him his peerage without a mite of income, even if it has to be raised by a tax on something.'

'American beef will have to be taxed,' said Harry. 'Never fear, my lord, we will pull you through somehow. As Miss Messenger said, "moral certainty" is a fine card to play, even if the committees of the House of Lords don't recognize the connection.'

The professor looked guilty, thinking of that 'Roag in Grane,' Saturday Davenant, wheelwright, who went to the American colonies.

Then her ladyship appeared complete and ready, dressed in her black silk with a fur cloak and a magnificent muff of sable—stately gracious, and happy. After her Mrs. Bormalack, awed.

'I am ready, my lord,' she said, standing in the door-way. 'My friends, we shall not forget those who were hospitable to us, and kind in the days of our adversity. Mr. Fagg, you may depend upon us. You have his lordship's permission to dedicate your book to his lordship. We shall sometimes speak of your discovery. The world of fashionable London shall hear of your circles.'

'Triangles, my lady,' said Daniel, bowing.

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Fagg. I ought to have known: and the triangle goes with the fife and drum in all the militia regiments. Professor, if there is any place in Portman Square where an entertainment can be held, we will remember you. Mr. Goslett—ah, Mr. Goslett, we shall miss you very much. Often and often has my husband said that, but for your own timely aid, he must have broken down. What can we now do for you, Mr. Goslett?'

Nothing could have been more generous than this dispensing of patronage.

'Nothing,' said Harry. 'But I thank you all the same.'

'Perhaps Miss Messenger wants a cabinet made?'

'No, no,' he cried, hastily. 'I don't want to make cabinets for Miss Messenger. I mend the office stools for the Brewery, and I work—for Miss Kennedy,' he added, with a blush.

Lady Davenant nodded her head and laughed. So happy was she that she could even show an interest in something outside the Case.

'A handsome couple,' she said, simply. 'Yes, my dear, go on working for Miss Kennedy, because she is worth it—and now, my lord. Gentlemen, I wish you farewell.'

She made the most stately, the most dignified obeisance, and turned to leave them; but Harry sprang to the front and offered his arm.

'Permit me, Lady Davenant.'

It was extraordinary enough for the coachman to be ordered to Stepney Green to take up a lord—it was more extraordinary to see that lord's noble lady falling on the neck of an ordinary female in a black stuff gown and an apron—namely, Mrs. Bormalack; and still more wonderful to see that noble lady led to the carriage by a young gentleman who seemed to belong to the place.

'I know him,' said James, the footman, presently.

'Who is he?'

'He's Mr. Le Breton, nephew or something of Lord Jocelyn, I've seen him about; and what he's doing on Stepney Green the Lord only knows.'

'James,' said the coachman.

'John,' said the footman.

'When you don't understand what a young gentleman is a-doin', what does a man of your experience conclude?'

'John,' said the footman, 'you are right as usual: but I didn't see her.'

There was a little crowd outside, and it was a proud moment for Lady Davenant when she walked through the lane (which she could have wished a mile long) formed by the spectators, and took her place in the open carriage, beneath the great fur rug. His lordship followed with a look of sadness, or apprehension, rather than triumph. The door was slammed, the footman mounted the box, and the carriage drove off—one boy called 'hooray,' and jumped on the curbstone. To him Lord Davenant took off his hat. Another turned catherine-wheels along the road, and Lord Davenant took off his hat to him, too, with aristocratic impartiality, till the coachman flicked at him with his whip, and then he ran behind the carriage and used language for a quarter of a mile.

'Timothy,' said her ladyship—'would that Aurelia Tucker were here to see!'

He only groaned—how could he tell what sufferings in the shape of physical activity might be before him? When would he be able to put up his feet again? One little disappointment marred the complete joy of the departure—it was strange that Miss Kennedy, who had taken so much interest in the business—who had herself tried on the dresses—should not have been there to see. It was not kind of her, who was usually

so very kind, to be absent on this important occasion.

They arrived at Portman Square a little before nine.

Miss Messenger sent them her compliments by her own maid, and hoped they would be perfectly comfortable in her house, which was placed entirely at their disposal—she was only sorry that absence from town would prevent her from personally receiving Lady Davenant.

The spaciousness of the rooms, the splendor of the furniture, the presence of many servants awed the simple little American woman—she followed her guide, who offered to show them the house and led them into all the rooms, the great and splendidly furnished drawing-room, the dining-room, the morning-room, and the library, without saying a word. Her husband walked after her in the deepest dejection, hanging his head and dangling his hands, in forgetfulness of the statuesque attitude. He saw no chance whatever for a place of quiet meditation.

Presently they came back to the morning room—it was a pleasant, sunny room; not so large as the great dining-room, nor so gaunt in its furniture, nor was it hung with immense pictures of game and fruit, but with light and bright water-colors.

'I should like,' said her ladyship, hesitating, because she was a little afraid that her dignity demanded that they should use the biggest room of all—I should like, if we could, to sit in this room when we are alone.'

'Certainly, my lady.'

'We are simple people, she went on, trying to make it clear why they liked simplicity; and accustomed to a plain way of life—so that his lordship does not look for the splendor that belongs to his position.'

'No, my lady.'

'Therefore, if we may use this room mostly, and—keep the drawing-room for when we have company—' She looked timidly at the grave young woman who was to be her maid.

'Certainly, my lady.'

'As for his lordship,' she went on, 'I beg he may be undisturbed in the morning when he sits in the library—he is much occupied in the morning.'

'Yes, my lady.'

'I think I noticed,' said Lord Davenant, a little more cheerfully, 'as we walked through the library, a most beautiful chair.' He cleared his throat, but said no more.

Then they were shown their own rooms, and told that luncheon would be served immediately.

'And I hope, Clara Martha,' said his lordship, when they were alone, 'that luncheon in this house means something solid and substantial—fried oysters now, with a beef-steak and tomatoes, and a little green corn in the ear, I should like.'

'It will be something, my dear, worthy of our rank. I almost regret now that you are a teetotaler—wine, somehow, seems to belong to a title. Do you think that you could break your vow and take one glass, or even two, of wine—just to show that you are equal to the position?'

'No, Clara Martha,' her husband replied, with decision. 'No—I will not break the pledge—not even for a glass of old Bourbon.'

There were no fried oysters at that day's luncheon, nor any green corn in the ear; but it was the best square meal that his lordship had ever sat down to in his life. Yet it was marred by the presence of an imposing footman, who seemed to be watching to see how much an American could eat. This caused his lordship to drop knives and upset glasses, and went very near to mar the enjoyment of the meal.

After the luncheon he bethought him of the chair in the library, and retired there. It was, indeed, a most beautiful chair—low in the seat, broad and deep, not too soft—and there was a footstool.

His lordship sat down in this chair, beside a large and cheerful fire, put up his feet, and surveyed the room. Books were ranged round all the walls—books from floor to ceiling. There was a large table with many drawers, covered with papers, magazines, and reviews, and provided with ink and pens. The door was shut, and there was no sound save of a passing carriage in the square.

'This,' said his lordship, 'seems better than Stepney Green—I wish Nathaniel were here to see me.'

With these words upon his lips, he fell into a deep slumber.

At half past three his wife came to wake him up. She had ordered the carriage, and was ready and eager for another drive along those wonderful streets which she had seen for the first time. She roused him with great difficulty, and persuaded him, not without words of refusal, to come with her. Of course she was perfectly wide awake.

'This,' she cried, once more in her carriage, 'this is London, indeed. Oh! to think we have wasted months at Stepney, thinking that was town. Timothy, we must wake up: we have a great deal to see and to learn. Look at the shops, look at the carriages. Do tell! It's better than Boston City. Now

that we have got the carriage we will go out every day and see something; I've told them to drive past the Queen's Palace, and to show us where the Prince of Wales lives. Before long we shall go there ourselves, of course, with the rest of the nobility. There's only one thing that troubles me.'

'What is that, Clara Martha? You air thinkin', perhaps, that it isn't in nature for them to keep the dinners every day up to the same pitch of elevation?'

She repressed her indignation at this unworthy suggestion.

'No, Timothy; and I hope your lordship will remember that in our position we can afford to despise mere considerations of meat and drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed.' She spoke as if pure Christianity was impossible beneath their rank, and indeed she had never felt so truly virtuous before. 'No, Timothy, my trouble is that we want to see everything there is to be seen.'

'That is so, Clara Martha. Let us sit in this luxurious chaise and see it all. I never get tired o' sittin', and I like to see things.'

'But we can only see the things that cost nothing, or outside things, because we've got no money.'

'No money at all?'

'None; only seven shillings and three-pence in coppers.'

This was a dreadful truth. Mrs. Bormalack had been paid, and the seven shillings was all that remained.

'And oh, there is so much to see! We'd always intended to run round some day, only we were too busy with the Case to find the time, and see all the shows we'd heard tell of—the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, and the monument of Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle—but we never thought things were so grand as this. When we get home we will ask for a guide-book of London, and pick out all the things that are open free.'

That day they drove up and down the streets, gazing at the crowds and the shops. When they got home, tea was brought them in the morning-room, and his lordship, who took it for another square meal, requested the loaf to be brought, and did great things with the bread and butter—and having no footman to fear.

At half past seven a bell rang, and presently Miss Messenger's maid came and whispered that it was the first bell, and would her ladyship go to her own room, and could she be of any help?

Lady Davenant rose at once, looking, however, much surprised. She went to her own room, followed by her husband, too much astonished to ask what the thing meant.

There was a beautiful fire in the room, which was very large and luxuriously furnished, and lighted with gas burning in soft-colored glass.

'Nothing could be more delightful,' said her ladyship, 'and this room is a picture. But I don't understand it.'

'Perhaps it's the custom,' said her husband, 'for the aristocracy to meditate in their bedrooms.'

'I don't understand it,' she repeated. 'The girl said the first bell. What's the second? They can't mean us to go to bed.'

'They must,' said his lordship. 'Yes, we must go to bed. And there will be no supper to-night. To-morrow, Clara Martha, you must speak about it, and say we're accustomed to later hours. At nine o'clock or ten we can go with a cheerful heart—after supper. But—well—it looks a soft bed, and I dare say I can sleep in it. You've nothing to say, Clara Martha, before I shut my eyes. Because if you have, get it off your mind, so's not to disturb me afterwards.'

He proceeded to dress in his most leisurely manner, and in ten minutes or so was getting into bed. Just as his head fell upon the pillows there was a knock at the door.

It was the maid who came to say that she had forgotten to tell her ladyship that dinner was at eight.

'What?' cried the poor lady, startled out of her dignity. 'Do you mean to say that we've got to have dinner?'

'Certainly, my lady; this young person was extremely well behaved, and in presence of her masters and mistresses and superiors knew not the nature of a smile.'

'My!'

Her ladyship standing at the door, looked first at the maid without and then at her husband, whose eyes were closed, and who was experiencing the first and balmy influences of sweet sleep. She felt so helpless that she threw away her dignity and cast herself upon the lady's-maid. 'See now!' she said, 'what is your name, my dear?'

'Campion, my lady.'

'I suppose you've got a Christian name?'

'I mean that Miss Messenger always calls me Campion.'

'Well, then, I suppose I must, too. We are simple people, Miss Campion, and not long from America, where they do things different, and have dinner at half past twelve and supper at six. And my husband has gone to bed. What is to be done?'

(To be Continued.)