

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER XXII.—Continued.

'I see. A common alphabet, which you discovered, perhaps?'

'That, young lady, is my Discovery—that is the greatest discovery of the age. I found it myself, once a small shoemaker in a little Victorian township—I alone found out that common alphabet, and have come over here to make it known. Not bad, says you, for a shoemaker, who had to teach himself his own Hebrew.'

'And the scholars here—'

'They're jealous, that's what it is; they're jealous. Most of them have written books to prove other things, and they won't give in and own that they've been wrong. My word! The scholars—' He paused and shook his hand before her face, 'some of them have got the Hebrew alphabet, and try to make out how one letter is a house and another a bull's head. And so on. And some have got the cuneiforms, and they make out that one bundle of arrows is an A and another a B. And so on. And some have got the hieroglyphic, and it's the same game with all. While I—if you please—with my little plain Discovery just show that all the different alphabets—different to outward seeming—are really one and the same.'

'This is very interesting,' said Angela. The little man was glowing with enthusiasm and pride; he was transformed; he walked up and down, throwing about his arms; he stood before her, looking almost tall; his eyes flashed with fire, and his voice was strong. 'And can you read inscriptions by your simple alphabet?'

'There is not,' he replied, 'a single inscription in the British Museum that I can't read. I just sit down before it, with my Hebrew dictionary in my hand—I didn't tell you I learned Hebrew on purpose, did I?—and I read that inscription, however long it is. Ah!'

'This seems extraordinary. Can you show me your alphabet?'

He sat down and began to make figures. 'What is the simplest figure? A circle? a square? a naught? No. A triangle. Very good, then. Do you think they were such fools as to copy a great ugly bull's head when they'd got a triangle ready to their hands and easy to draw? Not they; they just made a triangle—so—he drew an equilateral triangle on its base—and called it the first letter; and two triangles, one a top the other—so—and called that the second letter. Then they struck their triangles in another position, and it was the third letter; and in another, and its fourth—' Angela felt as if her head was swimming as he manipulated his triangles, and rapidly produced his primitive alphabet, which really did present some resemblance to the modern symbols. 'There—and there—and there—and what is that? and this? And so you've got the whole. Now, young lady, with this in your hand, which is the key to all learning—and the Hebrew dictionary, there's nothing you can't manage.'

'And an account of this is to be given in your book, is it?'

'That is the secret of my book. Now you know what it was I found out; now you see why my friends paid my passage home, and are looking for the glory which they prophesied.'

'Don't get gloomy again, Mr. Fagg. It is a long lane, you know, that has no turning. Let us hope for better luck.'

'No one will ever know,' he went on, 'the inscriptions that I have found—and read—in the Museum. They don't know what they've got. I've told nobody yet, but they are all in the book, and I'll tell you beforehand, Miss Kennedy, because you've been kind to me. Yes, a woman is best; I ought to have gone to the woman first. I would marry you, Miss Kennedy, I would indeed; but—I am too old, and besides, I don't think I could afford a family.'

'I thank you, Mr. Fagg, all the same. You do me a great honor. But about these inscriptions?'

'Mind, it's a secret.' He lowered his voice to a whisper. 'There's cuneiform inscriptions in the Museum with David and Jonathan on them—ah!—and Balaam and Balak—Aha!—he positively chuckled over the thought of these great finds—and the whole life of Jezebel—Jezebel! what do you think of that? And what else do you think they have got, only they don't know of it? The two tables of stone! Nothing short of the two tables, with the Ten Commandments written out at length!!!'

Angela gazed with amazement at this admirable man; his faith in himself; his audacity; the grandeur of his conceptions; the wonderful power of his imagination overwhelmed her. But, to be sure, she had never before met a genuine enthusiast.

'I know where they are kept; nobody else knows. It is in a dark corner; they are each about two feet high; and there's a hole in the corner of each for Moses's thumb to hold them by. Think of that! I've read them all through, only—he added with a look of bewilderment—'I think there must be something wrong with my Hebrew dictionary, because none of the commandments read quite right. One or two came out quite surprising. Yet the stones must be right, mustn't they? There can be no question about that; and the Discovery must be right. No question about that. As for the dictionaries—who put them together? to tell me that! Yah! the scholars!'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MISSING LINK.

The professor then started on his quest with a cheerful heart, caused by the certainty of dinner for some days to come. But he was an honest professor, and he did not prolong his absence for the sake of those dinners. On the other hand, he made the most rapid dispatch consistent with thorough work, and returned after an absence of four days, bearing with him the fruits of his research.

'I think,' said Harry, after reading his report, 'I think, Miss Kennedy, that we have found the Missing Link.'

'Then they really will make their claim good?'

'I did not say that—quite. I said that we have found a Missing Link. There might be, if you will think of it—two. One of them would have connected the condescending wheelwright with his supposed parent, the last Lord Davenant. The other would connect him with—quite another father.'

The truth, which was for some time carefully concealed from the illustrious pair was, in fact, this:

There is a village of Davenant, surrounding or adjoining a castle of Davenant, just as Alnwick, Arundel, Durham, Lancaster, Chepstow, Raglan, and a great many more English towns have a castle near them. And whether Davenant town was built to be protected by the castle, or the castle for the protection of the town, is a point on which I must refer you to the county historian, who knows all about it, and is not likely to deceive you on so important a point. The castle is now a picturesque ruin, with a country house built beside it. In this country house the last Lord Davenant died and the last heir to the title was born. There is an excellent old church, with a tower and ivy, and high-pitched roof, as an ancient church should have, and in the family vault under the chancel all the Davenants, except the last heir, lie buried.

There is also in the village a small country inn called the Davenant Arms, where the professor put up and where he made himself extraordinarily popular, because, finding himself among an assemblage of folk slow to see and slower still to think, he astonished them for four nights consecutively. The rustics still tell, and will continue to tell, so long as memory lasts, of the wonderful man who took the money out of their waistcoats, exchanged handkerchiefs, conveyed potatoes into strange coat-pockets, read their thoughts, picked out the cards they had chosen, made them take a card he had chosen whether they wanted it or not, caused balls of glass to vanish, changed half pence into half crowns, had a loaded pistol fired at himself and caught the ball, with other great marvels, all for nothing, to oblige and astonish the villagers, and for the good of the house. These were the recreations of his evening hours. The mornings he spent in the vestry of the old church searching the registers.

There was nothing professional about it, only the drudgery of clerk's work; to do it at all was almost beneath his dignity; yet he went through with it conscientiously, and restrained himself from inviting the sexton, who stayed with him, to lend him his handkerchief or choose a card. Nor did he even hide a card in the sexton's pocket, and then convey it into the parish register. Nothing of the sort. He was sternly practical, and searched diligently. Nevertheless, he noted how excellent a place for the simple feats would be the reading desk. The fact is, that gentlemen of his profession never go to church, and therefore are ignorant of the uses of its various parts. On Sunday morning they lie in bed; on Sunday afternoon they have dinner, and perhaps the day's paper, and on Sunday evening they gather at a house of call for conjurers in Drury Lane, and practice on each other. There is, therefore, no room in the conjurer's life for church. Some remedy should be found for this by the bishops.

'What have I got to look for?' said the

professor, as the sexton produced the old books. 'Well, I've got to find what families there were living here a hundred years ago or thereabouts, named Davenant, and what Christian names they had, and whether there were two children born and baptized here in one year, both bearing the name of Davenant.'

The sexton shook his head. He was only a middle-aged man, and therefore not yet arrived at sextonial ripeness; for a sexton only begins to be nellow when he is ninety or thereabouts. He knew nothing of the Davenants except that there were once Lords Davenant, now lying in the family vault below the chancel, and none of them left in the parish at all, nor any in his memory, nor in that of his father's before him, so far as he could tell.

After a careful examination of the books, the professor was enabled to state with confidence that at the time in question the Davenant name was borne by none but the family at the castle; that there were no cousins of the name in the place; and that the heir born in that year was christened on such a day and received the name of Timothy Clitheroe.

If this had been the only evidence, the case would have been in favor of the Canaan City claimant, but, unfortunately, there was another discovery made by the professor, at sight of which he whistled, and then shook his head, and then considered whether it would not be best to cut out the page, while the sexton thought he was forcing a card, or palming a ball, or boiling an egg, or some other ingenious feat of legerdemain. For he instantly perceived that the fact recorded before his eyes had an all-important bearing upon the case of his illustrious friends.

The little story which he saw was, in short, this:

In the same year of the birth of the infant Timothy Clitheroe, there was born of a poor vagrant woman, who wandered no one knew where from into the parish, and died in giving him to the world, a man-child. There was no one to rejoice over him, or to claim him, therefore he became parish property, and had to be christened, fed, flogged, admonished, and educated, so far as education in those days was considered necessary, at the charge of the parish. The first was to give him a name. For it was formerly, and may be still, a custom in country parishes to name a waif of this kind after the village itself, which accounts for many odd surnames, such as Stepney, Marylebone, or Hoxton. It was not a good custom, because it might lead to complications, as perhaps it did in this case, when there was already another family legitimately entitled to bear the name. The authorities, following this custom, conferred upon the baby the lordly name of Davenant. Then as it was necessary that he should have a Christian name, and it would be a pity to waste good Richard or Robin upon a beggar brat, they gave him the day of the week on which he was born. This was intended to keep him humble, and to remind him that he had no right to any of the distinguished Christian names bestowed upon respectably born children.

He was called Saturday Davenant.

The name, the date, and the circumstances were briefly recorded in the parish register.

In most cases this book contains three entries for each name, those of the three important events of his life; the beginning, the marrying, and the ending. One does not of course count the minor occasions in which he may be mentioned, as on the birth and death of a child. The professor turned over the pages of the register in vain for any further entry of this Saturday Davenant.

He appeared no more. His one public appearance, as far as history records it, was on that joyful occasion when, held in hiring arms, he was received into the Christian Church. The one thing to which he was born was his brotherhood in the Christian faith, no doubt the grandest of all possessions, yet in itself not professing to provide the material comforts of life. The baby was presented at the font, received a contemptuous name, squealed a little, no doubt, when he felt the cold water, and then—then—nothing more. What he did, whether he went, where he died, might be left to conjecture. A parish brat, a cottage home, bread and bacon to eat with more bread and bacon, plenty of stick, the Church Catechism, and particular attention called to the clauses about picking and stealing, practical work as a scarecrow at seven; the plow later on; for pleasures, quarter-staff, wrestling, fighting, bull-baiting, and perhaps poaching, with strong beer and small beer for drink; presently a wife, then children, then old age, then death. One was free to conjecture because there was no more mention of this baby; he did not marry in the parish nor did he die in it. He, therefore, went away. In those days, if a man went away it was for two reasons: either he fell into trouble and went away, to escape the wrath of the Squire; or he enlisted, marched off with beer in his head and ribbons in hat, swore terribly with the army in Irland-

ers, and presently earned the immortal glory which England rejoices to confer upon the private soldier who falls upon the enemy's sanguinary field. The enjoyment of this glory is such a solid, substantial, and satisfying thing, that fighting and war, and the field of honor are, and always will be, greatly beloved and desired by private soldiers.

There was no other entry of this boy's name. When the professor had quite satisfied himself upon this point he turned back to the first entry, and then became aware of a note, in faded ink, now barely legible, written on the margin. It was as follows, and he copied it exactly:

'Ye above sd Saturday Dnt was a Roag in Grane; he was bro't up in the Fear of God yet feared Him not; taught his Duty, yet did it not; admonished without stint of Rodd in Virtue, yet still inclined to Vice; he was appd to the Wheelwright; was skillful, yet indolent; notorious as a Poacher who could not be caught; a Deceiver of Maidens; a Tossopot and a Striker. Compelled to leave the Parish to avoid Prison and the Lash he went to London. Latronum officina. Was reported to have been sent to his majesty's Plantations in Virginia, where of nothing certain is known.'

This was the note which the professor read and copied out, with misgivings that it would not prove acceptable. Of course, he knew the story and quite understood what this might mean.

The next day, nothing more remaining to be found in the register, the professor examined the brasses and tablets in the church, and paid a visit to the castle. And when he had faithfully executed his commission, he went away, amid the regrets of the villagers, who had never before been entertained by so delightful and surprising a stranger, and brought back his spoils.

'What are we to think,' said Harry, after reading this report. 'The Roag in Grane, this wheelwright by trade, who can he be but the grandfather of our poor old friend?'

'I fear it must be so,' said Angela. 'Saturday Davenant. Remember the little book.'

'Yes,' said Harry, 'the little book came into my mind at once.'

'Not a doubt,' added the professor. 'Why, it stands to reason. The fellow found himself a long way from England, among strangers, with no money and only his trade. What was to prevent him from pretending to be one of the family whose name he bore?'

'And at the same time,' said Harry, 'with reserve. He never seems to have asserted that he was the son of Lord Davenant; he only threw out ambiguous words, he fired the imagination of his son, he christened him by the name of the lost heir, he pretended that it was his own Christian name, and it was not until they found out that this was the hereditary name that the claim was thought of. This Poacher and Striker seems to have possessed considerable native talent.'

'But what,' asked Angela, 'are we to do?'

'Let us do nothing, Miss Kennedy. We have our secret, and we may keep it for the present. Meantime, the case is hopeless on account of the absolute impossibility of connecting the wheelwright with the man supposed to have been drowned. Let them go on 'enjoying' the title, ignorant of the existence of this unlucky Saturday Davenant.'

So far the present thing was hidden away, and nothing was said about it. And though about this time the professor gave one or two entertainments in the drawing room, we can not suppose that his silence was bought, and it would be unjust to the noble profession of which he was a member to think that he would let out the secret had not Miss Kennedy paid him for their performance. Indeed, the professor was an extremely honorable man, and would have scorned to betray confidence, and it was good of Miss Kennedy to find out that an evening of magic and miracle would do the girls good.

But a profound pity seized the heart of Angela. These poor people who believed themselves to be entitled to an English peerage, who were so mistaken, who would be so disappointed, who were so ignorant, who knew so little what it was they claimed—could not something be done to lessen their disappointment, to break their fall.

She pondered long over this difficulty. That they would in the end have to return to their own country was a thing about which there could be no doubt whatever; that they should return with no knowledge whatever of the reality of the thing they had claimed; what it meant, what it involved, its splendors and its obligations, seemed to her a very great pity. A little experience, she thought, even a glimpse of the life led by the best bred and most highly cultivated and richest people in England would be of so much advantage to them that it would show them their uprightness for the rank which they assumed and claimed. And presently she arrived at a project which she put into execution without delay. What this was you will presently see.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LORD JOCELYN'S TROUBLES.

As the season advanced, and the autumn deepened into winter, Angela found that there were certain social duties which it was impossible altogether to escape. The fiction of the country house was good enough for the general world, but for her more intimate friends and cousins this would not do for long. Therefore, while she kept the facts of present occupation and place of residence a secret from all except Constance Woodcote, now the unsympathizing, she could not wholly shut herself from the old circle. Among others there was one lady whose invitations she was in a sense bound to accept. What her obligations were, and who this lady was, belong in no way to this history—that is to say, the explanation belongs to Angela's simple chronicle of the old days, when she was only Miss Messenger, the heiress presumptive of the Great Brewery. Therefore, it need not concern us. Suffice it to say that she was a lady in society, and that she gave great dinners, and held other gatherings, and was at all times properly awake to the attractions which the young, and beautiful, and wealthy Angela Messenger lent to her receptions.

On this occasion Constance Woodcote, among others, was invited to meet her old friend; she came but she was ungracious, and Angela felt, more than she had expected, how great already was the gulf between the old days of Newham and her life of active practical work. Six months before such coldness would have hurt and pained her; now she hardly felt it. Yet Constance meant to demonstrate by a becoming frost of manner how grievous was her disappointment about those scholarships. Then there were half a dozen men—unmarried men, men in society, men of clubs, men who felt strongly that the possession of Miss Messenger's millions might reconcile them to matrimony, and were much interested by the possibility of an introduction to her, and came away disappointed because they got nothing out of her, not even an encouragement to talk; and everybody said that she was singularly cold, distraite, and even embarrassed that evening; and those who had heard that Miss Messenger was a young lady of great conversational powers, went away cynically supposing that any young lady with less than half her money could achieve the same reputation at the same cost of energy. The reason of this coldness, this preoccupation, was as follows:

The dinner party was large, and the conversation by no means general. So far as Angela was concerned, it was held entirely with the man who took her down, and his name was Lord Jocelyn Le Breton—a rugged-faced man, with a pleasing manner and an agreeable voice; no longer young. He talked to her a good deal in a light, irresponsible vein, as if it mattered very little what he said so that it amused the young lady. He discoursed about many things, principally about dinners, asking Angela what were her own views as to dinners, and expostulating with her feminine contempt for the subject. 'Each dinner,' he said, 'should be like a separate and distinct work of art, and should be contrived for different kinds of wine. There should be a champagne dinner, for instance, light, and composed of many dishes, but some of these substantial; there should be a claret dinner grave and conscientious; a Burgundy dinner of few courses, and those solid; a German wine dinner, in which only the simplest plates should appear. But unto harmony and consistency in dining we have not yet arrived. Perhaps, Miss Messenger, you may be induced to bring your intellect to bear upon the subject. I hear you took high honors at Newham, lately.'

She laughed. 'You do too much honor to my intellect, Lord Jocelyn. At Newham they teach us political economy, but they have not trusted us with the art of dining. Do you know, we positively did not care much what we had for dinner!'

'My ward, Harry, used to say—but I forget if you ever met him.'

'I think not. What is his name?'

'Well, he used to hear my name, and everybody knew him as Harry Le Breton; but he had no right to it, so he gave it up and took his own.'

'Oh! Angela felt profoundly uninterested in Mr. Harry Le Breton.'

'Yes. And now you never will meet him. For he is gone—' Lord Jocelyn uttered these words in so sepulchral a tone that Angela gave them greater significance than they deserved.

'I am very sorry,' she said.

'No, Miss Messenger, he is not dead. He is only dead to society. He has gone out of the world; he has returned to—in fact, his native rank in life.'

Angela reddened. What could he mean?

(To be Continued.)

Mr. Graspall—Yes, you can marry my daughter if you like; but I tell you candidly she won't have a penny until I die. Are you still of the same mind? Young Doctor—Will you permit me to examine you, sir?