

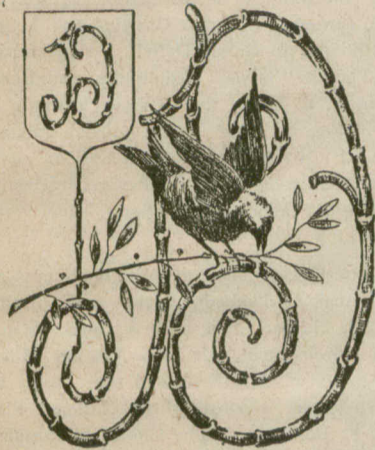
Written for the LADIES' PICTORIAL WEEKLY.

Enough To Do.

One morn, as the dominie went his way,
To visit the sick, and to comfort the poor,
A mither and bairns, in most sorry array,
He found at a cot, on the edge of the moor.
Addressing himself to the difficult task
Of caring for souls, this most worthy of men,
Courageously ventured the gude wife to ask,
"Good woman, keep you the commandments all ten?"
But she of the country of lochs, and of cairns,
All doubts on the subject did quickly dispel,
"What keep the commandments wi' a' o' these bairns?
It's a' I can do mon, to keep but oorself!"

Elderly Miss Langton.

CHAPTER I.



EAR MR. RAVELLE,
"Will you call upon Miss Langton, and make her the subject of our next 'Well-known People' paper. Her labors in connection with the question of dwellings for the poor, soup-kitchens, and half-penny dinners, have made her name famous, and a notice of her would be of especial interest to the readers of the *Friend of All*. Miss Langton's address is 37, Malvina Road, South Kensington.

"Believe me, yours very truly,

"JOHN SHERMAN."

Thus, in "square-toed" style, and in the vilest caligraphy, wrote the editor of a decidedly "square-toed" weekly periodical to his new contributor, who drew his straight black brows together as he read.

You would not have thought Bertie Ravelle exactly the kind of man to be on the staff of such a paper as the *Friend of All*—a very "serious sheet, of a religiously-secular character, principally patronized by thoughtful middle-aged ladies and gentlemen who subscribed to charities and took a general interest in model dwelling, drinking-fountain, and "open spaces for the poor."

The handsome young Oxford man who pulled his moustache, and went "Whew!" over the prospect before him, savored rather of Pall Mall and the clubs than of the world that smacks of Exeter Hall. But the well-worn axiom of Fouché, "*Il faut vivre*," holds good; and Bertie Ravelle, well-born, well-educated had found that Latin and Greek don't always mean bread and butter, and brilliant articles for reviews have a limited sale. Therefore, when chance threw it in his way to add the *Friend of All* to his at present limited list of papers, he could not afford to refuse the work, although it was far from congenial; and he was obliged to subdue his brilliant style to the more sober tone of the *Friend of All*.

Of late the editor had published articles of the "interview" order, the subjects of which were all, of course, eminently useful people; but the articles had been written by a member of the staff who was now absent through illness.

"You can do that kind of thing, Mr. Ravelle," said the editor; and Ravelle replied that no doubt he could.

But he had never done "that kind of thing;" and when the letter came which actually ordered an "interview," he felt somewhat taken aback.

"Wonder how I shall set about it?" he mused, pushing his hand through his curly hair. "I could 'cook' the article, if the old lady would send me some statistics and pars about herself, and leaflets about blanket-clubs and ragged dinners. An elderly, prim spectacled dame! And the crams I shall have to tell! for I never heard of her before; and I don't care a continental—as an American would say—for the ragamuffin ticket."

However, the thing had to be done, and there was no time to be lost—no time even to write and make an appointment. Ravelle must call, and take his chance of finding Miss Langton disengaged and explain why he had not first asked for an appointment.

He left home in time to reach Malvina Road about three o'clock, though as likely as not, he reflected, the old lady would be holding a *levee* of philanthropists, male and female.

He naturally glanced up at the front of the house, and noticed that the drawing-room windows were draped with white lace curtains, tied back with rose-colored sashes. That had a rather coquettish look; perhaps Miss Langton was not so prim as he had imagined.

He knocked at the door, and it was opened by a neat-looking parlor-maid.

"Is Miss Langton at home?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Will you ask her if she can see me for a few minutes? I will not detain her long."

The servant looked at the card he gave her, "Mr. Albert Ravelle, New College, Oxford;" but Ravelle carried his best credentials in his unmistakable mien and manner of gentleman.

The servant disappeared into a room near, and in a minute came out, and, asking the visitor to follow her, led the way upstairs to the drawing-room, where she left him with the information that Miss Langton would be with him in a few minutes.

Ravelle naturally looked about him, though his good-breeding forbade his making a tour of inspection.

The appearance of the room puzzled him. It was furnished in a graceful, artistic fashion, with bamboo tables and chairs, æsthetic plush upholstery, Indian muslin curtains, big jars containing ferns or feathery grasses, Indian mats and rugs scattered about, a grand piano, open, and on the desk a piece of music—what it was Ravelle could not see from where he sat, and he would not for the world have crossed the room to see.

Nowhere was there a sign of a prospectus, a tract, or a "goody" magazine. Ravelle had never seen a "goody" drawing-room, that he knew of; but he had pictured it as something very different from this worldly, but charmingly pretty apartment.

And while he still wondered the door opened, and he rose and turned—to see a young lady of perhaps twenty—not a day more—tall, slight, remarkably pretty, with very brilliant dark eyes, and curly light hair; and she wore a bewitching tea-gown of French gray plush and amber.

She was quite in keeping with the room; it made exactly the right background for her; but Ravelle was more bewildered than ever, for what place had this picturesque, artistic figure, in the domestic economy of the Langton *menage*? What possible connection could there be between her and soup-kitchens, coal tickets, and mothers' meetings?

"You wished to see me?" she began, in a very sweet voice, pitched in a soft, low key.

"I beg your pardon," said Ravelle, bowing again. "I asked to see Miss Langton."

"I am Miss Langton," with a flash of amusement in the dark eyes.

"You—Miss Langton—"

He really could get no farther.

The young lady came to his rescue with ready self-possession.

"I am the only Miss Langton in this house," she said, smiling. "Miss Dorothy Langton. Perhaps there is some mistake?"

"No," said Ravelle, recovering himself: "but forgive me, I could not imagine—I—the truth is, Miss Langton"—she had advanced and taken a seat, inviting him by a gesture to resume his—"I venture to call on behalf of the editor of a paper—the *Friend of All*—you would know its name, of course?"

She looked up with a quick questioning in her eyes, a pretty movement of her head.

What a bewitching creature she was!

"yes?" she said, interrogatively, as he paused.

There was a smile lurking at the corners of her mouth. She smoothed it away, and dropped her eyes demurely.

"We have been publishing lately," Ravelle went on, "At Home" sketches of well-known people, and I was asked to call upon you as an eminent—philanthropist—just a movement of the straight brows, but not the shadow of a smile on her face—Ravelle had no small difficulty to suppress it on his—"in the hope," he continued, bravely, "that you would allow a notice to appear. I ought to have written to you to ask you this beforehand, but I only heard this morning from the editor, and the article is required for this week's issue."

Miss Langton rose, and crossing the room to the piano, took the music off the desk, and put it into a canterbury. She seemed unnecessarily long over this simple operation; and when she raised herself and turned round, there was a flush on her face.

"I have no objection," she said—there was a sort of suppressed tone in her voice, and now she seated herself with her back to the light. "You pay me a great compliment. My poor labors cannot be worth recording."

"That is naturally your estimate of them," said Ravelle, politely.

But he thought there was something unreal in her manner as she spoke. Was she one of those fashionable young women who get the name of being charitable, and only give the money, while others do the disagreeable part of the work?

"But the public," he added "thinks differently."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"What do you want me to tell you?" she said.

Ravelle laughed frankly.

"The fact is," said he, "I am new to this kind of work; and I hardly know where to begin."

Miss Dorothy Langton laughed too.

"So am I new to it," she remarked; "I was never interviewed before."

"Indeed! I understood from someone that there was an account of you in the *Christian—Christian* something-or-other—"

"Oh—h—was there? I forget; but you certainly don't seem very well up in the names of those 'goody' papers, Mr. Ravelle? How roguish she looked!

Well, no—the whole thing is out of my line," replied Ravelle, divided between admiration of his charming "subject" and an uncomfortable impression of her insincerity. No more complete bouleversement of accepted canons could be than the appearance, manner, and mode of talking of Miss Langton. She was actually making fun of "goody" papers—she whose whole platform was goody!"

"It is easy to see that!" chimed in the young lady. "Well, can't you just describe me and the room, and then talk in a vague, general way about soup-kitchens, and all the rest of it? I really don't care about puffing myself."

"Ye—es," said Ravelle, "but perhaps a few particulars—"

"Do you mean what first gave me the idea? I believe it was seeing a ragged boy on a door-step one night; and then I founded a soup-kitchen in Bermondsey—"

"That seems a very out-of-the-way place," said Ravelle, smiling.

"There are lots of poor people there," replied Miss Langton, gravely. "Are you going to take that down?"

"I shall remember it, thanks."

"Oh! I thought an interviewer always took notes. Well, then. I set up a club for shoeing poor boys—"

"Was that what you called it?"

"Yes, why not? Oh! you think it sounds like horses? Do you know, that never occurred to me. I'll alter the name. Then followed the blanket-club—and the—the mothers' meetings—and I had a guild for distributing tracts—"

"A guild!"

"Haven't you ever heard of guilds?" said Miss Langton, severely.

"I really don't know what you have to do on a serious paper."

"Nor do I. But I've heard enough of guilds at Oxford—only it's a high-church idea, isn't it?"

"And I am low church—so I am," said Miss Langton, clasping her pretty white hands on her knee. "But I have no prejudices, Mr. Ravelle. What's in a name. I don't mind the word guild. Do you?"

"Oh! no. I'm a high churchman myself. I was only surprised that's all."

"You've been surprised all the time," said Miss Langton, coolly. "You came prepared to see a starch old frump of fifty, with spectacles and gray hair—didn't you?"

Ravelle burst out laughing.

"Well, I confess I did. I can't associate the idea of soup-kitchens and arrowroot-clubs with you, Miss Langton."

"Nor can anyone else, that I know of," said the young lady. "But I don't believe there is such a thing as an arrowroot-club. I haven't got one. But, oh! do you know I have a gruel society!"

"What in the world's that?" exclaimed Ravelle amazed.

"A society for supplying hot gruel to cabmen at night. You wouldn't believe how the men appreciate it."

"I shouldn't!" said Ravelle, promptly. "I wouldn't touch gruel!"

"But you're not a cabman, I suppose you wouldn't eat slabs of boiled dough either, but they do. Don't forget the gruel society—it's one of my pet fads."

"I am not likely to forget it," replied Ravelle, smiling. Certainly, he thought, this lovely philanthropist was a mere dilettante.

"You shall come down one day to Bermondsey," pursued Miss Langton, "and see me ladling out soup."

"You do it yourself?" said he. He thought he would go anywhere to see her again. Bermondsey seemed only in the next street.

"To be sure I do. Oh! you set me down as a fashionable faddist."

Ravelle colored, and began an excuse; but Miss Langton cut him short.

"Oh! I don't blame you. People always fancy that philanthropy and primness are Siamese twins. I mean to open your eyes. Now, haven't you got about enough for your sketch?"

"I suppose I must say yes, Miss Langton, and apologize for taking up so much of your valuable time. But you have been too modest—you have told me so little."

"Oh! you can go—I mean," correcting herself—"you can put in a lot yourself, can't you?"

"I think I can manage without that," said he, rising. "Thank you very much."

"Don't mention it; I am so pleased to be of service to your paper. I am sorry that I have to cut you short; but I have an appointment in ten minutes' time. You will send me a copy of the paper?"

"Certainly. She gave him her hand. He would have given something to hold the pretty hand in his a little longer than conventionality allowed; but that was impossible. He bade adieu, and went out, vowing inwardly to see the charming philanthropist again—and soon. Ah! There was the Bermondsey soup distribution! He could remind her of her promise. He went home, and sat down to write his article *con amore*.

CHAPTER II.

As a rule Mr. John Sherman had proofs of all the articles that went into the *Friend of All*; but this week the "interview" was late, the "copy" not reaching the office until the editor had left, and the paper went to press the same night. The matter was put in hand at once, and the paper duly went to press.

Ravelle had done his best, as usual, to "tone down," but in spite of this his article on "Miss Dorothy Langton" was rather brilliant specimen of writing for the sober sheet in which it appeared. There was a preamble about the upsetting of all preconceived ideas, all accepted canons in the *menage*, personal appearance, and manners of the "famous philanthropist whose good works are household words." Then followed a description of the dainty drawing-room, and the sunny-tressed dark-eyed young lady in the plush tea-gown, who announced herself as Miss Dorothy Langton. Several of the lady's speeches were given with an accuracy extremely significant, seeing that the young man had not taken notes; out came the Bermondsey Soup Kitchen, the Poor Boy Shoeing Club, the Tract Distribution Guild; and over the Gruel Society the writer grew quite eloquent. Three columns of leader type were devoted to number six of "Well-Known People—Miss Dorothy Langton," and if Bertie Ravelle wanted to create a sensation he certainly succeeded. *Morning Argus*, immortalized by Max Adler, did not "hum around this town" more loudly than the *Friend of All* "hummed" among the "all" who subscribed to it. Every post that day brought shoals of indignant, amazed, stern reproachful letters to the distracted editor; and the next day, and the next they poured in from outraged country subscribers. But "we anticipate."

Ravelle, of course, had two copies early in the morning, and directly after breakfast he posted one to 37, Malvina Road, and returned to work. He was in the midst of some letters, about ten o'clock, when a telegram was given him from Mr. Sherman:

"Come to office at once. Most important."

"What's up now!" thought Ravelle; but he took a cab and drove into Fleet Street. As he passed through the publishing office he saw two or three clerks with their heads together over the paper, and they were all sputtering and gurgling with laughter, the merriment reaching an explosive point when they saw Ravelle.