

LADY BOUNTIFUL.

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

CHAPTER XXI.—Continued.

Her husband was asleep as usual, for he had had breakfast, and as yet the regular pangs of noon were not active. The Case was not spread out before him, as was usual, ever since Mr. Goslett had taken it in hand. It was ostentatiously rolled up, and laid on the table, as if packed ready for departure by the next mail.

His wife regarded him with a mixture of affection and contempt.

'He would sell the crown of England,' she murmured, for 'roast turkey and apple fixin's. The Davenants couldn't have been always like that. It must be his mother's blood. Yet she was a Church member and walked consistent.'

She did not wake him up, but sought out Mrs. Bormalack, and presently there was a transfer of coins and the Resurrection of Smiles and Doux Parler, that Fairy of Sweet Speech, who covers and hides beneath the cold wind of poverty.

'Tell me, Mr. Goslett,' said Angela, that evening still thinking over the sad lot of the claimants, 'tell me; you have examined the claim of these people—what chance have they?'

'I should say none whatever.'

'Then what makes them so confident of success?'

'Hush! listen. They are really confident. His noble lordship perfectly understands the weakness of his claim, which depends upon a pure assumption, as you shall hear. As for the little lady, his wife, she has long since jumped to the conclusion that the assumption requires no proof. Therefore, save in moments of dejection, she is pretty confident. Then they are hopelessly ignorant of how they should proceed and of the necessary delays, even if their case was unanswerable. They thought they had only to cross the ocean and send in a statement in order to get admitted to the rank and privilege of the peerage. And I believe they think the queen will, in some mysterious way, restore the property to them.'

'Poor things!'

'Yes, it's rather said to think of such magnificent expectations. Besides, it really is a most beautiful case. The last Lord Davenant had one son. That only son grew up, had some quarrel with his father, and sailed from the Port of Bristol, bound for some American port, I forget which. Neither he nor his ship was ever heard of again. Therefore the title became extinct.'

'Well?'

'Very good. Now the story begins. His name was Timothy Clitferoe Davenant, and so was his father's, and so was his grandfather's.'

'That is very strange.'

'It is very strange—what is stranger still is, that his grandfather was born, according to the date on his tomb, the same year as the lost heir, and at the same place—Davenant, where was the family seat.'

'Can there have been two of the same name born in the same place and in the same year?'

'It seems improbable, almost impossible. Moreover, the last lord had no brother, nor had his father, the second lord. I found that out at the Herald's College. Consequently, even if there was another branch, and the birth of two Timothys in the same year was certain, they would not get the title. So that their one hope is to be able to prove what they call the Connection. That is to say, the identity of the lost heir with this wheelwright.'

'That seems a very doubtful thing to do, after all these years.'

'It is absolutely impossible, unless some documents are discovered which prove it. But nothing remains of the wheelwright.'

'No book? No papers?'

'Nothing, except a small book of songs, supposed to be convivial, with his name on the inside cover, written in a sprawling hand, and misspelled, with two v's—'Davenant,' and above the name, in the same hand, the day of the week in which it was written, 'Saturday,' with two t's. No Christian name.'

'Does it not seem as if the absence of the Christian name would point to the assumption of the title?'

'Yes; they do not know this, and I have not yet told them. It is, however, a very small point, and quite insufficient in itself to establish anything.'

'Yes,' Angela mused. She was thinking whether anything could be done to help these poor people and settle the case decisively for them one way or the other. 'What is to be the end of it?'

Harry shrugged his shoulders.

'Who knows how long they can go on? When there are no more dollars, they must go home again. I hear they have got another supply of money; Mrs. Bormalack has been paid for a fortnight in advance.

After that is gone—perhaps they had better go too.'

'It seems a pity,' said Angela, slightly reddening at mention of the money, 'that some researches could not be made, so as to throw a little light upon this strange coincidence of names.'

'We should want to know first what to look for. After that, we should have to find a man to conduct the search. And then we should have to pay him.'

'As for the man, there is the professor; as for the place, first, there is the Herald's College, and secondly, there are the parish registers of the village of Davenant; and as for the money, why, it would not cost much, and I believe something might be advanced for them. If you and I, Mr. Goslett, between us, were to pay the professor's expenses, would he go about for us?'

She seemed to assume that he was quite ready to join her in giving his money for this object. Yet Harry was now living, having refused his guardian's proffered allowance, on his pay by the piece, which gave him, as already stated, tenpence for every working hour.

'What would the professor do?' she asked.

'The professor is down upon his luck,' said Harry. 'He is so hard up at present that I believe we could get him for nothing but his expenses. Eighteen shillings a week would buy him outright until his engagements begin again. If there were any traveling expenses of course that would be extra. But the village of Davenant is not a great way off. It is situated in Essex, and Essex is now a suburb of London, its original name having been East-End-seaxas, which is not generally known.'

'Very well,' she replied, gravely. 'That would be only nine shillings apiece, say eleven hours of extra work for you; and probably it would not last long, more than a week or two. Will you give two hours a day to his lordship?'

Harry made a wry face, and laughed. This young person had begun by turning him into a journeyman cabinet-maker, and was now making him work extra time. What next?

'Am I not your slave, Miss Kennedy?'

'Oh! Mr. Goslett, I thought there was to be no more nonsense of that kind. You know it can lead to nothing—even if you desired that it should.'

'Even? Miss Kennedy, can't you see—'

'No—I can see nothing—I will hear nothing. Do not—oh, Mr. Goslett—we have been—we are—such excellent friends. You have been so great a help to me; I look to you for so much more. Do not spoil all; do not seek for what you could never be; pray, pray, do not.'

She spoke with so much earnestness; her eyes were filled with such frankness; she laid her hand upon his arm with so charming camaraderie, that he could not choose but obey.

'It is truly wonderful,' he said, thinking, for the thousandth time, how this pearl among women came to Stepney Green.

'What is wonderful?' She blushed as she asked.

'You know what I mean. Let us both be frank. You command me not to say the thing I most desire to say. Very good, I will be content to wait, but under one promise—'

'What is that?'

'If the reason or reasons which command my silence should ever be removed—mind, I do not seek to know what they are—you will yourself—'

'What?' she asked, blushing sweetly.

'You will yourself—tell me so.'

She recovered her composure and gave him her hand.

'If, at any time, I can listen to you, I will tell you so. Does that content you?'

Certainly not; but there was no more to be got; therefore Harry was fain to be contented whether he would or not. And this was only one of a hundred skirmishes in which he endeavored to capture an advanced fort or prepared to lay the siege in form. And always he was routed with heavy loss.

'And now,' she went on, 'we will get back to our professor.'

'Yes. I am to work two extra hours a day that he may go about in the luxury of eighteen shillings a week. This it is to be one of the honey-handed. What is the professor to do first?'

'Let us,' she said, 'find him and secure his services.'

It has been seen that the professor was already come to the period of waist-tightening which naturally follows a too continued succession of banian days.

He listened with avidity to any proposition which held forth a prospect of food. We Thork, he said, only partly understand-

ing it, would be difficult, but, therefore, the more to be desired. Common conjurers, he said, would spoil such a case. As for himself, he would undertake to do just whatever they wanted with the register, whether it was the substitution of a page or the tearing out of a page, under the very eyes of the parish clerk. 'There must be,' he said, 'a patter suitable for the occasion. I will manage that for you. I'm afraid I can't make up as I ought for the part, because it would cost too much, but we must do without that. And now, Miss Kennedy, what is it exactly that you want me to do?'

He was disappointed on learning that there would be no 'palming' of leaves, old or new, among the registers; nothing, in fact, but a simple journey, and a simple examination of the books. And though, as he confessed, he had as yet no experience in the art of falsifying parish registers, where science was concerned, its interests were above those of mere morality.

CHAPTER XXII.

DANIEL FAGG.

What would have happened if certain things had not happened? This is a question which is seldom set on examination papers, on account of the great scope it offers to the imaginative faculty, and we all know how dangerous a thing it is to develop this side of the human mind. Many a severe historian has been spoiled by developing his imagination. But for this, Scott might have been another Alison and Thackeray a Mill. In this Stepney business the appearance of Angela certainly worked changes at once remarkable and impossible to be dissociated from her name. Thus, but for her, the unfortunate claimants must have been driven back to their own country like baffled invaders 'rolling sullenly over the frontier.' Nelly would have spent her whole life in the sadness of short rations and long hours, with hopeless prayers for days of fatness. Rebekah and the improvers and the dress-makers and the apprentices would have endured the like hardness. Harry would have left the joyless City to its joylessness, and returned to the regions whose skies are all sunshine—to the young and fortunate—and its pavements all of gold. And there would have been no Palace of Delight. And what would have become of Daniel Fagg, one hardly likes to think. The unlucky Daniel had, indeed, fallen upon very evil days. There seemed to be no longer a single man left whom he could ask for a subscription to his book. He had used them all up. He had sent begging letters to every Fellow of every Scientific Society; he had levied contributions upon every Secretary; he had attacked in person every official at the Museums of Great Russell Street and South Kensington; he had tried all the publishers; he had written to every bishop, nobleman, clergyman, and philanthropist of whom he could hear, pressing upon them the claims of his great Discovery. Now he could do no more. The subscriptions he had received for publishing his book were spent in necessary food and lodging; nobody at the Museum would even see him; he got no more answers to his letters; starvation stared him in the face.

For three days he had lived upon ninepence. Threepence a day for food. Think of that, ye who are fed regularly, and fed well. Threepence to satisfy all the cravings of an excellent appetite! There was now no more money left. And in two days more the week's rent would be due.

On the morning when he came forth, hungry and miserable, without even the penny for a loaf, it happened that Angela was standing at her upper window, on the other side of the Green, and, fortunately for the unlucky scholar, that she saw him. His strange behavior made her watch him. First he looked up and down the street in uncertainty; then, as if he had business which could not be delayed a moment, he turned to the right and marched straight away toward the Mile End Road. This was because he thought he would go to the Head of the Egyptian Department at the British Museum and borrow five shillings. Then he stopped suddenly; this was because he remembered that he would have to send in his name, and that the chief would certainly refuse to see him. Then he turned slowly and walked, dragging his limbs and hanging his head, in the opposite direction—because he was resolved to make for the London Docks, and drop accidentally into the sluggish green water, the first drop of which kills almost as certainly as a glass of Bourbon whiskey. Then he thought that there would be some luxury in sitting down for a few moments to think comfortably over his approaching demise, and of the noise it would make in the learned world, and how remorseful and ashamed the scholars—especially he of the Egyptian Department—would feel for the short balance of their sin-laden days, and he took a seat on a bench in the Green garden with this view. As he thought he leaned forward, staring into vacancy, and in his face there grew so dark an expression of despair and terror, that Angela shuddered and ran for her hat, recollecting that she

had heard of his poverty and disappointments.

'I am afraid you are not well, Mr. Fagg.' He started and looked up. In imagination he was already lying dead at the bottom of the green water, and before his troubled mind there were floating confused images of his former life, now past and dead and gone. He saw himself in his Australian cottage arriving at his grand Discovery; he was lecturing about it on a platform; he was standing on the deck of a ship, drinking farewell nobblers with an enthusiastic crowd; and he was wandering hungry, neglected, despised, about the stony streets of London.

'Well? No, I am not well,' he replied, presently, understanding things a little.

'Is it distress of mind or body, Mr. Fagg?'

'Yesterday it was body; to-night it will be both; just now it is only one.'

'Which one?'

'Mind,' he replied, fiercely, refusing to acknowledge that he was starving. He threw his hat back, dashed his subscription book to the ground, and banged the offending bench with his fist.

'As for mind,' he went on, 'it's a pity I was born with any. I wish I'd had no more mind than my neighbors. It's mind, and nothing else, that has brought me to this.'

'What is this, Mr. Fagg?'

'Nothing to you. Go your ways; you are young; you have yet your hopes, which may come to nothing, same as mine; even though they are not, like mine, hopes of Glory and Learning. There's Mr. Goslett in love with you; what is Mind to you? Nothing. And you in love with him. Very likely he'll go off with another woman, and then you'll find out what it is to be disappointed. What is Mind to anybody? Nothing. Do they care for it in the Museum? No. Does the Head of the Egyptian Department care for it? Not he; not a bit. It's a cruel and a selfish country.'

'Oh, Mr. Fagg!' She disregarded his allusion to herself though it was sufficiently downright.

'Yes, I will be revenged. I will be revenged. I will do something—yes—something that shall tell all Australia how I have been wronged; the colony of Victoria shall ring with my story. It shall sap their loyalty; they shall grow discontented; they will import more Irishmen; there shall be separation. Yes; my friends shall demand separation in revenge for my treatment.'

It is Christian to forgive, Mr. Fagg.

'I will forgive when I have had my revenge.' No one shall say I am vindictive! Ah!—he heaved a profound sigh. 'They gave me a dinner before I came away; they drank my health; they told me of the reception I should get, and the glory that awaited me. Look at me now. Not one penny in my pocket. Not one man who believes in the Discovery. Wherefore I may truly say that it is better to be born without a brain.'

'This is your subscription book, I believe.'

She took and turned over its pages.

'Come, Mr. Fagg, you have come to the fifty-first copy of the book. Fifty-one copies ordered beforehand does not look like disbelief. May I add my name? That will make fifty-two. Twelve shillings and sixpence, I see. Oh, I shall look forward with the greatest interest to the appearance of the book, I assure you. Yet, you must not expect of a dress-maker such a knowledge of Hebrew, Mr. Fagg. You great scholars must be contented with the simple admiration of ignorant workgirls.' He was too far gone in misery to be easily soothed, but he began to wish he had not said that cruel thing about possible desertion by her lover.

'Admiration!' he echoed, with a hollow groan. 'And yesterday nothing to eat for three days; and the day before the same; and the day before that. In Australia, when I was in the shoe-making line, there was always plenty to eat. Starvation, I suppose, goes to the brain. And is the cause of suicide, too. I know a beautiful place in the London Docks, where the water's green with minerals. I shall go there.' He pushed his hands deeper into his pockets, while his bushy eyebrows frowned so horribly that two children who were playing in the walk screamed with terror and fled without stopping. 'That water poisons a man directly.'

'Come, Mr. Fagg,' said Angela, 'we allow something for the superior activity of great minds. But we must not talk of despair when there should be nothing beyond a little despondency.'

He shook his head.

'Too much reading has probably disordered your digestion, Mr. Fagg. You want rest and society, with sympathy—a woman's sympathy. Scholars, perhaps, are sometimes jealous.'

'Reading has emptied my purse,' he said. 'Sympathy won't fill it.'

'I do not know—sympathy is a wonderful medicine sometimes; it works miracles, I think. Mr. Fagg, you had better let me pay my subscription in advance—you can give me the change when you please.'

She placed a sovereign in his hand. His fingers clutched it greedily. Then his con-

science smote him—her kind words, her flattery, touched his heart.

'I can not take it,' he said. 'Mr. Goslett warned me not to take your money. Besides'—(he gasped, and pointed to the subscription list)—'fifty-one names! They've all paid their money for printing the book. I've eaten up all the money, and I shall eat up yours as well. Take the sovereign back—I can starve. When I am dead I would rather be remembered for my Discovery than for a shameful devourer of subscription money.'

She took him by the arm, and led him unresisting to the establishment.

'We must look after you, Mr. Fagg,' she said. 'Now I have got a beautiful room, where no one sits all day long except sometimes a crippled girl, and sometimes myself. In the evening the girls have it. You may bring your books there, if you like, and sit there to work when you please. And by the way'—she added this as if it were a matter of the very least consequence, hardly worth mentioning—'if you would like to join us any day at dinner—we take our simple meals at one—the girls, no doubt, will all think it a great honor to have so distinguished a scholar at table with them.'

Mr. Fagg blushed with pleasure. Why—the British Museum treated him with contumely; if nobody would subscribe to his book; if he was weary of asking and being refused—here was a haven of refuge where he could receive some of the honor due to a scholar.

'And now that you are here, Mr. Fagg,' said Angela, when she had broken bread and given thanks—you shall tell me all about your discovery. Because, you see, we are so ignorant—we girls of the working classes—that I do not exactly know what is your discovery.'

He sat down and asked for a piece of paper. With this assistance he began his exposition.

'I was drawn to my investigation,' he said, solemnly, 'by a little old book about the wisdom of the ancients—that is now five years ago, and I was then fifty-five years of age. No time to be lost, says I to myself, if anything is to be done. The more I read and the more I thought—I was in the shoe-making trade and I'm not ashamed to own it, for it's a fine business for such as are born with a head for thinking—the more I thought, I say, the more I was puzzled. For there seemed to me no way possible of reconciling what the scholars said.'

'You have not told me the subject of your research yet.'

'Antiquity,' he replied, grandly. 'All antiquity was the subject of my research. First, I read about the Egyptians and the hieroglyphics; then I got hold of a new book all about the Assyrians and the cuneiform character.'

'I see,' said Angela. 'You were attracted by the ancient inscriptions?'

'Naturally. Without inscriptions where are you? The scholars said this, and the scholars said that—they talked of reading the Egyptian language and the Assyrian and the Median and what not. That wouldn't do for me.'

The audacity of the little man excited Angela's curiosity, which had been languid.

'Pray go on,' she said.

'The scholars have the same books to go to as me, yet they don't go—they've eyes as good, but they won't use them. Now follow me, miss, and you'll be surprised. When Abraham went down into Egypt, did he understand their language, or didn't he?'

'Why, I suppose—at least, it is not said that he did not.'

'Of course he did. When Joseph went there, did he understand them? Of course he did. When Jacob and his sons came into the country, did they talk a strange speech? Not they. When Solomon married an Egyptian princess, did he understand her talk? Why of course he did. Now, do you guess what's coming next?'

'No—not at all.'

'None of the scholars could. Listen then: if they all understood each other, they must all have talked the same language—mustn't they?'

'Why, it would seem so.'

'It's a sound argument, which can't be denied. Nobody can deny it—I deny them. If they understood each other, there must have been a common language. Where did this common language spread? Over all the countries thereabout. What was the common language? Hebrew.'

'Oh,' said Angela, 'then they all talked Hebrew?'

'Every man Jack—nothing else known. What next? They wanted to write it. Now we find what seems to be one character in Egypt, and another in Syria, and another in Arabia, and another in Phoenicia, and another in Judaea. Bless you! I know all about these alphabets. What I say is—a common language, then a common language to write it with.'

(To be Continued.)

Poor persons are supplied with spectacles free of charge by a Boston society.

A home for aged tailors is talked of by the International Union of Tailors.