

Woven in the Fabric

by

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**Scenes from the lives of Martha Crossley (1775 – 1854)
and Lavena Saltonstall (1881– 1957)**

**First performances:
Square Chapel and Halifax Minster, Halifax, August 2010**

A play for three characters:

**Martha Crossley, wife of John Crossley,
founder of Dean Clough mills,
Lavena Saltonstall, suffragette and activist
from Hebden Bridge/Halifax, and
fictional 'Crystal Marriott', standing as an Independent
candidate for Halifax, of the present day.**

**(Also Virginia Mason, features editor at the time from
The Halifax Courier)**

The year: 2010

**The place: the churchyards of Square Chapel and Halifax Minster,
Halifax, West Yorkshire**

Extract from:

Scene 5: The thrill of the chase

CRYSTAL: Go on! Go on, Lavena! Get on your stand! Your waggon!

LAVENA: *[suddenly aware of herself and becoming shy again]* Oh, I could not! Not on a stage. Not to dozens of people.

MARTHA: Oh, you've harangued us loud enough - go on! You'll never have this chance again ...

CRYSTAL: Yes, enough loose-cannoning! Here's your chance. Come on, I'll help you. Here, let's get you up on here. ... Come on! Climb on! We'll do it together. Get behind me.

[LAVENA stands almost hidden behind CRYSTAL who puts her own hands behind her back while LAVENA thrusts her arms through CRYSTAL's so that she can use her own gesticulations. From this point, CRYSTAL will mime in sync. with LAVENA's speeches.]

LAVENA/ All right. How exciting. *[She giggles.]* ... Here goes, then ... If a
CRYSTAL: woman, a girl, shows any tendency to politics or ideas of her own, she is looked upon by the majority of both men and women as a person who neglects doorsteps and home matters; if a daughter shows any signs of a craving for higher things than cleaning brass fenders or bath taps, they put a stop to what they call her 'high notions' ...

MARTHA: Well done! Well said. We could not remain at the hearth!

CRYSTAL: Sssh!

MARTHA: Forgive me. Continue. *[to the audience]* Oh, aren't they wonderful?

LAVENA/ Who is going to tell these mothers that daughters were not given to
CRYSTAL: them merely to dress and domesticate? Who is going to tell them that

they have a higher duty to perform to them than merely teaching them housework? Who? Who? We hear you cry - ...

AUDIENCE: *[encouraged by MARTHA]* Women! Aye, women! Hurray!

LAVENA/ ... and us women of the *north* especially, women nurtured by factory
CRYSTAL: unionism and true labour principles, women from Lancashire and the Pennines, women with some real political clout!

MARTHA: Clout? Oh, this is more severe! I am discomforted.

LAVENA/ ... courageous women, prepared to lose their jobs, be shunned by
CRYSTAL: their families and risk all manner of violence to have the cause heard.

MARTHA: Violence? Oh, not violence, not again. This I cannot countenance.
Please don't go on.

LAVENA: ... a whole new generation of women who had grown up with 'Votes for Women' ringing in their ears, ringing in their ears ... !

[LAVENA realises she is on her own and she quietens. She too goes to comfort MARTHA.]

[to CRYSTAL] I have gone too far. Have I have offended her again?

CRYSTAL: Martha, it was different by Lavena's time: much progress for women but still, few rights and no vote! Lavena became part of a movement that was growing of its own accord: the Women's Social and Political Union swelling hour by hour into a vast powerhouse of feeling and action ...

MARTHA: But she speaks of violence: 'all *manner*' of violence, she says: disturbing the peace. Disobedience. And worse. I can no longer cheer her.