

Beautiful But Poor

By JULIA
EDWARDS.
Author of
"The Little Widow"
"Stella Stirling,"
"Prettiest of All,"
Etc., Etc.

(Continued.)

"He is a good man, Frank, and I am glad you like to visit him. He has seen much of the world, and you can learn a great deal in conversing with him. And now, daughter, dear, how have you spent your afternoon?"

"I started out to go a-shopping, papa. You know you handed me a roll of money last night for that purpose. I went on foot, for I like exercise on a sunny morning like this. Only a little way from here, in front of the drug store on the next avenue, I saw a young girl, a mere child of ten or eleven years, crying bitterly. I asked her what was the matter, and learned, through her many sobs, that she had come with only seven cents, the last money she or her mother had in the world, to get medicine for that mother, who was sick. The medicine named in the prescription cost twenty cents, and the druggist would not let her have it without the money. I took the poor thing by the hand and went in and got the medicine for her, and in the meantime found out where she lived, in an alley only four blocks, dear father, from this rich home, in the basement of one of the old tumble-down houses, which are a disgrace to the city. I don't know but I did wrong, papa, but I couldn't help it. I went home with that little girl and saw her poor mother, sick, with four children, actually starving, in an unfurnished cellar—no food, no fire—nothing but want and wretchedness to meet my view. Father, there is a fire there now, and plenty to eat. The sick woman is on a good bed, our doctor has taken her case in hand, and the children, in decent clothes, will go to school next week. But I have not been shopping. I found better use of my money."

"God bless my girl—my noble girl," said Mr. Legare, and tears came in his eyes as he spoke. "Frank, my boy, Lizzie has outstripped us both in good works, though we both have done some good; and I—well, I, too, have had an adventure, and perhaps have been the indirect cause of bettering the condition of a poor, hard-working girl—the loveliest creature, by the way, that I ever saw, at home or abroad. And talented, too, the mistress of five languages; and, Lizzie, not so old, I should judge, as you, by a year or two."

"Where did you meet this prodigy of beauty and learning, father?" asked the son.

"At W—'s book-bindery, where I took some valuable old reviews for binding. She has worked there over two years, earning and supporting herself on four dollars a week. And until some one was needed to collate and arrange my old German and French reviews, her knowledge of languages had remained undiscovered. She bears an excellent character—is modest, pure, and unassuming. I was glad to hear Mr. W— order his foreman to assign her to new and

TEARFUL,

Trembling, frightened, she knows not why. Between her sobs she tells her husband of her misery. It is not enough for the husband to comfort the wife in this condition, she needs help. In those early days when the shadow of maternity first begins to fall upon the woman she is often nervous, sleepless, without appetite, and full of vague fears.

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more pleasant duties, at ten dollars a week."

"So, dear papa, you, too, brought joy to a toil-worn heart."

"I hope so, child, I hope so. She told me she owed her education to a gifted mother. I saw her lips tremble and her eyes moisten when she spoke, and, thinking of our own loss, my children, I forebore to question her then. But I shall, by and by, for I feel strangely interested in her. So very, very beautiful; so talented, and yet in such humble circumstances. In looks, in manners, in conversation a lady who would grace any society, yet, after all, only a poor book-bindery girl."

Lunch, which had been going on all this time, was over, and Mr. Legare, mentioning that he had some letters to write, went to his library, while the brother and sister went off, arm in arm, to a favorite alcove in the adjoining drawing-room.

"Frank, what do you think of this new discovery which our dear father has been telling us of? I never new him to speak with such enthusiastic admiration of any one before."

"Neither did I, Lizzie," said Frank, gravely. "Seriously, sister, I must go and see this peerless girl—see her, too, before father goes there again, if I can. I do not want a step-mother younger than you are, dear."

"Oh, Frank! Papa would never think of that!"

"I don't know, Lizzie. He is young for his years. He has led a careful, temperate life, and is not beyond his prime either mentally or physically. Stranger things have happened. I repeat, I must go and see this girl for myself. W— is a warm friend of mine, and will help me if there's any danger."

"I don't know but you are right, Frank. Go, if you think best."

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. W— was rather surprised to receive quite an early call at his bindery from the son of his wealthy patron—the younger Legare. He had met Frank at his club, and on "the road," for both drove fast horses; but the young man had never before visited the bindery, though his father often did.

Mr. W—, however, received his visitor with great cordiality, and asked what he could do for him.

"I would like to see you in your private office a moment," said young Legare, who had, when he entered the large room, cast a keen and searching glance at all the hands—men, boys, and girls—whom his eye could reach.

"Certainly. Step this way," said Mr. W—, leading the way to a room partitioned off at the upper end of the main bindery. "Take a seat, Mr. Legare," he said, pointing to a luxurious arm-chair, cushioned and backed with morocco.

"Thank you. I will detain you but a moment," said Frank. "My father was here yesterday?"

"Yes; he left some work, which will be finished by to-morrow. He is one of my best patrons," replied W—.

"He discovered a prodigy here yesterday," said young Legare.

"A prodigy?"

"Yes, sir; at least he seems to think so, for he talked like a crazy man about her—a girl beautiful as a houri, and as learned as she is beautiful, the mistress, he said, of no less than five languages."

"Ah, yes! You allude to Hattie Butler. She is rather pretty, and certainly quite gifted as a linguist."

"What will you take to send her away where he will never see her again?"

"Mr. Legare! I hardly understand you."

"I think I spoke quite plainly. I asked you what you would take to send her away where he would never see her again. Do you understand that?"

"I think I do," said Mr. W—, flushing up. "But you must understand I never discharge a good and willing hand without a fault, when there is work to do for that hand. This young woman has worked for us over two years without committing an error."

"Is it no error to snare an old man like my father, because he happens to be rich, with a display of her beauty and learning?"

"Snare! Mr. Legare, have you been drinking, or what is the matter with you?"

"I have not been drinking, Mr. W—, and I am in very sober earnest in what I say. My father, though old, is very impressive, and perhaps you know it. He came home to lunch yesterday, and could talk of nothing but the beauty and talent of this girl."

"Why, he was not in here over ten or fifteen minutes altogether, and his conversation with her may have occupied three or four minutes of that time."

(To be Continued.)

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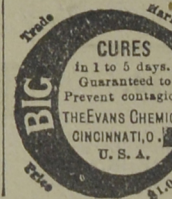
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