

Beautiful But Poor

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

(Continued.)

Little Jessie, ever neat as far as she could be in her person, now looked really pretty, for her new eight-cent calico dress, though bought at a shop, fitted her slight and childish form perfectly, and she had combed out her dark curling hair until it looked like flosses of raven silk. The very pallor of her little face made her dark, mournful eyes more beautiful.

The girl was setting the table, assisted a little now and then by Bid- dy Lanigan, who cut the bread and meat, and Miss Scrimp was superin- tending it all, when she heard a car- riage rattle up to the door, and a moment later heard the door-bell ring.

Miss Scrimp had not yet changed her dress for evening, or put on her false curls. She thought Mr. W— might be in the carriage, as he had been before when a carriage stopped with Hattie, and to be seen by him, without her curls, would never do.

So she said to Jessie:
"Run to the door, and see who is there, while I run upstairs and change my dress. If it is anybody to see me, ask 'em right into the par- lor and light the gas there, for 'twill soon be dark enough to need it, and I look my best in gas-light."

Jessie opened the door, and a glad cry broke from her lips when she saw Hattie standing there, and though two ladies and an elderly gentleman stood on the steps also, she paid no heed to them, but cried out:

"Oh, dear, good Miss Hattie, is it you? See my new dress. It is the first I have had in such a long, long time. If any one wants to see Miss Scrimp, I'm to take 'em right into the parlor and light up the gas. She has gone up stairs to fix up."

"We'll go into the parlor, dear; there are those with me who wish to see Miss Scrimp, and you, too. Run and light the gas."

Jessie ran in, and Mrs. Emory, grasping Hattie's arm, gasped out:
"You need not tell me who she is; my heart spoke the instant I saw her. It is my child—my blessed child!"

"Be calm—come to the parlor, dear madam, and let me break it to Jessie, or the poor girl will almost die in her joy. She has had a hard life here. She looks scarcely four- teen, yet she is two years older."

"That is true," said the matron of the asylum; "we have the date of her coming registered."

The three ladies and Mr. Legare entered the parlor just as the blaze of the gas in three-bracket jets came flashing out.

Jessie turned, and Hattie said, as she stood there with a wondering look in her face:

"Jessie, do you want to be very, very happy? I have brought a lady here who will love you so, so much if you will only let her."

Jessie looked at Hattie, then at Mrs. Emory, whose eyes began to fall, and, with a wild cry, sprang

half way toward the latter.

"Oh, Miss Hattie!" she cried; "tell me—isn't this the mother, the dear mother I've dreamed about so long—so long?"

"It is! it is! Jessie, my child, my love, come to my arms!" cried Mrs. Emory, tears of joy rushing in a flood from her eyes.

In a second mother and daughter sobbed in each other's arms.

Mr. Legare wept, too, and even the matron of the asylum, hardened to many a scene like this, stood with her handkerchief to her eyes.

Hattie alone, hearing a shuffling and well-known step coming down the stairs, kept her composure, for she knew she would need it all.

"Sakes alive! What's goin' on here? Who is that that's a-cryin' over my bound-girl?" cried Miss Scrimp, addressing Hattie, the only one who confronted her.

Hush, woman! This scene is too sacred for you to intrude upon," said Hattie, sternly. "There a mother, a loving mother, weeps in joy over her long lost child, restored at last by the blessing of God to her bosom."

"Her child? Why, it's Jess—my bound-girl!" sneered Miss Scrimp.

"Woman, she is your bound—girl no longer," said the matron of the asylum. "You deceived us when once before we came here to find her, and falsely said she had run away from you. Now, we, who have the right, annul the indentures, and restore her to her mother."

"It sha'n't be!" screamed Miss Scrimp. "She's mine by law, and I'll have her, if I have to call in all the police in the ward."

"One word more, one single threat, and I will call the police to arrest you, and never pause in my prosecution until you rest inside a prison's bars, there to stay for years, as you deserve."

Miss Scrimp shivered from head to foot when she heard those words, for she had for an instant forgotten that she was wholly in the power of Miss Butler.

"Oh, oh!" she sobbed, "this is the way my help is to be taken from me after I've clothed and fed her for years."

"Starved and abused her, you mean—say not fed and clothed. She has fed on scraps, slept on rags, and if I must be a witness you will suffer now for what you've done to her!" cried Hattie, too angry to care to shield the wretched spinster in the least.

"Oh, hush! Don't tell her that!" gasped Miss Scrimp, for, as Mrs. Emory turned toward her, she recog- nized the lady she had sent away with a falsehood when that lady came asking for Jessie Albemarle.

"Miss Butler, you dear, blessed angel, will you come home with Jessie and me? Come as her sister and my child!" cried Mrs. Emory, taking no more notice of Miss Scrimp than she would have done of a plaster cast of some poor politician.

"I cannot go with you to-night, Mrs. Emory, but to-morrow—I will go to see you and your dear little daughter. To-night you want her all to yourself, and I have some writ- ing which I must do."

"Then, dear Miss Hattie, I will wait till to-morrow to say what I cannot say now to you, for my heart is too full. Come, Jessie—come, brother—let us go. The matron will go with us; we will leave her at the asylum as we go."

Jessie ran and kissed Hattie over and over, and then turned and fixed a bitter look of hatred on Miss Scrimp.

"You've whipped me for the last time, you toothless old brute; you can wait on the table now yourself."

"Come, Jessie; it is unworthy of you to notice her now. Come, my darling."

And Mrs. Emory took her child by the hand, and, followed by Mr. Le- gare and the matron, went out to the carriage—Jessie in just the clothes she had on when they met, without bonnet or shawl.

And Miss Scrimp, speechless with impotent anger, helpless in her rage, stood and saw them go, and saw Hattie kiss Jessie and her mother in the carriage, and then saw it drive off, and many of the boarders, just coming, saw it, too, but not yet did they understand it all.

"I s'pose I'm to thank you for all this," said Miss Scrimp, her cross- eyes fairly green as she snapped her words short off, speaking to Hattie.

"If you thank me for anything thank me for the mercy which yet keeps you out of prison," said Hat- tie, quietly.

"I'd like to kill you!" hissed the spinster.

"No doubt you would if you dared. But there is an eye on you which protects me. So beware."

Miss Scrimp shivered from head to foot, and looked all around her as if she feared the hand of arrest to be laid upon her.

Yet Hattie had alluded to that "All-seeing eye," which is never closed.

(To be Continued.)



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