

Beautiful But Poor

By JULIA
EDWARDS.

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

(Continued.)

To a scholar and an artist the library would seem a fairy region where taste and fancy, roaming hand in hand, could live forever. And Mr. Legare had tastes which fed on the artistic beauty of his paintings, and enjoyed the worth of his valuable books. He had tried to rear his children to the same taste, to similar noble and improving studies. But he had also, with his almost unlimited wealth, given them access to all fashionable pleasures, and the consequence was that both son and daughter found more pleasure in the outside world than in the solid realities of their palace-like home. The opera and its circle of fashion, theatrical spectacles, not the grand old plays of Shakespeare, balls, routes and club pastimes suited them far better than to gaze on those noble works of art, or pore over the grand array of books which filled the hundreds of shelves in the best private library in the great city.

Mr. Legare was looking over his last acquisition, the rare old reviews, beautifully bound, which had just been sent in from Mr. W—'s book-binding. The work was, as usual with that establishment, elegantly done; but Mr. Legare was intently looking over the inside of the works, while Frank and Lizzie were looking over a new collection of fine English prints, which had just been received from London, and were now spread out on the mosaic table-center.

Suddenly an exclamation of surprise and pleasure broke from the old gentleman's lips.

"Wonderful! It is a gem! and it illustrates the subject perfectly!" he cried.

"What is it that pleases you so, papa?" asked the daughter.

"A pencil sketch on the blank leaf of this old review. It is an illustrated idea of a dream of Martin Luther—angels poring over the revealed word of God. It is perfection, and entirely fresh. It must be the work of that wonderful girl down at W—'s bindery, for she alone has had the care of this work since it left my hands, and the drawing was not there when I took the pages to the bindery. It must be the work of that wonderfully gifted girl. I'll find out, and if it is, she must and shall have a chance to study art. This sketch would do credit to a Dore, or any other artist. Come and look at it, Frank."

"Excuse me, father. I am looking over your new portfolio, and, moreover, I am no believer in the wonderful talent of shop-girls. It is very easy, when so many works are coming and going, to make copies of sketches. That may be a copy from Dore, for all you know."

"Even if copied, none but an artistic hand could do it so well," said the old gentleman, his eyes still lingering over the sketch.

At that moment a tall lady, of middle age, noble in appearance, and dressed richly, but plainly, and in

excellent taste, entered the room.

Both the young people arose with a glad cry:

"Aunt Louisa, when did you come? Oh, how glad we are to see you!"

And the old gentleman left his book and its new-found illustration, to greet the visitor, who, it seemed, was a widowed sister of his late wife, who, living in another city, visited him occasionally, and ever found a welcome, a warm and heartfelt welcome, from himself and his children.

The children, or rather young people—they were rather too old to be called children—loved their Aunt Louisa very much, for she was all tenderness to them, and though often sad, as if a secret sorrow lay heavily on her heart, she was ever ready to join them in any festive moment, any pleasure-giving excursion, and seemed to strive to be doubly cheerful to add to their happiness on such occasions.

"I have but just arrived," she said, "and even left my trunk at the depot in my haste to see the dear ones here."

"I will send George for it right away, dear aunt—give me the check," cried Frank.

"And then come here and look at the old works, Louisa, and a wonderful little pencil sketch I have just discovered," said the old gentleman.

The lady handed her nephew the check for her baggage, and while he went out to send the coachman after it, she went to the table where Mr. Legare had been seated, examining the newly-bound works.

"What artist drew that?" she exclaimed, the moment her eyes fell on the sketch which had so attracted his attention.

"I am not sure yet," he answered. "But I believe it to be the production of a poor girl, whom I found sewing in a bindery for four dollars a week, and yet a complete mistress of five different languages—perhaps more. I see her initials, 'H. B.' in one corner of the sketch."

"How old is this wonderful girl?" asked the lady, with an air of sudden interest.

"She may be twenty or even one or two years older. Not under eighteen, at any rate," replied the old gentleman.

"Too old!" sighed the lady to herself, in a sad whisper.

What she meant we cannot know. Her brother-in-law did not hear her, or only the sigh, if he did, and he continued:

"I got the girl promoted as a reader and collator, and now they give her ten dollars a week for work on just such jobs as this—arranging and preparing choice old works like this. W— had quite a lot on hand which he could do nothing with until the talent and education of this girl came into notice almost by accident. She is a wonder, Louisa—you are children—I do wish you would adopt that girl. She is lovely as a picture."

Tears came into the hazel eyes of the lady as she said:

"I fear my heart would not go out to a stranger!"

"You could not help liking this girl. She is so modest and unobtrusive. Her employer, and the foreman under whom she has worked for over two years, speak in the highest terms of her. She makes no associates, and for a wonder no enemies, though she shuns all acquaintance."

"We shall have to go and see this wonderful girl, Aunt Louisa," said Lizzie, rather pettishly. "Papa is quite carried away with her. He could talk of nothing else when he came home to luncheon on the day he discovered her."

"Perhaps we will go to see her some day!" said her Aunt Louisa, in a kindly tone. "It is not often we find refinement and the proof of education among those who toil for their daily bread. No matter how gifted the toiler may be by nature, he or she has but little time to improve the gifts of nature."

"That is only too true!" said Mr. Legare. "And so much the more it becomes the duty of us, who have been blessed with wealth, to use that wealth in helping these rough ones to see the light. Though I shall leave my children enough for all proper needs and uses—enough for them to hold their station in life and enjoy it—I intend to leave a good bequest for the purpose of aiding the poor who desire an education in literature and art. There are so many in this world who long to rise and cannot, because they are weighed down by poverty's cruel load."

"You are right. A nobler use for surplus wealth could not be found," said the lady, warmly. "I am glad to hear you say this. When I see a man pass away, leaving millions on millions, only to be increased by souls as sordid as his own, I think that he who forgets God's poor on earth will himself be unknown in heaven. Good words go a great ways, but good works go ever so much farther."

(To be Continued.)

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