

Beautiful But Poor

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

(Continued.)

The storm was over, would that all such domestic storms could pass as fleetly, and as brightly. Frank did not go to his club. He sat down by the side of his sister, and long, earnestly and quietly they talked about this strangely beautiful, this mysterious girl, and tried to plan out some way to find out, without her knowing it, who she was, where she came from, and all about her.

CHAPTER X.

Little Jessie Albemarle always had the door-bell to answer, even if she was making beds in the top story of the house, when she heard it, for Miss Scrimp considered it beneath her dignity to go to the door when she was able to keep a cook and a house-servant. Moreover, she was seldom dressed for appearance at the door except when ready to go to the market or the time arrived when she could watch her hungry boarders from the accustomed seat at the head of the long table in her dining-room.

And Jessie heard a sharp, sudden ring thrice repeated, only a week later than when she had answered the postman's ring before for Hattie Butler's California letter, and she knew by the peculiar ring who was there. She bounded down stairs two or three steps at a jump, and passed Miss Scrimp on the landing at the head of the first stairs where she usually posted herself to listen when any one came to the door.

The postman handed her a letter, and Jessie, at a glance, saw that it was for Miss Hattie Butler—was postmarked in California and sealed with red wax with that strange device—two hearts pierced with an arrow.

Scarcely was the door shut when Miss Scrimp screamed out, in her usual shrill tone:

"You, Jess! who is that letter for?"

"Miss Hattie Butler, ma'am," said Jess, meekly. "Shan't I keep it and give it to her when she comes?"

"No, bring it here this minute!"

Jess went slowly up stairs, and reluctantly handed the letter over to her mistress. She had given her letters before, which she knew never reached those to whom they were directed. And the poor little servant loved Hattie Butler, and could not bear that she should be wronged.

Miss Scrimp looked at her letter. "It's from California again," she muttered. "There's somethin' strange in so many letters comin' to that gal from California." Then she turned to Jessie, and fixing, if she could fix, those cross-eyes on her, she said, in a whisper, a harsh, fierce whisper: "If you just breathe one whisper to a living soul about this letter a-comin' here, I'll pull the very ears off your frowsy head. I'm afeared some one is a-tryin' to de-lude that sweet young cretur away."

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and I'm not a-goin' to sit still and see it. No, it's my Christian duty to take care of her, and I'm goin' to do it. I'll see who is a-writin' to her, and what he says."

"Why, sure, ma'am, you wouldn't keep Miss Hattie's own letter from her?" asked Jessie, with unusual boldness.

"Yes, for her own good, I would. And now, mind you, don't speak it to a living soul. If you do, I'll whip you till you can't squeal!"

Miss Scrimp was one who never forgot such a promise, as poor Jessie knew to her sorrow. So she went back up stairs to her work, and Miss Scrimp darted into her own room with that letter.

She sat down near the dingy window, and looked at it, back and front, and examined it without breaking the seal.

But this could not be done. The seal must be broken, or the end of the envelope cut. Miss Scrimp hesitated before acting on either of these ideas. She had heard of a penalty attached to the crime of opening another person's letter.

She didn't care a pin for the crime, but she did care for the penalty. She was like the penitent thief. He was sorry to be caught stealing.

"I must know what is in this letter!" she muttered. "I can't understand that girl. And she will never tell me anything. There's a mystery about her, and for the life of me I can't get at the bottom of it. But I will—I will, if I die for it. Jess will never dare tell her about this letter. I'd skin her alive if she did. I'll open it, and know who she has got in California, and what he wants."

With a desperate twitch she ran her dirty thumbnail under the crease of the envelope, near the end of the letter, tore it open, and took out a half sheet of note-paper.

It had neither date nor place of dating at its head. The letter was composed of but two lines. She read them over aloud:

"My darling, every pledge is kept. Wealth is gained. Let me come to you!"

There was no signature—not a clew. The handwriting was elegant, but even the sex of the writer could not be determined by that.

If ever a woman was madly disappointed, that woman was Miss Scrimp.

Literally she had run all her risk for nothing. And her curiosity now was excited a thousand fold. What pledges had been kept by the one who dare call Hattie Butler darling? Wealth had been gained, but whose was it? That the writer wanted to come to Hattie was certain. But who was the writer? Miss Scrimp would have given her false hair and teeth to know. Yes, or she would have fed her boarders on turkey for a week if she could have gotten old and tough ones at half price.

If she had only known who to write to, or even to telegraph to, an answer would have gone back, signed: "Come along soon as you can—Hattie Butler."

But Hattie would not have known it. Miss Scrimp, mean as she was, would have spent five dollars for telegraphing in a moment if she could by that have got to the bottom of the mystery which so terribly worried her.

Little did she dream, while in this turmoil of disappointment, that a pair of gleeful eyes were fairly dancing over her too evident annoyance; for Jessie Albemarle, after going noisily upstairs, as if to her work, had crept down as slyly as a mouse, and peeping through the key-hole had been a witness to the opening of the letter.

And when she saw Miss Scrimp put the letter under a book on a shelf near her bed, the brave little friend of Hattie Butler determined that, even though the seal was broken, the letter should reach its proper owner.

"She'll go down to cut their slices of bread and meat for supper, and then I'll get it," said Jessie to herself. "She will never let me cut the bread or meat for fear I'll cut too thick, or maybe eat a bite or two while I'm cutting 'em. But Miss Hattie is so good to me that I will help her, and she shall have her letter whether I get whipped for it or not."

And the little heroine went back to her work as silently as she had left it, with her little plan fully arranged.

And Miss Scrimp, having hidden the letter, was pondering in perplexity over its meaning. She had been often exercised over the secrets of her boarders, but never so badly as now.

(To be Continued.)

To Represent Manitoba University.
Rev. Canon Matheson has been appointed to represent Manitoba University at the 1,000th anniversary celebration in London, Eng., of King Alfred the Great's death, being held by the universities of Great Britain in July next.

INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY

Tender for Extension to Wharf and Freight Sheds at Pictou, N. S.

Sealed Tenders addressed to the undersigned, and marked on the outside "Tender for Wharf and Freight Shed, Pictou," will be received until TUESDAY, the 20th day of August, 1901, for the construction of a Crooked Pile Wharf at Pictou, N. S.

Plans and Specifications may be seen on and after the 5th day of August next at the Station Master's Office at Pictou, N. S., and at the Chief Engineer's Office, Moncton, N. B., where forms of tender may be obtained. All the conditions of the Specification must be complied with.

D. POTTINGER, General Manager.
Railway Office, Moncton, N. B., July 29th, 1901.—Aug. 2 d131



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