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# IN SPITE OF HIS BIRTH.

"Well, marm, the gangway is open, and we may as well get comfortable seats while we can. Where's your trunk?" and he glanced about him, it having only just occurred to him that she might have some baggage.

"I have no trunk, Mr. Lawson," she answered. "Ned and I have all the clothing we shall need for the present in this extension," and she pointed to a new and capacious one that stood near them.

"Well, well, marm, there'll be precious few women at the fashionable House with as little luggage as that," he responded with a twinkle in his eye as he picked up the valise and led the way, on board the boat.

"The day was fine and the sail down the harbor was delightful, Mr. Lawson pointing out the various objects of interest, and relating the historical events associated with some of them.

"Ned had never been on the ocean before, and the experience was an exciting one to him, while he exhibited all a boy's enthusiasm over what he saw—the shipping especially interesting him.

Upon their arrival at Nantasket, Mr. Lawson took a carriage for the hotel, where both Ned and his mother were soon installed in their respective positions.

Mrs. Wallingford was assigned a room looking out upon the sea, while Ned had a smaller one connecting with his mother's apartment.

"The linen room" was on the same floor, was both spacious and pleasant, with shelves and drawers on three sides, while a table, sewing machine, and a comfortable rocker occupied the fourth.

"Now, there ain't any need of your killing yourself," Mr. Lawson remarked, when he had conducted Miriam thither. "You're to have the whole charge of the sheets, pillow-cases, towels, and table linen; they're to be kept in order and handed out to the dining-room servants and thambermaids as they are needed. They must be looked over and mended as they come from the laundry, and there'll be some new articles to be mended; but I guess you'll have plenty of time for some exercise out of doors and sea bathing, both of which I advise you to take, if you want to get strong and well."

"Thank you, Mr. Lawson," Mrs. Wallingford gratefully responded, for she saw that the old gentleman was interested in her welfare, and wanted to be kind to her. "I will do everything that I can to improve my health, for I know I cannot discharge my duties faithfully unless I am well."

"That's the talk, but if, during a rush, the work gets ahead of you, just let me know, and you shall have help."

She thanked him again for his consideration, and then he left her to begin her work.

Already she felt better than for a long time. The salt air was both refreshing and invigorating, and she seemed to be breathing in strength with every inspiration, while hope and courage were revived over the prospect of a permanent home for the summer and remunerative employment to enable her to lay by a little for the future, when the season should be at an end.

Ned was to be the office runner, and his bright face, alert manner, and manly, courteous bearing at once won him the goodwill of every one whom he served.

He dropped easily into his line of duty, and was so cheerful and good-natured in performing it that he received many a "tip" from appreciative guests in the house.

All this he gave directly into the hands of his mother, who carefully invested them in one of the Boston banks as a nest-egg for him in the future.

He began at once to grow brown and hearty, his eyes were bright with health, his step elastic, and he was as happy as the day was long, while, when he began to discover that his mother's thin cheeks were filling out and a dainty color to tinge them, his delight knew no bounds.

"Marmee," he said to her one day, while his eyes dwelt fondly on her face, "you are getting as pretty as—a young girl; do you know it?"

"Eie, Ned, you mustn't begin to practice flattery upon your mother," Mrs. Wallingford responded, an amused smile hovering about her lips.

"It isn't flattery, it's solid truth; you're a hundred times prettier than some of the fine ladies who are here," he stoutly affirmed, but she laughed out merrily, and told him to run away, for she was very busy.

But surprises and pleasures seemed to follow thickly upon each other. One day, as Ned was hurrying along a hall, intent upon some duty, he nearly ran over a bright little fairy, dressed all in blue and white, with a wreath of golden hair streaming over her plump shoulders, dainty bronze boots on her little feet, and knots of gleaming blue ribbon at the top of her sleeves.

"I beg pardon, miss," Ned said, with gallant politeness, as he brought himself up short, and doffed his cap; then, as a sharp bark and the tinkling of silver bells fell upon his ears, a look of blank astonishment, followed by one of unfeigned delight, overspread his face as he recognized in the bewitching vision and her canine attendant Miss Gertrude Langmaid and her dog Budge.

"Oh!" exclaimed the little maiden, a smile of pleasure wreathing her red lips as she in turn recognized Ned. "You are Ned Wallingford, and the boy who found Budge for me?"

"Yes," Ned responded, flushing with joy because she remembered him; "but how do you know me?"

"I never forget anybody," asserted

the pretty maid, with a confident toss of her bright head.

"I saw you out at that drinking fountain on Beacon street—don't you know?"—and you told me that Budge was a full-blooded pug."

"Yes; but I didn't suppose you'd ever think of it again," said Ned, modestly.

"Didn't you? well, Budge, and I have a pretty good memory—haven't we, doggie?" responded Miss Gertrude as she fondly petted the silky head of her pet, "and we are ever so much obliged to you for giving us back to each other. Do you know," she added confidentially, "I nearly cried my eyes out when I thought he was lost forever."

Ned looked as if he thought it would be a great pity to spoil such lovely eyes, but he simply said: "I'm sure you are very welcome to all that I did, and I am very glad that I happened to run across him."

"Papa thought you were very independent, though, not to take any reward," the child gravely remarked, as she studied Ned's frank, handsome face.

He flushed again.

"I couldn't," he said, "after he had been so kind, and—and you had given me that beautiful rose."

"What rose?" Gertrude inquired, wondering, then as she suddenly remembered, she added, indifferently, "Oh, that was nothing. But are you stopping here at this house?" she inquired, with some curiosity.

"Yes, I am messenger boy for the clerk."

"Oh! Do you like it?"

"Yes, indeed; I think it is great fun, and I do so love the sea," and Ned glanced out of an open window where he could see the bright, sunlit waves as they came rolling in upon the rocks on the beach.

"But don't you get very tired?" Gertrude asked.

"Well, sometimes, but I get rested after a swim and a good night's sleep."

"Oh, can you swim?"

"Of course I can; can't you?"

"No; but papa said he would try to teach me this summer," Gertrude replied, with a little envious sigh over Ned's accomplishment, then after looking him gravely over for a moment, she remarked, "I think it is rather queer that you should happen to be here. We always come here for a month or two every summer. I think it is the nicest place I know of. Do you like to sail on the water?"

"Don't I?" Ned returned enthusiastically, "though I don't have a chance very often, I'm so busy."

"Papa has a yacht, and we go out very often; I will ask him to take you with us in a hurry now, and I'll see you again about it," the child returned, as it suddenly occurred to her that she was keeping him a good while.

"Good by," she added; "say good-by to him, Budge, for he has been a good friend to you."

Budge responded to this command by a short, friendly bark, and by trying to wag his tightly curled tail. Ned lifted his cap again as the blue and white fairy went skipping down the hall, and then went about his business with a sparkle of joy in his eyes and a bright smile on his lips.

Gertrude Langmaid was, in his estimation the prettiest and sweetest girl he had ever seen.

He knew that she was the petted daughter of a wealthy gentleman, while he was the son of a poor widow, and had to work for his living; but she was just as kind and friendly to him as if he had been the son of a millionaire, and he almost worshipped her for her sweet graciousness.

Later in the day Mrs. Langmaid came into the office and shook hands cordially with him, while after that he lost no opportunity to give Ned an errand, and always "tipped" him liberally in return for his services.

Ned saw Gertrude every day after that first interview, and they became the best of friends. She never varied her kind and gracious manner, though Ned sometimes wondered if she would treat him the same in the presence of her own high-toned companions. At last she had an opportunity to prove herself the noble-hearted little lady that she was. Her eleventh birthday came around soon after her arrival at the hotel, and her father and mother arranged for a little reception and lawn party in honor of the event, with refreshments to be served in a tent which was erected in the spacious grounds for the occasion.

Ned was rather surprised and very much gratified to receive a printed invitation to the party, a mark of little Miss Langmaid's friendship and esteem which made his cheeks glow and his eyes sparkle with pleasure.

He showed it to the clerk, and was even more delighted when he told him that he should have the whole afternoon of the specified day to himself.

So at three o'clock on the tenth a merry company of boys and girls, about Gertrude's age, assembled on the lawn and piazza of the hotel, and entered most heartily into the various sports provided for them.

Ned enjoyed everything as thoroughly as any one, and soon made himself a favorite by his good-natured and obliging manner, and as his mother had taken pains to have him nicely dressed for the occasion, every body, save those boarding at the hotel, supposed him to be the son of some guest in the house.

But all the amusement came near being spoiled about tea-time, when Gertrude and her mother, with two or three others, tried to arrange the order of marching into the tent for supper.

"There are ten boys and ten girls. I think we should go in cou-

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ples," remarked a pert little miss, who was a small bundle of fashion and furbelows, and who liked to ape her elders in society matters.

"Well," said Mrs. Langmaid, smiling with amusement, "I see no objection to that, and you shall choose your own partners. Who will you go with, Katharine?"

"I'm sure I'm not going with that common errand-boy," the child returned, with another toss of her head and a disdainful glance toward the group on the lawn, where Ned was doing his best to make the others have a good time.

"What errand-boy?" chimed in a chorus of voices, for several others had approached, and were listening to arrangements while they bent surprised glances upon Katharine Montague, who was a guest in the hotel, and who had secretly resented Ned's being invited to the party.

"That Ned Wallingford," was the contemptuous reply; "he's—the only errand boy here in the hotel."

"Well," exclaimed Gertrude, just here, her fair face crimsoning and her eyes flashing with indignation, "what if he is? he is just one of the nicest boys I ever knew, and you'll spoil everything, Kate Montague, if you do or say anything unkind to him," and tears rushed into the little maiden's eyes as she concluded this spirited defence of her friend.

"Yes," said Mrs. Langmaid, gravely, "Ned is a remarkably nice boy, and I should be very sorry to have his feelings hurt in any way simply because he is not the son of rich parents and has to work. I hope you will all be very careful."

"Mamma, I will choose Ned for my partner," Gertrude here spiritedly announced; "I shall be proud to have him to go with me, for he is always so gentlemanly."

This independent championship quenched all further ill-attended remarks, for these little people were all familiar enough with the etiquette of polite society to know that whoever was chosen by the hostess as an escort had the post of honor, and it would not do to give offence by slighting him in any way.

Consequently Ned, who happily was in blissful ignorance of this little tiff regarding his position and social standing, was made very happy when Gertrude, with shy sweet graciousness, asked him if "he would be her partner, and take her in to supper."

He led the procession with her as proudly and with as much self-possession as if he had been accustomed all his life to such gallantries, while Gertrude confidentially told her mother afterward that "there wasn't a boy at the table who was as handsome, gentlemanly, and attentive as Ned Wallingford."

CHAPTER VIII.

But Miriam Wallingford had overheard the spirited discussion regarding the social standing and real worth of her boy, if Ned had not.

She had been sitting on the upper piazza, just where she could overlook the sports of the young people as she quietly worked at her mending and had thus been an unintentional listener to the debate.

Her fair face had flushed hotly as the pert little miss had spoken so slightly of the "common errand boy," and she bent eagerly forward to listen for the reply from Gertrude and her mother.

A sweet smile curved her delicate lips, when the true-hearted little maiden so nobly espoused the cause of her humble friend, and her glance rested gratefully upon Mrs. Langmaid, as she gently but firmly objected to having his feelings hurt in any way.

She had never met the lady, neither had she yet seen Mr. Langmaid, but Gertrude she knew very well, for Ned frequently brought her to her rooms, and she and the attractive young girl had become firm friends.

Miriam was thankful that her duties did not bring her much in contact with the guests of the house; she rarely saw any of them except as she met them by chance, in passing through the halls about her duties, and it was a subject of wonder, among many of them, who the beautiful woman could be with that slight, graceful figure, and a face of such delicate fairness and refinement.

Her work was of such a nature that she could always be daintily dressed, and though her costumes

were very simple—usually of white or some pretty cambric dotted with a tiny sprig of black, she appeared like some cultured and high-bred lady, which indeed she really was.

But a cloud, aside from her poverty, overshadowed her life—a cloud pressed so heavily upon her heart and spirit that she instinctively shrank from all society.

Mr. Lawson was the only one with whom she held anything like friendly intercourse. He was frequently at the hotel, and always sought her to inquire, in a most kind and paternal way, "how she and Ned were getting along."

He always seemed strangely pleased, too, with the improvement in her health and appearance, while it was plain to be seen that he was becoming exceedingly fond of Ned.

In her gratitude for the great kindness he had shown, in providing such a congenial home and employment for her and her boy, Miriam was very amiable and pleasant to him—except when he attempted to question her regarding her past, as he did upon one or two occasions; then she would suddenly withdraw within her shell, so to speak, assuming a proud though quiet reserve, which effectually baffled the old gentleman's curiosity.

But to-day as she sat upon the piazza and realized the kindness and nobility of Mrs. Langmaid, she was instinctively drawn toward her and wished that she might know her better.

Then she smiled with amusement when she saw Ned with Gertrude on his arm, marching proudly into the tent, where he took his place at the head of the table beside his staunch little friend, without a thought, apparently, regarding the social difference in their positions.

She was so glad that he had not been near enough to hear the coarse remarks of that pert child, Katharine Montague, and thus could enjoy with a pang this, his first party and experience in social life.

"Oh, if I can but have my health and employment, so that I can give him the education I wish, I know he will rise in the world and eventually become the equal, if not the superior, of any of those potted children of fortune," she mused, as she continued to watch them during the banquet. "Ned is naturally smart," she continued, "I believe he will develop talent as he grows older, and I am sure he will become a man to be proud of in spite of—"

Her lips suddenly closed and thus shut back into her sad heart the thought to which she had so nearly given expression.

A little later she arose, and taking in her arms the pile of linen—upon which she had been at work—she went within the house to put it away.

As she was passing along the spacious hall leading to the linen-room, she saw a gentleman approaching her from the opposite direction.

She merely glanced at him, and would have passed on without a second look, had not a half-smothered exclamation of astonishment from him caused her to lift her eyes again to his face, when she suddenly became rooted to the spot where she stood.

Her limbs refused to move; every atom of color fled from her face; her heart beat like a sledge-hammer in her bosom; the roaring of a great waterfall was in her ears.

The gentleman himself was scarcely less astonished and overcome.

For a moment he was rendered speechless, and appeared to be smitten with a terrible sense of guilt and consternation.

Then throwing out one hand, with a gesture indicating keenest pain, he questioned in a husky, hardly audible tone:

"Are you Miriam Wallingford?"

"You know that I am," she breathed, and then, her suddenly-smitten heart, unable to bear this cruel probing of an old wound, she sank, with a moan, in a heap upon the floor, scattering her pile of snowy linen all about her.

The man sprang forward to save her the fall, but only in season to receive her head upon his arm, thus preventing it from striking against the sharp casing of a door, with a force that would have bruised it terribly.

"Poor girl!" he muttered, as he saw that she had fainted. "I do not wonder that she was overcome; this meeting must have shocked her as much as it has me."

He gently lifted her from the floor,

borne her into a small reception room near by and laid her upon a sofa there.

Then returning to the hall he gathered up the scattered linen and carried this also within the room, shutting the door after him to prevent any one from coming in.

He found the stricken woman beginning to revive, and bringing her a glass of water, he made her drink some of it, and was relieved to see that she was rapidly recovering her strength and consciousness.

"You are better?" he remarked, in a kindly tone.

"Yes, thank you," Miriam returned, and raised herself to a sitting posture, but with her great pain-dilated eyes fixed, with a look of horror, upon her companion.

"Do not regard me so accusingly, if beg," he remarked, with visible agitation, "I know that I was guilty of a great wrong toward you years ago; but ah! I have repented of it in sackcloth and ashes, over and over again."

"Your repentance came rather late," Miriam Wallingford returned, with exceeding bitterness, while her face was ghastly in its pallor, too late to prevent a terrible and lasting stigma from resting upon me and my boy."

"Ah! then Ned is your son?"

"Yes."

"Why do you call him by the name of Wallingford?"

"Can you ask?—why should I call him anything else?" was the almost passionate inquiry.

But—

"Do you imagine, for one moment, that I would allow my pure and noble boy to bear the name of the coward who deceived me—who wronged me in the most cruel manner that a woman can be wronged?" the pale woman cried, springing to her feet and confronting her companion with blazing eyes, a spot of vivid red burning on each cheek while she was so brilliantly beautiful in her indignant excitement that her companion marveled.

"But, pray let me explain," the man began appealingly, when she interrupted him again.

"Explain!" she repeated, with stinging scorn, but in a tone of agony which smote the listener like a lash, "How can you explain? What can you explain? Do you suppose that my explanation can undo the wrong of the past?"

"No; it cannot 'undo it' perhaps; but it may serve to mitigate it in a measure, if you will but listen to me," he replied, with gentle gravity.

"Oh! you do not know what you are talking about," the stricken woman cried sharply and with a dry hard sob; "nothing can ever mitigate my condition and no one knows it better than you who helped to bring me where I am. Can anything give me back my care-free youth, my innocence and happiness? Can anything make me the guileless loved and honored girl I was when I first knew you?—restore my home, my parents, both of whom died of broken hearts? Can anything wipe out the torture of the last thirteen long years—the struggle with poverty, care and disease? Can anything give to my boy an honorable birthright and make him what a fond and loving mother would wish him to be? Ah! William Cunningham, you, perhaps, did not think when you aided and abetted such a fraud years ago that your sin would rise up to confront you at this late day of your life—"

"For heaven's sake stop!" cried the man with white lips, his voice hoarse with suppressed feeling. "Every word you utter is like a dagger in my heart. And why do you address me by the name of Cunningham?"

"Was not that the name by which your friend introduced you to me?"

"Sure enough he did!" he acknowledged as if but just then recalling the fact. "But did he never tell you that it was not my surname?"

"No."

"My name is William Cunningham Langmaid."

Mrs. Wallingford started and bent a searching look upon him.

"And you are—Gertrude's father?" she asked.

"Yes."

"The father of that sweet beautiful child!" the woman continued thoughtfully. "Suppose she should grow to womanhood only to be doomed to such a fate as mine."

(To be continued.)

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