

Blossy's Birthday Gift.

From New York Weekly.

CHAPTER I

"Hush, wife," said the merchant, soothingly; "don't blight the child's best instincts as they are cropping up. Let her alone."

The indignant lady went rushing from the room, and at the same instant a servant appeared in an opposite direction.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but there's a lad out here who will insist on seeing you. I've done my best, but he declares it's important, and won't go."

"Show him in," commanded the merchant.

And in a breath a little boy entered, his well worn hat in his hand.

"I've come sir," he began at once, his brown eyes clear and fearless, and extending a little parcel to the merchant as he spoke, "to return this, and to beg you not to think had of me. The little girl there, his fine eyes lighting as they rested on Blossom, still perching on her father's knee, 'threw it down to me this morning, and told me to sell it and buy something for my sick mother. I didn't think about it, and ran off home, but my mother soon made me see how wrong it was to take it, and I've brought it back, and I hope you won't think bad of me, sir!"

"You sha'n't!" she cried vehemently, pushing it back into the lad's hand. "You sha'n't give it back—papa says he doesn't care, and I want you to keep it."

"Wait, Blossy," interposed her father. "You shall keep your pretty necklace, and we'll give your little friend something more available. Here, give him this."

He drew out his purse, and took from it a bank bill, which Blossy pounced upon eagerly, and put in the boy's hand. His fine sensitive lips quivered, and a mist dimmed his clear eyes.

"I thank you, sir," he said; "it will be a fortune to my poor mother. But, he added, hesitatingly, "I'm not a beggar—only I couldn't see her and baby suffer so. If you would let me work—"

"What could you do?" he asked, "I'm a handy boy, sir, if I do say it myself."

The Broadway millionaire's keen gray eyes softened.

"So you would like to work for it, would you?" He said. "Very well; come to my place of business to-morrow morning, and we'll see. Here's my card; can you find the place, do you think?"

"Oh, yes, there's not many places in New York that I can't find."

"Very well, come at ten—ten o'clock, sharp. I like boys to be punctual."

"All right, sir—and a thousand thanks to you and the little girl, too."

Blossy pushed forward and put out her dimpled hand.

"Good-by, little boy," she said; "be sure and get your mother plenty o' supper."

Twenty years after that wintery evening a great financial failure shook the commercial world, and some of the best New York firms toppled and went over. With the rest was the great Broadway store, owned by Blossy's father. He failed utterly. The store, the grand Fifth avenue mansion, the plate, and jewels, and horses and carriages, all went, and Blossy and father retired from the gay world as poor as the poorest laborer that walked the streets. Her mother had died a year or two previous, and Blossy alone was left to comfort and support her invalid father. For some time his health had been failing, and this sudden loss of all laid him prostrate, an old man whose mind and body were alike enfeebled.

A rare and radiant maiden was our little Blossy—the sweet bird had bloomed into a peerless flower. Bravely enough she met her grave responsibilities, uttering no word of complaint, betraying no sign of weakness or despair.

Her first step was to dispose of her jewels and whatever valuables she possessed, in order to raise funds sufficient to take her father to the sea-side. She let them all go—all her pretty, girlish ornaments—and the old coral necklace, with which a diamond clasp, was among them.

She went down to the sea-side with her poor father, but the salt wind did not invigorate him; he sank perceptibly day by day, and one sultry summer night found him dying.

Blossy sat by his bed-side in the little cottage she had rented, all her golden hair put back, her white, worn face full of an unutterable sorrow. Life looked very dreary and desolate to the friendless girl.

"It will soon be over, Blossy," panted the old merchant, "and I should be willing enough to go, but for you. Who will comfort you and take care of you, my poor little girl?"

Blossy choked down a bitter sob. "Never fear for me, dearest father," she murmured, dropping kisses on his cold brow, "I am young and strong, and Heaven will help me."

A tap at the door interrupted them, and Blossy upon opening it, faced a tall and handsome gentleman.

He bowed deeply before her. "I must beg your pardon, Miss Ross, for this untimely intrusion. You have forgotten me, no doubt, but your father, my oldest, best friend—"

Blossy uttered a sudden cry, and put out both hands.

"I know you now," she cried, "and papa has talked of you incessantly. I am so glad you have come."

She led him to the bed-side. The old merchant looked up, and his eyes lit with joy.

"Why, Howard, my boy," he exclaimed, "have you come? and at the very hour of need?"

The young man sat down, and took his old friend's hands in both his own. It required but a few words to tell his story. From the position of errand-boy in the great Broadway store he had grown straight up, and now he was the junior member of a wealthy firm, just returned from Calcutta. Arriving in New York, he had heard of his old benefactor's misfortunes, and had lost no time in following him to the sea-side. But he found him beyond all mortal help.

"My days are numbered," said the old merchant, solemnly. "I am willing to go only for Blossy—who will care for her?"

The young man's bronzed cheeks flushed, and his handsome eyes grew eager and wistful.

"Mr. Ross," he said, his voice unsteady, "she shall never need a friend while I live. And," he added hesitatingly, "if I might hope that she would ever come to regard me as her nearest friend! Oh, sir, since that wintery morning years and years ago, when I stood in the snow, a poor, little beggar, and she looked down upon me like an angel, and dropped her pretty jewel at my feet—since that hour I have loved her. Her sweet face has been the one inspiration of my life. The hope, that one day I might be found worthy to win her regard has been my incentive in all I have accomplished. If you will permit—if she will—I will promise to shield her from all sorrow and care."

"Blossy, little daughter, what do you say to this?"

Blossy was weeping, with her face hidden in the pillows, but at her father's call she put out her hand. He took it, and placing it within the young man's, clasped them closely together.

"What God has joined together, let no man put asunder," he said solemnly. "My children, may the merciful Father bless you. Now I can die in peace."

And a few hours later the old merchant's soul took flight; and, hand-clasped, the newly-plighted lovers kept their solemn vigil by the dead.

On Tuesday of last week a tragedy occurred on Lower Trout creek, which commenced resulting in the death of A. J. Friday. As near as we have been able to learn the circumstances of the case were as follows: Douglas McGrath was in the employ of A. J. Friday and on Tuesday morning hired up a team to start for The Dalles after a load of freight. McGrath was whipping the horses when Friday undertook to make him quit. Friday had a grudge in his hands at the time which McGrath took away from him and with it struck Friday several times on the head knocking him down. Friday lay some time senseless on the ground, until his house came and carried him to his house. Afterwards McGrath took the team, went to The Dalles and returned this week. There were no witnesses to the tragedy except Friday's family. A warrant was issued out of Justice Bell's court last Monday for the arrest of McGrath and placed in the hands of Constable Black to serve. Mr. Black retried Thursday evening with McGrath in charge, and the preliminary examination will be held before Justice Bell as soon as the attendances of witnesses can be had. McGrath gave bond for his appearance before the magistrate at the preliminary examination.—Ochoce Review.

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