

WORTH WINNING, WORTH KEEP- ING.

BY MATTIE DYER BRITTS.

CHAPTER II.

From New York Ledger: "There! Bless my soul, if I had not forgotten! Who do you think is here?"

"I couldn't guess, so I won't try. Tell me!" "Cousin Jessie Kingsbury! She is over at brother John's now. Come to-day!"

"Did she?" "There was no very intense interest in Kate's tone, for she was not over glad to hear of the young lady's arrival. Guests were troublesome, but she felt obliged to say, as Charles waited:

"Will we have to invite her here?"

"Why, of course, Kate! We'll do our part of the entertaining, with Stella and John. We must call to-morrow and set a time for her to come to us. She will stay a month or two. Jess is so lively, we can't be dull while she is here."

Kate was just conscious of a queer twinge at Charles's words, but she led the way to the table, and poured the tea with her usual pleasant manner.

"There! I forgot something else, too," cried Charles, suddenly clapping his hand on his pocket. "I've got a treat for us to-night."

"What is it?" asked Kate.

Charles took two small squares of pastyhead from his pocket and held them up to her.

"What are they?" said she. "Theatre tickets?"

"Yes, 'Faust' by a splendid company. I knew you always wanted to here 'Faust,' so I got 'em on purpose for you."

Charles looked pleased, but Kate's fair face clouded, as she answered: "Well, I'm sorry you spent the money. I can't go."

"Can't go? Why in the world can't you, then? You are so fond of good opera. I thought this would be a real treat."

"So it would, Charley, if I could leave the baby."

"But I thought you had a good girl?"

"Well, I have a perfect treasure."

"Well, don't you think she might manage to rock the baby for two hours on one occasion?" asked Charles, seriously.

"Oh, but Charley, he might be taken sick or something."

"Yes, the house might burn down; but I don't think it will," returned Charley, more shortly than he often spoke to Kate. "I'm very sorry you won't go," he added as he rose from the table, his appetite quite spoiled. "It is a disappointment to me."

"Why, you can go, I'm sure, Charles. I shall not care at all."

"No; I'll stay with you, and we can have our own music. I have not heard you sing for a month."

Kate hesitated a moment, then she said: "But, Charles, I must stay up in the nursery. I never trust Johnnie to Sarah at evenings."

Charles frowned, stood irresolute an instant, and said: "Oh, well, then, I don't see why I should get some measure, if I can. I'll just drop over to John's and see if they are going. As I have two tickets, if Jess cares to go we might make a party of it."

"Yes, certainly, go, Charles. I don't want you to stay at home because I have to."

"You know I had rather be with you, my dear. But it's dull work sitting down-stairs alone all the evening."

The Charles kissed her, put on his overcoat and went away. But after he was gone Kate began to be conscious of a lonely, uneasy feeling, and to wish she had gone, too. Of course, Charles was as loyal and true-hearted as a man could be. But, to think of him sitting beside that dashing, black-eyed Jess all the evening, and showing her all the little attentions which he knew so well how to give a woman; it worried her, somehow, and she could not help it. She was not jealous. Oh, no! She had told him to go, and really hoped he would enjoy it. But—but—she did wish she had left Johnnie to Sarah for one evening, and made one of that opera-party with the rest.

As for Charles, as he walked rapidly over to his brother's, he wondered if he wasn't a preciousascal for wishing that blessed baby

had never come into his house. To be sure, it was a bright little thing, sweet and cute, and he would have loved it dearly and been very proud of it (as he was, after all, if he had only known it.) but since it arrived, Kate had been no companion at all for him. She was everlastingly up in the nursery, and she neglected her dress and her hair, and never read or sang to him or went out with him, and he was feeling the change sadly.

"Of course, it is right to be a devoted mother," he said to himself; "but I do wish the mother had not so entirely displaced the wife. It's hard on a fellow, and I don't like it. I don't wonder men get tired of their wives, if they all do the same way."

Just then Charles ran against a passer-by, and as he glanced up to apologize, saw his brother.

"Ah, John!" was his greeting. "I'm just on my way to your house."

"Well, I'm on my way to yours," replied John, laughing. "We want you and Kate to go with us to her 'Faust' to-night."

"No use to go on," returned Charles. "I have been trying to induce Kate to go, but she won't."

"She won't? Why not?" "She can't leave that precious youngster. I got her a ticket, but it was no go. So I was coming over to say if you want to hear the opera my tickets are at your service."

"Not unless you go with us, Charles. Of course, you will, though. And Jess can use one of your tickets."

"Why, I hardly know about going myself, John. I don't like to leave Kate at home alone, you know."

"Nonsense! It is her own fault. Come, I won't hear a word more. Forward, march! It's time to be off."

Charley submitted, feeling a little reproached, for, though he had set out with the intention of going to the play, when he took a second thought, he did not care to go without Kate. But Miss Jessie was very willing to be escorted by her handsome cousin.

And Charley did not see the laughing light in her eyes, as she whispered to Stella:

"Mrs. Kate had better be careful of her property while I am here. I might take him away from her."

"For shame, Jess!" answered Stella; but in her heart she did wish Kate would give Charles a little more of her time.

"She is making a mistake," was her thought. "But people never get any thanks for interfering, so I won't do it. If she makes her bed, she will have to lie in it."

There was plainly nothing to be done or said. And if in the flashes of Jess's dark eyes and brilliant wit, Charles almost forgot Kate sitting at home with the baby, there was no one to blame, unless it was Kate herself, for leaving her rightful place to be filled by another woman.

Kate had gone to bed before he got home, and he would not disturb her. But at breakfast next morning he told her what a grand time they had enjoyed.

"Yes, I am very glad, Char," said Kate, rather faintly.

"Oh, yes. We only missed you, dear. But Jess is so lively, one couldn't help having a gay time with her. By the way, Kate, she says, as you are so busy with the baby, she will not stand on ceremony and wait for you to call on her. She is coming over with Stella to-day. We must have her stay here, you know. If you can't spare time to entertain her, why, I can."

A sudden feeling, which she could not explain, fired Kate's heart; and made her say, with some spirit:

"I shall do my part, of course, Charley."

"That's a good girl!" he returned in tones of real pleasure. "I knew you would if—if that wretched—"

"Charles Grant!"

"Oh, excuse me—that precious baby—did not absorb all your time. Then you'll invite her to stay when they call?"

"Yes."

"You're a darling! Wish I could be here, too. But you can make them stay to dinner. Good-bye!" A kiss, and he was off.

"Oh, yes! She'll stay, fast enough!" sighed Kate, as she went upstairs. "But what I wish is that people would stay at home as I do. However, as Miss Jess has no husband and baby to keep her at home, it is to be expected that she will go anywhere where she can find amusement, not to say anything of a nice little flirtation."

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