

Bess Trefoil's Reward.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

CHAPTER II.

"DIDN'T HE ASK WHERE I WAS?"

From New York Ledger:

"Bess has made up her mind not to come," said she in answer to young Cotesworth's eager inquiry. "She had a chance to do a little extra sewing for extra pay, and dear Bess is dreadfully fond of money for one so young. Quite a miser, you know." And Flora's laugh rang out sweet and clear, above the jingle of the sleigh-bells.

It was long past midnight when the gay party returned, but Bess still sat sewing at the machine. She listened, with a pale, set face, to Flora's exaggerated description of the "delightful time they had had."

"I'd help you, Bess, if I wasn't so awfully tired," said Flora, with yawn. "Are you nearly through?" Bess smiled. Did Flora dream, she thought, how tired she was? And there were yet four or five hours' work on the gown.

"Oh," cautiously added Flora, "I forgot to tell you that I stepped on the skirt of the red merino dress, getting into the sleigh to come home, and tore it into ribbons. But it was an old thing, anyway. You couldn't have got much more wear out of it. And Charlie was so nice."

"Was he? Didn't he ask where I was?"

Flora shook her head. Where was the use, she thought, of encouraging Bess to think too much of the handsome young steam-fitter, whom she, Flora, had fully determined to make her own prey?

"I'm so tired of this everlasting dressmaking," said Flora to herself. "And Charles Cotesworth would be a husband for any girl to be proud of."

Cousin Thankful Morse sat in her little room at the Old Ladies' Home, the next day, when the matron brought the steam-fitters foreman to look at the flawed radiator-pipes under the window. She knew him at once.

"Why, it's Mr. Cotesworth, ain't it?" said she peering over the rim of her silver spectacles. "Well, I do declare! Why, Bess Trefoil was just here. She come to bring me a new fur tippet and muff; I couldn't a' gone to church next Sunday with the old link set, so badly eaten with moths. She set up all night to finish a job for the dress maker; it was one, too, that Flora ought to have done, but she somehow contrived to push it off on to Bess—Flora allays was a selfish creature—and Bess just spent the money for me and her aunt Nat! Bess is always thinking of other people. It's Bess as pays my board here, Mr. Cotesworth," added the loquacious old lady, as Charlie bent to examine the joints of the steam pipes. "I'd be on the board if it wasn't for her. Flora wouldn't care nothin' for her. She thinks old folks hain't no business to exist. Poor Bess! I was dreadful sorry for her last night; she wanted to go on that sleigh ride awful bad! But she knowed of she lost the place at Madame What's-her-name's, there wouldn't be no rent paid nor cloths bought for Mrs. Trefoil!"

Charles Cotesworth straightened himself up. "She really wanted to go then?"

he said. "Flora told me—"

Cousin Thankful wagged her head of stiff gray curls: "You can't put no dependance in wiat Flora Trefoil says," declared she. "She's allays tryin' to put other people in the background. I jest wish you could 'a' seen Bess cryin' over her work, 'arter you'd all gone away and left her last night!"

"Do you think," said Cotesworth, seizing his monstrous nippers as if with fatal intent, "she would be at home if I were to call to-night?" Cousin Thankful looked wonderously sage.

"Ef I was you, Charlie," said she, "I'd go to the dressmakers place and sort o' calculate to walk home with her. Or else, like's not, you will find yourself caught in some of Flora's tricks and traps. I hain't no confidence in Flora."

Mr. Cotsworth availed himself of the old woman's hint. When Bess Trefoil came out of Madame Enrico's little side-door that evening, into the dark street, where the gas-lamps blurred feebly against the driving mist which was fast effacing the purity of the snow, Mr. Cotsworth's umbrella was waiting for her.

"Mr. Cotesworth!" she cried, with a little start. "You are not sorry to see me, Bess?" "No; but—but—" "Bessie, I didn't half enjoy the sleigh-ride last night without you." Her face shone radiant under the row of theatre-lamps which they were just passing.

"Really?"

(It seemed such a silly thing to say, but what else was there for her?) They were in a dark place now; he drew her arm in his.

"We can walk better under one umbrella—so," he said. "I wonder, Bess, what you would say if I were to ask you to walk through all the years of life at my side."

"I think," murmured Bess, "I should say—yes."

[To be Continued.]

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