

BESSIE.



It's only Bessie Raven, said Mrs. Lidlington to her niece, Mrs. Enfield, a blooming city matron, who had brought her two boys to the country for the summer, "I wouldn't let Hal and Felix associate with her on any account, if I were you. There's no good in any of those Ravens—a vile, low set."

Mrs. Enfield looked pityingly at the brown-faced, bare-legged little gypsy, who had slunk under the back door, a basket of late luscious blackberries on her arm, and the deep flush that betokened how plainly she had overheard Mrs. Lidlington's careless words, still dyeing her cheeks.

"Only Bessie Raven!" How often she had heard that phrase. How bitter a meaning did it convey to her ears.

"There are no trout there! You might throw a bait and wait a year, and you wouldn't get a bite!"

It was a deep, solitary ravine, where, in attitudes of intense eagerness, Hal Enfield and his brother Felix were holding their fishing rods, awaiting the expected bite, while Bessie Raven's brown face and big, black eyes looked out at them from a natural oval frame of bushes and vines, as she held a basket in one hand, and her tattered sun bonnet in the other.

Hal Enfield, a self-sufficient little aristocrat, by nature as well as by education, drew himself haughtily up. "I don't know that we asked any information from you," said he, haughtily. "Have the goodness to be about your business."

"I won't!" retorted Bessie Raven, with an ominous flash in her dark eyes. "It's a free country, ain't it? And I've as much right here as you have!"

"Very well," said Hal, rising and gathering together his tackle. "I'll go, then. Come, Felix."

But Felix, the younger brother, had no idea of leaving his cool, shady nook, for a whim of Hal's.

Hal stalked away in high dudgeon; Felix remained behind to cultivate the acquaintance of Bessie Raven.

"If there are no trout here," said he, compositely eyeing the brown gypsy face among the leaves, "where do they hide?"

"I'll show you," said Bessie, with alacrity. "Just a piece further on. There's lots of 'em—only everybody don't know it. Come on!"

And the two children spent a long summer's morning together under the green trees.

Until just as Felix Enfield was turning to go home, half apprehensive that he had missed the farm-house dinner, he did not perceive that the little gold cross he wore attached to his watch-chain was gone.

"Oh!" cried he, "where is my—?" He stopped abruptly. For in the very moment in which he spoke, he perceived, half-hidden in the folds of the bosom of Bessie's tattered dress, the gleam of some golden ornament. Involuntarily he caught at it—it was his own.

"You little thief!" cried he, "you must have stolen it!"

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weeks, before they returned to their city home—and so he never got the chance to tell Bessie Raven good-by.

Ten years afterward! Three and twenty is a dangerous age for flirtations, but Felix Enfield had never been seriously smitten until that time when he crossed the Atlantic in the steamer Will o' the Wisp, and fell in love with the captain's Spanish-eyed daughter.

"If you don't marry me," said Felix, with comical earnestness, "I'll throw myself into the sea."

"There's not much danger of that," said Miss Richfield, quietly.

"But I am in earnest!" protested Felix.

"So am I!" said the damsel with the blue-black eyes.

"Don't you love me?" pleaded Felix. "I don't dislike you," demurely answered Miss Richfield.

"Then I shall hope," rejoined Felix. "Hope is a commodity that is free to all!" said the young lady.

But at the voyage's end Mr. Enfield was deeper in love than ever.

"Look here, Miss Richfield," said he; "if you don't say you'll have me, I won't leave the steamer's deck! I'll go back and forth perpetually between New York and Southampton!"

"I don't think papa would care for so permanent a passenger," said Miss Richfield, with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"But, really! Do you know, Miss Richfield, I believe you are engaged already."

She colored a little. "Why?" she asked.

"Ah! you think I have no eyes. You think I haven't perceived that you always wear a black velvet ribbon around your neck—a black velvet ribbon, from which is suspended some trinket of gold, hidden in the lace frills of your collar. Is it a gauge?"

"Yes," Miss Richfield calmly answered; "it is a gauge of true love. If I ever am married—"

"If," almost scornfully ejaculated the lover.

"Well, when I am married," Miss Richfield corrected herself, "it will only be to the gentleman who gave me this!"

"Then I may consider myself rejected!" slowly spoke Felix, with a face of the bitterest chagrin.

"Not quite," said the dark-eyed damsel, softly, as she drew the golden talisman from her throat and held it toward him. "Don't you remember who gave me this?"

He uttered an exclamation of recognition.

"It is the golden cross I gave, years ago, to Bessie Raven!" cried he.

"Yes," she said, quietly, "and I am Bessie Raven."

"You!"

"Yes. My mother died shortly after you gave me this. My uncle, who had just returned from the West, adopted us all. Two of my sisters are in boarding-school. My brother is being educated in a German university. And I am my uncle's adopted daughter, known only by his name."

"But, Bessie, you said you would marry the one who gave you that!" cried out Enfield.

"So I will," confessed Bessie, laughing and blushing. "If he is still infatuated enough to persist in wanting me."

They were married within a month—a regular true-love match—and old Mrs. Lidlington finds herself grand-aunt-in-law to "only Bessie Raven!"

"And really," says she, complacently. "I don't think Felix could have made a better match!"—New York Daily News.

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Managing Her.

Pretty Wife (poutingly)—That Mrs. De Plaine has a dozen dresses handsomer than the only good one I've got. Smart Husband—A homesy woman like that needs rich attire to attract attention from her face. You don't. (Pretty wife subsides.)—New York Weekly.

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