

That Student Girl

A crotchety and contrary old chap was Dick Shellen, a rich old farmer, as stubborn as a mule. He had made his way in the world by the dogged obstinacy seizing hold of whatever came his way, and retaining hold, as though life depended upon it.

Shellen had one son—a handsome, clear-headed young man—straight as a young larch, tall, and tenacious in his way, when he chose to have one, as did Dick himself. This son, as he grew up, had proved a great assistance to his father in working the farm, and his services had been made the most of.

The old man managed to keep him at home with him some time after he ought to have been doing for himself. Not an acre of his father's possessions was ever called his son's; he owned nothing, save a horse which some neighbor had given him when it was a sleeky colt, and some sheep obtained in much the same manner; and the old man grudged him the keeping of these.

Shellen and his son differed often, but there were two points in which the difference amounted to something serious. The first point concerned education, for which the old man had the most profound contempt, and the son had not.

There was a college some dozen miles from the Shellen farm, and thither—having thoroughly prepared himself in spite of his father's warning and opposition—Henry betook himself, and by one contrivance and another, and helped by his mother's small marketing, kept himself there for several months.

The second point was not likely to be so easy of arrangement.

At college Henry had found some

trifles besides scholastic honors.

He had chanced upon a very charming combination of curly and azure eyes,

a red-lipped, dimpled-cheeked fairy,

daughter of one of the professors who,

instead of curving her dainty lip at

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In short, Henry had found someone to love, some one that he wanted to marry, as he gravely informed his father. You should have seen the old man's eyes; it was misery they worded in their sockets. "Marry a poor student—was ridiculous!"

"And pray what is there in being a girl student?" said Bertha Halmstead, when Henry told her, half laughing, half vexed, and altogether rueful, for without assistance from his father he could not afford to live.

He had laughed again, but with some embarrassment, saying, "My father is afraid that a daughter of Professor Halmstead would not make a very good farmer's wife."

"Does he think—" Bertha hesitated, looking with smiling perplexity at her little white hands.

"Did these pretty hands not know much about baking, etc. Exactly! I believe he thinks that."

"Then he thinks wrong," said Bertha, fidgeting and looking at her lover, with a comical little pout.

" Didn't I hear you say you wanted a servant at home? I've a mind to go down and offer to take the place."

"I may want one badly enough, but my father will not suffer one inside the house."

"Why, how do you live then? Who looks for you now that your mother is ill?"

"We do our own cooking," Henry said with a return of the half-smiling half-embarrassed expression. "We cook for ourselves, or do without."

The very door opened, revealing the one which witnessed the conversation. Henry was at home, busily engaged over some culinary operations, when the outside door, which stood ajar, was noiselessly pushed open and a singularly attired form presented itself on the threshold. It wore a red and green striped dress, the checks very large, a yellow bow at the waist, and very trimble white bonnet. It led neither nearly as long as his arm, stretched from one side.

The face what could be seen of it was a very curious one to be inside such a bonnet. Just now, as she surveyed the children and Henry, herself, the muscles about her mouth twitted and quivered, and her eyes twinkled with roguish brightness.

Presently Henry looked that way. Instantly the face took a lugubrious length, and, coming from the room, the girl said hesitatingly, but without looking at him:

"Auntie, I'm sorry for employing a servant the day I and your father met with the fringe of her skirt."

"I believe not," said Henry, coloring with some annoyance perhaps at the nature of his employment.

"Sir, sir, and the lady, that sart me said you'd be shure to take me on her service, education, which I has in my pocket and her skirt."

She gave him a look which seemed to be from Miss Halmstead. Henry read it with very lover-like carefulness, but shook his head.

"I'm very sorry, my good girl, but we do not wish to hire a servant."

"Well, like your father mayn't object when see me, the girl persisted."

Henry looked at the soiled white hat and red feather and green and white apron, wondering what his father would say.

But he was of too kindly a nature to be willing to expose even his servant to his father's rough manner. He repeated what he had said before, assuring her that it would be of no use to see his father.

The girl stood for a moment.

"Please, sir, and I'll just see him a moment. Let's see if he may take a look at me."

And before he could reply she had crossed the room and stood upon the

threshold of the next: Henry followed presently, curious to see what kind of a reception she would get. "Shure, an' I'll be worth a lot to ye, she was saying, with innocent emphasis. Henry entered.

He talked a good deal, pointing out such a torrent of words that the old man could not by any possibility slip one in.

This remarkable volubility completely baffled the old man's slowness. He could not say a word now if he wished to, she concluded with such impudence so far back as to suppose he'd say when he knows you're not Biddy at all!"

"No, Biddy at all!" screamed Shellen, struck with a sudden suspicion of his covert.

"This is Biddy, Biddy, the white frill of her close, thin trimming as ever. She laughed though, when she said, and, deliberately taking off her cap, shook her bright curls all about her face, and, reaching toward him her little hand, said:

"Sure, sir, sir, yo' we're be after hating a poor girl because her name's Bertha Halmstead instead of Bridget O'Flynn."

"Professor Halmstead is my father," said Bertha in her natural voice.

"What's that?"

"Bertha, Bertha, the girl."

"And you're not Irish?"

"The old man stood for a moment, clouds gathering in his face.

"Well, Henry," he said, rather sourly, "you have outwitted me again; much good may it do you. You had better get out the horses now and take Halmstead's girl home. He must want to see her by this time."

"It is you, Bertha," he said; "I was suspecting something of the sort."

"Not till I looked at you," said the girl, reluctantly retreating as he approached.

"Do you think it quite the thing?"

"Shure, an' why ain't it the thing for a poor girl to be gettin' her living honestly?"

And that was all he could get out of her. Henry, for his part, had identified with Bertha, for he understood the young man had given nothing to save except in that character.

"Does your father know of this, Bertha?" What would he say?"

"Sure, sir, it's my own fadder would be interterin', wid mo, would he?" said Biddy.

In vain were all remonstrances with the rough and willful girl. She persisted in being Biddy, even to him, and maintained a distance between them very different from that between him and Bertha in her own person.

Annoyed, provoked, chagrined, annoyed, Henry, the advent of his father forced him to retire from the kitchen, for fear of betraying his secret, which he would not have done for a good deal.

It was several hours before he could return to the house, his father having upon one pretext or another, detained him.

When at last they entered together, kitchen and dining-room, both of which had been in a state of disorder when they left there, had undergone such a remarkable renovating process that old Shellen drawled back, at first, thinking he had set foot in somebody's house instead of his own.

Stiffer was smoking on the table.

"Bertha Halmstead," he said, "she was the most unapproachable Biddy the next, and would have nothing to do with them.

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