

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 doggedst 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 as tenacious in his way, when he chose to have one, as old 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 sickly 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 fatherly thwarting 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 something besides scholastic honors. He had chanced upon a very charming combination of curls and azure eyes, a red-lipped, dimpled-cheeked fairy, daughter of one of the professors who, instead of curving her dainty lip at the home-spun suit which his poverty and his father's niggardliness compelled him to wear, never seemed to be conscious of anything or anybody else when he was near.

In short, Henry had found some one 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 a mercy they were fast in their sockets. "Marry a girl student—it was ridiculous!"

"And pray what harm is there in being a girl student?" questioned Bertha Halmstead, when Henry told her, half laughing, half vexed, and altogether rueful; for without assistance from his father he could not marry her for a long time yet.

Henry 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.

"That these pretty hands don't know much about baking, etc. Exactly; I believe he thinks that."

"Then he thinks wrong," said Bertha, reddening and looking up 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."

Henry laughed.

"We 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 day succeeding the one which witnessed this conversation Henry was at home busying himself over some culinary operations, when the outside door, which stood ajar, was noiselessly pushed wide open and a singularly attired form presented itself on the threshold. It wore a red and green plaid dress, the checks very large, a yellow shawl and a very tumbled white bonnet. A red feather, nearly as long as his arm, streamed 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 kitchen and Henry, herself unseen, the muscles about her mouth twitched nervously 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:

"An would ye be after employing a servant the day?" and stood fidgeting with the fringe of her shawl.

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

"Shure, sir, and the lady that sint me said you'd be shure to take me on her recommendation, which I has in my pocket, and here 'tis now."

She gave him a note which proved 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."

"Belike your father mayn't object when he sees me," the girl persisted.

Henry looked at the soiled white hat and red feather and repressed a smile, wondering what his father would say.

But he was of too kindly a nature to be willing to expose even this 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.

"If you please, sir, I'll just see him a moment. Belike he may take a likin' to the look of 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 yeas," she was saying, with innocent emphasis, as Henry entered.

She talked rapidly, pouring out such a torrent of words that the old man could not by any possibility slip one in among them, and sat regarding her with an expression of the most ludicrous astonishment.

This remarkable volubility completely baffled the old man's slowness.

He could not say a word now if he wished to, and she concluded with "I can bake bread that'd bring the very eyes out iv yer head and make ye swally yer tongue with delight."

He could only twirl his thumbs in a sort of ridiculous awe, and asked her, with a sudden smile, how much she expected "to get for doing all these things."

The end of it was that her services were accepted and she began work at once.

Henry deliberated and furtively watched her. For some time she seemed unconscious of his scrutiny; but presently she turned, and clasping both her little hands on top of the broom handle, said, with a mixture of bravado and archness too natural to be mistaken:

"Well, Henry, what do you think?"

The young man laughed and looked annoyed in the same breath.

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

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

"Do you think it quite the thing, Bertha?"

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

And that was all he could get out of her. Having acknowledged her identity with Bertha, for an instant, she was the most unapproachable Biddy the next, and would have nothing to say except in that character.

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

"Shure, an' it's my own fadder would be interferin', wid me, would he?" said Biddy.

In vain were all remonstrances with the roguish 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 proper self. Annoyed, provoked, chagrined, almost angry, the advent of his father forced him to retire from the kitchen, for fear of betraying her 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 most untidy state when they left there, had undergone such a remarkable renovating process that old Shellen draw back at first, thinking he had set foot in somebody else's house instead of his own.

Supper was smoking on the table—such a supper as old Shellen, at least, had not seen for months. To crown all, Mrs. Shellen was sitting propped up with pillows in a great easy chair and looking wondrously contented, and with reason—the poor lady had not had a woman's hand about her before since her illness. They lived in such an isolated, inhospitable manner that very few of their neighbors even knew Mrs. Shellen was not as well as usual. Biddy, as she called herself, had tidied the poor lady up in a wonderful manner.

Shellen sat down to the daintily spread table and made a most hearty and keenly relished meal, glancing askance at Biddy meanwhile. Henry, strange to say, ate very little, and he watched Biddy askance, too.

This was only the beginning of reforms this darling girl instituted. First, however, for her own peace of mind, as well as Henry's—knowing that mother and son were fast friends and always of one opinion—she told

her secret to Mrs. Shellen and fairly wheedled the good lady into approval. It is true that she shook her head at first and looked wondrously shocked. It was so charming to have those little soft hands fluttering about her and to see such brightness and comfort spring up around, that she could not, for her own sake, help countenancing, as much as silence could, Biddy's mysterious presence.

Having made a good beginning, Biddy established herself in a short time completely in the good graces of the old man.

He had a lurking fondness for neatness and good order, and Mrs. Shellen, poor woman, wasn't a very tidy house-keeper. Under the new reign order grew out of chaos; the house seemed in holiday garb all the time, and an atmosphere of social cheerfulness pervaded everywhere.

One morning, Biddy had said something the day before, the old man ended a grumbling complaint of Henry's with "I never see no good come of eddication yet. If it hadn't been for that college business you might have taken a liking to a sensible girl and she to you."

He glanced at Biddy as he spoke. She turned scarlet and came near dropping the dish she was holding. It was not the first time Henry had heard such insinuations, and he rather enjoyed Biddy's trepidation.

"Look here, father," said Henry, smiling maliciously, "just pick me out a wife, and see what will come of it."

"The only girl I know of worth having wouldn't have you, I dare say—would you, Biddy?" Shellen said, grumblingly, but suddenly turning to the girl, Bridget O'Flynn, who had kept Bertha's lover at a tantalizing and unrelenting distance all that time.

He was taking his revenge now. Making a desperate effort, Biddy rallied her confused senses to say, with considerable self-possession:

"Shure, sir, it isn't myself that'll be after having any man till I'm asked?"

"Biddy, will you marry me?" said Henry, gravely extending his hand.

"I will that, now," said Biddy, promptly putting her hand in his, while old Shellen came near choking himself with amazement.

It was too late to recede, however, whether he had really wished such a thing or not, as they soon made him understand. He went out of doors presently, privately pinching himself to ascertain if he were really in his senses or not. Seeing the two standing by the window in close conversation soon after, he crept with the same laudable intention toward them, under cover of the bushes that grew by the house.

"Now, Bertha," Henry was saying, laughing, "what is to be done next? I must say you have managed wonderfully so far; but what do you suppose he'll say when he knows you're not Biddy at all?"

"Not Biddy at all!" screamed Shellen, struck with a sudden suspicion of he knew not what, as he started out of his covert.

There stood Biddy, the white frill of her close cap as immense as ever. She laughed though, when she saw him, and, deliberately taking off her cap, shook her bright curls all about her face, and, reaching toward him her little hand, said:

"Sure, sir, an' ye won't be after hating a poor girl because her name's Bertha Halmstead instead of Bridget O'Flynn?"

"You—you Professor Halmstead's girl?"

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

"What's that?"

Bertha repeated it.

"And you're not Irish?"

"Niver a bit!"

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."

"Yes, sir," and Henry colored with mingled anger and amazement.

Bertha did not change countenance, however. Extending that pretty hand of hers, she said, sweetly:

"You'll shake hands with me, sir?"

Shellen turned back and gave his hand awkwardly. The girl took it in both hers, bending her bright, arch face toward him, saying:

"I shall come back some time, sir. Will you be glad to see me?"

Shellen blummed and hawed, and stammered out at last:

"Ye—es; come back, Biddy—I mean Miss O'Flynn—I mean Miss—"

"Bertha," suggested the girl, quietly. "Yes, come back; and the sooner the better. There, Henry, make the most of it!"

Bertha did come back, in a very few weeks, too, and nobody was gladder to see her than old Shellen, though he was a little shy at first of Professor Halmstead's girl. She soon made him forget everything save that she was Henry's wife; and the way he humored the sly puss to sundry grants of money refurbishing and repairing, I couldn't begin to tell.

FANCY TRICK DOGS.

A young woman who found herself in need of extra funds has started a new school—a school for pet dogs. The idea is not to make professional tricksters of them, but simply to teach them to amuse their masters and mistresses at home by doing something requiring more intelligence than simply eating, running and barking, or lying in comfort on a satin sofa pillow.

The idea was evolved by the need of the hour, and the presence of her own little dogs, which do all sorts of funny little "stunts" even without direct orders, so used are they to going through their little tricks. It has become second nature to them, and they voluntarily go through with them in their own play together, or to attract attention to themselves when they want anything to eat.

She has always been fond of pets, but was never content until she had taught each pet little tricks. At one time her rooms were a regular menagerie. There were two white mice, a squirrel, two little marmosets, or South American monkeys; a parrot, a canary, a robin, a fox terrier, a Maltese poodle and a Brazilian terrier, besides three tame common house mice which found their way through their own little doors in the casing of the doorway when the dogs were not in sight, and fed on the crumbs left for them, and, if their mistress was there, running up to her and eating out of her hand and running up her arm onto her shoulder.

She had taught all the pretty little show tricks to her own pets, dogs included, and also trained the pet dogs of her friends; so why not train other dogs?

The younger the dogs the better, according to the saying that "you cannot teach old dogs new tricks," although that is not strictly true, as many an old dog has been trained to do all the sprightly tricks taught to puppies, but the puppies learn quicker. They are more fond of playing, and tricks are simply an intelligently guided lot of games. It requires time and the patience of Job; that is all. But few persons have the necessary time or patience to spend on their dogs.

The first thing the teacher does is to make firm friends of the dog under tuition, the next to make him respect her authority, and then reward him for obedience. All dogs expect rewards for extraordinary exertion, just like people. A few lessons are all that is necessary usually, following each in quick succession, always with the reward at the close. It is just as easy to teach several dogs at once as one at a time. One of the prettiest sights is to see two dogs marching like little soldiers across the room.

Her own two little white dogs—the poodle and terrier—are about the same size. Every day they go through the same performance when the mail carrier comes and leaves a letter. They rush to the door at his ring, and if there are not enough letters for both, the terrier, Nuisance, allows the poodle, Midget, to take the letter in her mouth, and they scurry to the door of the mistress's room and both stand erect, the letter in full sight in Midget's mouth, and then they march upright on their hind legs across the room to their mistress and sit down on their haunches to deliver the letter.

If she pretends not to see them they wave both front paws up and down rapidly to attract her attention. If she still remains oblivious Nuisance gives a little bark—speaks—and they cock their eyes and turn their heads on one side, looking at her inquiringly in a very cunning way, and she takes the letter. Then they remain seated until she gives them each some candy. If she should pretend not to think of it they sit there patiently until she remembers, waving their paws energetically every time they can catch her eye.

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