MARY JANE HOLMES

AIKENSIDE

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER I. — THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE.

Table of Contents

The good people of Devonshire were rather given to quarreling—sometimes about the minister's wife, meek, gentle Mrs. Tiverton, whose manner of housekeeping, and style of dress, did not exactly suit them; sometimes about the minister himself, good, patient Mr. Tiverton, who vainly imagined that if he preached three sermons a week, attended the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, the Thursday evening sewing society, officiated at every funeral, visited all the sick, and gave to every beggar who called at his door, besides superintending the Sunday school, he was earning his salary of six hundred per year.

Sometimes, and that not rarely, the quarrel crept into the choir, and then, for one whole Sunday, it was all in vain that Mr. Tiverton read the psalm and hymn, casting troubled glances toward the vacant seats of his refractory singers. There was no one to respond, unless it were good old Mr. Hodges, who pitched so high that few could follow him; while Mrs. Captain Simpson—whose daughter, the organist, had been snubbed at the last choir meeting by Mr. Hodges' daughter, the alto singer—rolled up her eyes at her next neighbor, or fanned herself furiously in token of her disgust.

Latterly, however, there had come up a new cause of quarrel, before which every other cause sank into insignificance. Now, though the village of Devonshire could boast but one public schoolhouse, said house being divided into two departments, the upper and lower divisions, there

were in the town several district schools; and for the last few years a committee of three had been annually appointed to examine and decide upon the merits of the various candidates for teaching, giving to each, if the decision were favorable, a little slip of paper certifying their qualifications to teach a common school. Strange that over such an office so fierce a feud should have arisen; but when Mr. Tiverton, Squire Lamb and Lawyer Whittemore, in the full conviction that they were doing right, refused a certificate of scholarship to Laura Tisdale, niece of Mrs. Judge Tisdale, and awarded it to one whose earnings in a factory had procured for her a thorough English education, the villagers, to use a vulgar phrase, were at once set by the ears, the aristocracy abusing, and the democracy upholding the dismayed trio, who, as the breeze blew harder, quietly resigned their office, and Devonshire was without a school committee.

In this emergency something must be done, and, as the two belligerent parties could only unite on a stranger, it seemed a matter of special providence that only two months before, young Dr. Holbrook, a native of modern Athens, had rented the pleasant little office on the village common, formerly occupied by old Dr. Carey, now lying in the graveyard by the side of some whose days he had prolonged, and others whose days he had surely shortened. Besides being handsome, and skillful, and quite as familiar with the poor as the rich, the young doctor was descended from the aristocratic line of Boston Holbrooks, facts which tended to make him a favorite with both classes; and, greatly to his surprise, he found himself unanimously

elected to the responsible office of sole Inspector of Common Schools in Devonshire. It was in vain that he remonstrated, saying he knew nothing whatever of the qualifications requisite for a teacher; that he could not talk to girls, young ones especially; that he should make a miserable failure, and so forth. The people would not listen. Somebody must examine the teachers and that somebody might as well be Dr. Holbrook as anybody.

“Only be strict with 'em, draw the reins tight, find out to your satisfaction whether a gal knows her P's and Q's before you give her a stifficut. We've had enough of your ignoramuses,” said Colonel Lewis, the democratic potentate to whom Dr. Holbrook was expressing his fears that he should not give satisfaction. Then, as a bright idea suggested itself to the old gentleman, he added: “I tell you what, just cut one or two at first; that'll give you a name for being particular, which is just the thing.”

Accordingly, with no definite idea as to what was expected of him, except that he was to find out “whether a girl knew her P's and Q's,” and was also to “cut one or two of the first candidates,” Dr. Holbrook accepted the office, and then awaited rather nervously his initiation. He was not easy in the society of ladies, unless, indeed, the lady stood in need of his professional services, when he lost sight of *her* at once, and thought only of her disease. His patient once well, however, he became nervously shy and embarrassed, retreating as soon as possible from her presence to the covert of his friendly office, where, with his boots upon the table and his head thrown back in a most comfortable position, he sat one April morning, in happy

oblivion of the bevy of girls who must, of course, ere long-invade his sanctum.

“Something for you, sir. The lady will wait for an answer,” said his “chore boy,” passing to his master a little three-cornered note, and nodding toward the street.

Following the direction indicated, the doctor saw, drawn up near his door, an old-fashioned one-horse wagon, such as is still occasionally seen in New England. A square boxed, dark green wagon, drawn by a sorrel horse, sometimes called by the genuine Yankee “yellow,” and driven by a white-haired man, whose silvery locks, falling around his wrinkled face, gave to him a pleasing, patriarchal appearance, which interested the doctor far more than did the flutter of the blue ribbon beside him, even though the bonnet that ribbon tied shaded the face of a young girl. The note was from her, and, tearing it open, the doctor read, in the prettiest of all pretty, girlish handwriting:

“Dr. Holbrook.”

Here it was plainly visible that a “D” had been written as if she would have said “Dear.” Then, evidently changing her mind, she had with her finger blotted out the “D,” and made it into an oddly shaped “S,” so that it read simply:

“Dr. Holbrook—Sir: Will you be at leisure to examine me on Monday afternoon, at three o'clock?
“MADELINE A. CLYDE.

“P. S.—For particular reasons I hope you can attend to me as early as Monday. M. A. C.”

Dr. Holbrook knew very little of girls, but he thought this note, with its P. S., decidedly girlish. Still he made no comment, either verbal or mental, so flurried was he with knowing that the evil he so much dreaded had come upon

him at last. Had it been left to his choice, he would far rather have extracted every one of that maiden's teeth, than to have set himself up before her like some horrid ogre, asking what she knew. But the choice was not his, and, turning to the boy, he said, laconically, “Tell her to come.”

Most men would have sought for a glimpse of the face under the bonnet tied with blue, but Dr. Holbrook did not care a picayune whether it were ugly or fair, though it did strike him that the voice was singularly sweet, which, after the boy had delivered his message, said to the old man, “Now, grandpa, we'll go home. I know you must be tired.”

Slowly Sorrel trotted down the street, the blue ribbons fluttering in the wind, while one little ungloved hand was seen carefully adjusting about the old man's shoulders the ancient camlet cloak which had done duty for many a year, and was needed on this chill April day. The doctor saw all this, and the impression left upon his mind was, that Candidate No. 1 was probably a nice-ish kind of a girl, and very good to her grandfather. But what should he ask her, and how demean himself toward her? Monday afternoon was frightfully near, he thought, as this was only Saturday; and then, feeling that he must be ready, he brought out from the trunk, where, since his arrival in Devonshire, they had bean quietly lying, books enough to have frightened an older person than poor little Madeline Clyde, riding slowly home with grandpa, and wishing so much that she'd had a glimpse of Dr. Holbrook, so as to know what he was like, and hoping he would give her a chance to repeat some of the many pages of geography and “Parley's History,” which she knew by heart. How she would have trembled could she

have seen the formidable volumes heaped upon his table and waiting for her. There were French and Latin grammars, “Hamilton's Metaphysics,” “Olmstead's Philosophy,” “Day's Algebra,” “Butler's Analogy,” and many others, into which poor Madeline had never so much as looked. Arranging them in a row, and half wishing himself back again to the days when he had studied them, the doctor went out to visit his patients, of which there were so many that Madeline Clyde entirely escaped his mind, nor did she trouble him again until the dreaded Monday came, and the hands of his watch pointed to two.

“One hour more,” he said to himself, just as the roll of wheels and a cloud of dust announced the approach of something.

Could it be Sorrel and the square-boxed wagon? Oh, no; far different from grandfather Clyde's turnout was the stylish carriage and the spirited bays dashing down the street, the colored driver reining them suddenly, not before the office door, but just in front of the white cottage in the same yard, the house where Dr. Holbrook boarded, and where, if he ever married in Devonshire, he would most likely bring his wife.

“Guy Remington, the very chap of all others whom I'd rather see, and, as I live, there's Agnes, with Jessie. Who knew she was in these parts?” was the doctor's mental exclamation, as, running his fingers through his hair and making a feint of pulling up the corners of his rather limp collar, he hurried out to the carriage, from which a dashing looking lady of thirty, or thereabouts, was alighting.

“Why, Agnes, I beg your pardon, Mrs. Remington, when did you come?” he asked, offering his hand to the lady, who, coquettishly shaking back from her pretty, dollish face a profusion of light brown curls, gave him the tips of her lavender kids, while she told him she had come to Aikenside the Saturday before; and hearing, from Guy that the lady with whom he boarded was an old friend of hers, she had driven over to call, and brought Jessie with her. “Here, Jessie, speak to the doctor. He was poor dear papa's friend,” and a very proper sigh escaped Agnes Remington's lips as she pushed a little curly-haired girl toward Dr. Holbrook.

The lady of the house had spied them by this time, and came running down the walk to meet her rather distinguished visitor, wondering, it may be, to what she was indebted for this call from one who, since her marriage with the supposed wealthy Dr. Remington, had rather cut her former acquaintances. Agnes was delighted to see her, and, as Guy declined entering the cottage just then, the two friends disappeared within the door, while the doctor and Guy repaired to the office, the latter sitting down in the very chair intended for Madeline Clyde. This reminded the doctor of his perplexity, and also brought the comforting thought that Guy, who had never failed him yet, could surely offer some suggestions. But he would not speak of her just now; he had other matters to talk about, and so, jamming his penknife into a pine table covered with similar jams, he said: “Agnes, it seems, has come to Aikenside, notwithstanding she declared she never would, when she found that the whole of the Remington property belonged to your mother, and not your father.”

“Oh, yes. She got over her pique as soon as I settled a handsome little income on Jessie, and, in fact, on her too, until she is foolish enough to marry again, when it will cease, of course, as I do not feel it my duty to support any man's wife, unless it be my own, or my father's,” was Guy Remington's reply; whereupon the penknife went again into the table, and this time with so much force that the point was broken off; but the doctor did not mind it, and with the jagged end continued to make jagged marks, while he continued: “She'll hardly marry again, though she may. She's young—not over twenty-six—-

“Twenty-eight, if the family Bible does not lie; but she'd never forgive me if she knew I told you that. So let it pass that she's twenty-six. She certainly is not more than three years your senior, a mere nothing, if you wish to make her Mrs. Holbrook;” and Guy's dark eyes scanned curiously the doctor's face, as if seeking there for the secret of his proud young stepmother's anxiety to visit plain Mrs. Conner that afternoon. But the doctor only laughed merrily at the idea of his being father to Guy, his college chum and long-tried friend.

Agnes Remington—reclining languidly in Mrs. Conner's easy-chair, and overwhelming her former friend with descriptions of the gay parties she had attended in Boston, and the fine sights she saw in Europe, whither her gray-haired husband had taken her for a wedding tour—would not have felt particularly flattered, could she have seen that smile, or heard how easily, from talking of her, Dr. Holbrook turned to another theme, to Madeline Clyde, expected now almost every moment. There was a merry laugh on Guy's

part, as he listened to the doctor's story, and, when it was finished, he said: “Why, I see nothing so very distasteful in examining a pretty girl, and puzzling her, to see her blush. I half wish I were in your place. I should enjoy the novelty of the thing.” “Oh, take it, then; take my place, Guy,” the doctor exclaimed, eagerly. “She does not know me from Adam. Here are books, all you will need. You went to a district school once a week when you were staying in the country. You surely have some idea, while I have not the slightest. Will you, Guy?” he persisted more earnestly, as he heard wheels in the street, and was sure old Sorrel had come again.

Guy Remington liked anything savoring of a frolic, but in his mind there were certain conscientious scruples touching the justice of the thing, and so at first he demurred; while the doctor still insisted, until at last he laughingly consented to commence the examination, provided the doctor would sit by, and occasionally come to his aid.

“You must write the certificate, of course,” he said, “testifying that she is qualified to teach.”

“Yes, certainly, Guy, if she is; but maybe she won't be, and my orders are, to be strict—very strict.”

“How did she look?” Guy asked, and the doctor replied: “Saw nothing but her bonnet. Came in a queer old go-giggle of a wagon, such as your country farmers drive. Guess she won't be likely to stir up the bile of either of us, particularly as I am bullet proof, and you have been engaged for years. By the way, when do you cross the sea again for the fair Lucy? Rumor says this summer.”

“Rumor is wrong, as usual, then,” was Guy's reply, a soft light stealing into his handsome eyes. Then, after a moment, he added: “Miss Atherstone's health is far too delicate for her to incur the risks of a climate like ours. If she were well acclimated, I should be glad, for it is terribly lonely up at Aikenside.”

“And do you really think a wife would make it pleasanter?” Dr Holbrook asked, the tone of his voice indicating a little doubt as to a man's being happier for having a helpmate to share his joys and sorrows.

But no such doubts dwelt in the mind of Guy Remington. Eminently fitted for domestic happiness, he looked forward anxiously to the time when sweet Lucy Atherstone, the fair English girl to whom he had become engaged when, four years before, he visited Europe, should be strong enough to bear transplanting to American soil. Twice since his engagement he had visited her, finding her always lovely, gentle, and yielding. Too yielding, it sometimes seemed to him, while occasionally the thought had flashed upon him that she did not possess a very remarkable depth of intellect. But he said to himself, he did not care; he hated strong-minded women, and would far rather his wife should be a little weak than masculine, like his Aunt Margaret, who sometimes wore bloomers, and advocated women's rights. Yes, he greatly preferred Lucy Atherstone, as she was, to a wife like the stately Margaret, or like Agnes, his pretty stepmother, who only thought how she could best attract attention; and as it had never occurred to him that there might be a happy medium, that a woman need not be brainless to be feminine and gentle, he was satisfied with

his choice, as well he might be, for a fairer, sweeter flower never bloomed than Lucy Atherstone, his affianced bride. Guy loved to think of Lucy, and as the doctor's remarks brought her to his mind, he went off into a reverie concerning her, becoming so lost in thought that until the doctor's hand was laid upon his shoulder by way of rousing him, he did not see that what his friend had designated as a go-giggle was stopping in front of the office, and that from it a young girl was alighting.

Naturally very polite to females, Guy's first impulse was to go to her assistance, but she did not need it, as was proven by the light spring with which she reached the ground. The white-haired man was with her again, but he evidently did not intend to stop, and a close observer might have detected a shade of sadness and anxiety upon his face as Madeline called cheerily out to him: “Good-by, grandpa. Don't fear for me; I hope you have good luck;” then, as he drove away, she ran a step after him and said; “Don't look so sorry, for if Mr. Remington won't let you have the money, there's my pony, Beauty. I am willing to give him up.”

“Never, Maddy. It's all the little fortin' you've got. I'll let the old place go first;” and, chirruping to Sorrel, the old man drove on, while Madeline walked, with a beating heart, to the office door, knocking timidly.

Glancing involuntarily at each other, the young men exchanged meaning smiles, while the doctor whispered softly: “Verdant—that's sure. Wonder if she'll knock at a church.”

As Guy sat nearest the door, it was he who held it ajar while Madeline came in, her soft brown eyes glistening with

something like a tear, and her cheeks burning with excitement as she took the chair indicated by Guy Remington, who unconsciously found himself master of ceremonies.

Poor little Madeline!

CHAPTER II. — MADELINE CLYDE.

Table of Contents

Madge her schoolmates called her, because the name suited her, they said; but Maddy they called her at home, and there was a world of unutterable tenderness in the voices of the old couple, her grandparents, when they said that name, while their dim eyes lighted up with pride and joy when they rested upon the young girl who answered to the name of Maddy. Their only daughter's only child, she had lived with them since her mother's death, for her father was a sea captain, who never returned from his last voyage to China, made two months before she was born. Very lonely and desolate would the home of Grandfather Markham have been without the presence of Madeline, but with her there, the old red farmhouse seemed to the aged couple like a paradise.

Forty years they had lived there, tilling the rather barren soil of the rocky homestead, and, saving the sad night when they heard that Richard Clyde was lost at sea, and the far sadder morning when their daughter died, bitter sorrow had not come to them; and, truly thankful for the blessings so long vouchsafed them, they had retired each night in peace with God and man, and risen each morning to pray. But a change was coming over them. In an evil hour Grandpa Markham had signed a note for a neighbor and friend, who failed to pay, and so it all fell on Mr. Markham, who, to meet the demand, mortgaged his homestead; the recreant neighbor still insisting that long before the mortgage should be due, he certainly would be able himself to meet it. This,

however, he had not done, and, after twice begging off a foreclosure, poor old Grandfather Markham found himself at the mercy of a grasping, remorseless man, into whose hands the mortgage had passed. It was vain to hope that Silas Slocum would wait. The money must either be forthcoming, or the red farmhouse be sold, with its few acres of land. Among his neighbors there was not one who had the money to spare, even if they had been willing to do so. And so he must look among strangers.

“If I could only help,” Madeline had said one evening when they sat talking over their troubles; “but there's nothing I can do, unless I apply for our school this summer. Mr. Green is committeeman; he likes us, and I don't believe but what he'll let me have it. I mean to go and see;” and, ere the old people had recovered from their astonishment, Madeline had caught her bonnet and shawl, and was flying down the road.

Madeline was a favorite with all, especially with Mr. Green, and as the school would be small that summer, the plan struck him favorably. Her age, however, was an objection, and he must take time to see what others thought of a child like her becoming a schoolmistress. Others thought well of it, and so before the close of the next day it was generally known through Honedale, as the southern part of Devonshire was called, that pretty little Madge Clyde had been engaged as teacher, she receiving three dollars a week, with the understanding that she must board herself. It did not take Madeline long to calculate that twelve times three were thirty-six, more than a tenth of what her grandfather must borrow. It seemed like a little fortune, and

blithe as a singing bird she flitted about the house, now stopping a moment to fondle her pet kitten, while she whispered the good news in its very appreciative ear, and then stroking her grandfather's silvery hair, as she said:

“You can tell them that you are sure of paying thirty-six dollars in the fall, and if I do well, maybe they'll hire me longer. I mean to try my very best. I wonder if ever anybody before me taught a school when they were only fourteen and a half. Do I look as young as that?” and for an instant the bright; childish face scanned itself eagerly in the old-fashioned mirror, with the figure of an eagle on the top.

She did look very young, and yet there was something womanly, too, in the expression of the face, something which said that life's realities were already beginning to be understood by her.

“If my hair were not short I should do better. What a pity I cut it the last time; it would have been so long and splendid now,” she continued, giving a kind of contemptuous pull at the thick, beautiful brown hair on whose glossy surface there was in certain lights a reddish tinge, which added to its beauty.

“Never mind the hair, Maddy,” the old man said, gazing fondly at her with a half sigh as he remembered another brown head, pillowed now beneath the graveyard turf. “Maybe you won't pass muster, and then the hair will make no difference. There's a new committee-man, that Dr. Holbrook, from Boston, and new ones are apt to be mighty strict.”

Instantly Maddy's face flushed all over with nervous dread, as she thought: “What if I should fail?” fancying that

to do so would be an eternal disgrace. But she should not. She was called by everybody the very best scholar in school, the one whom the teachers always put forward when desirous of showing off, the one whom Mr. Tiverton, and Squire Lamb, and Lawyer Whittemore always noticed so much. Of course she should not fail, though she did dread Dr. Holbrook, wondering much what he would ask her first, and hoping it would be something in arithmetic, provided he did not stumble upon decimals, where she was apt to get bewildered. She had no fears of grammar. She could pick out the most obscure sentence and dissect a double relative with perfect ease; then, as to geography, she could repeat whole pages of that, while in the spelling-book, the foundation of a thorough education, as she had been taught, she had no superiors, and but a very few equals. Still she would be very glad when it was over, and she appointed Monday, both because it was close at hand, and because that was the day her grandfather had set in which to ride to Aikenside, in an adjoining town, and ask its young master for the loan of three hundred dollars.

He could hardly tell why he had thought of applying to Guy Remington for help, unless it were that he once had saved the life of Guy's father, who, as long as he lived, had evinced a great regard for his benefactor, frequently asserting that he meant to do something for him. But the something was never done, the father was dead, and in his strait the old man turned to the son, whom he knew to be very rich, and who he had been told was exceedingly generous.

“How I wish I could go with you clear up to Aikenside! They say it's so beautiful,” Madeline had said, as on Saturday evening they sat discussing the expected events of the following Monday. “Mrs. Noah, the housekeeper, had Sarah Jones there once, to sew, and she told me all about it. There are graveled walks, and nice green lawns, and big, tall trees, and flowers—oh! so many!—and marble fountains, with gold fishes in the basin; and statues, big as folks, all over the yard, with two brass lions on the gateposts. But the house is finest of all. There's a drawing-room bigger than a ballroom, with carpets that let your feet sink in so far; pictures and mirrors clear to the floor—think of that, grandpa! a looking-glass so tall that one can see the very bottom of their dress and know just how it hangs. Oh, I do so wish I could have a peep at it! There are two in one room, and the windows are like doors, with lace curtains; but what is queerest of all, the chairs and sofas are covered with real silk, just like that funny, gored gown of grandma's up in the oak chest. Dear me! I wonder if I'll ever live in such a place as Aikenside?”

“No, no, Maddy, no. Be satisfied with the lot where God has put you, and don't be longing after something higher, Our Father in heaven knows just what is best for us; as He didn't see fit to put you up at Aikenside, 'tain't noways likely you'll ever live in the like of it.”

“Not unless I should happen to marry a rich man. Poor girls like me have sometimes done that, haven't they?” was Maddy's demure reply.

Grandpa Markham shook his head.

“They have, but it's mostly their ruination; so don't build castles in the air about this Guy Remington.”

“Me! Oh, grandpa, I never dreamed of Mr. Guy!” and Madeline blushed half indignantly. “He's too rich, too aristocratic, though Sarah said he didn't act one bit proud, and was so pleasant, the servants all worship him, and Mrs. Noah thinks him good enough for the Queen of England. I shall think so, too, if he lets you have the money. How I wish it was Monday night, so we could know sure!”

“Perhaps we both shall be terribly disappointed,” suggested grandpa, but Maddy was more hopeful.

She, at least, would not fail, while what she had heard of Guy Remington, the heir of Aikenside, made her believe that he would accede at once to her grandpa's request.

All that night she was working to pay the debt, giving the money herself into the hands of Guy Remington, whom she had never seen, but who came up in her dreams the tall, handsome-looking man she had so often heard described by Sarah Jones after her return from Aikenside. Even the next day, when, by her grandparent's side, Maddy knelt reverently in the small, time-worn church at Honedale, her thoughts, it must be confessed, were wandering more to the to-morrow and Aikenside, than to the sacred words her lips were uttering. She knew it was wrong, and with a nervous start would try to bring her mind back from decimal fractions to what the minister was saying; but Maddy was mortal, and right in the midst of the Collect, Aikenside and its owner would rise before her, together with the wonder how she and her grandfather would feel one week from that Sabbath day. Would the desired certificate be hers? or would

she be disgraced forever and ever by a rejection? Would the mortgage be paid and her grandfather at ease, or would his heart be breaking with the knowing he must leave what had been his home for so many years? Not thus was it with the aged disciple beside her—the good old man, whose white locks swept the large lettered book over which his wrinkled face was bent, as he joined in the responses, or said the prayers whose words had over him so soothing an influence, carrying his thoughts upward to the house not made with hands, which he felt assured would one day be his. Once or twice, it is true, thoughts of losing the dear old red cottage flitted across his mind with a keen, sudden pang, but he put it quickly aside, remembering at the same instant how the Father he loved doeth all things well to such as are His children. Grandpa Markham was old in the Christian course, while Maddy could hardly be said to have commenced as yet, and so to her that April Sunday was long and wearisome. How she did wish she might just look over the geography, by way of refreshing her memory, or see exactly how the rule for extracting the cube root did read, but Maddy forebore, reading only the Pilgrim's Progress, the Bible, and the book brought from the Sunday school.

With the earliest dawn, however, she was up, and her grandmother heard her repeating to herself much of what she dreaded Dr. Holbrook might question her upon. Even when bending over the washtub, for there were no servants at the red cottage, a book was arranged before her so that she could study with her eyes, while her small, fat hands and dimpled arms were busy in the suds. Before ten o'clock everything was done, the clothes, white as the snowdrops in

the garden beds, were swinging on the line, the kitchen floor was scrubbed, the windows washed, the best room swept, the vegetables cleaned for dinner, and then Maddy's work was finished. “Grandma could do all the rest,” she said, and Madeline was free “to put her eyes out over them big books if she liked.”

Swiftly flew the hours until it was time to be getting ready, when again the short hair was deplored, as before her looking-glass Madeline brushed and arranged her shining, beautiful locks. Would Dr. Holbrook think of her age? Suppose he should ask it. But no, he wouldn't. If Mr. Green thought her old enough, surely it was not a matter with which the doctor need trouble himself; and, somewhat at ease on that point, Madeline donned her longest frock, and, standing in a chair, tried to discover how much of her pantalets was visible.

“I could see splendidly in Mr. Remington's mirrors,” she said to herself, with a half sigh of regret that her lot had not been cast in some such place as Aikenside, instead of there beneath the hill in that wee bit of a cottage, whose rear slanted back until it almost touched the ground. “After all, I guess I'm happier here,” she thought. “Everybody likes me, while if I were Mr. Guy's sister and lived at Aikenside, I might be proud and wicked, and—”

She did not finish the sentence, but somehow the story of Dives and Lazarus, read by her grandfather that morning, recurred to her mind, and feeling how much rather she would rest in Abraham's bosom than share the fate of him who once was clothed in purple and fine linen she pinned on her little neat plaid shawl, and, tying the blue ribbons of her

coarse straw hat, glanced once more at the formidable cube root, and then hurried down to where her grandfather and old Sorrel wore waiting for her.

“I shall be so happy when I come back, because it will then be over, just like having a tooth out, you know,” she said to her grandmother, who bent down for the good-by kiss without which Maddy never left her. “Now, grandpa, drive on; I was to be there at three,” and chirruping herself to Sorrel, the impatient Madge went riding from the cottage door, chatting cheerily until the village of Devonshire was reached; then, with a farewell to her grandfather, who never dreamed that the man whom he was seeking was so near, she tripped up the flagging walk, and, as we have seen, soon stood in the presence of not only Dr. Holbrook, but also of Guy Remington.

Poor, poor little Madge!

CHAPTER III. — THE EXAMINATION.

Table of Contents

It was Guy who received her, Guy who pointed to a chair, Guy who seemed perfectly at home, and, naturally enough, she took him for Dr. Holbrook, wondering who the other black-haired man could be, and if he meant to stay in there all the while. It would be very dreadful if he did, and in her agitation and excitement the cube root was in danger of being altogether forgotten. Half guessing the cause of her uneasiness, and feeling more averse than ever to taking part in the matter, the doctor, after a hasty survey of her person, withdrew into the background, and sat where he could not be seen. This brought the short dress into full view, together with the dainty little foot, nervously beating the floor.

“She's very young,” he thought; “too young, by far,” and Maddy's chances of success were beginning to decline even before a word had been spoken.

How terribly still it was for the time, during which telegraphic communications were silently passing between Guy and the doctor, the latter shaking his dead decidedly, while the former insisted that he should do his duty. Madeline could almost hear the beatings of her heart, and only by counting and recounting the poplar trees growing across the street could she keep back the tears. What was he waiting for, she wondered, and, at last, summoning all her courage, she lifted her great brown eyes to Guy, and said, pleadingly:

“Would you be so kind, sir, as to begin?”

“Yes, certainly,” and electrified by that young, bird-like voice, the sweetest save one he had ever heard, Guy knocked down from the pile of books the only one at all appropriate to the occasion, the others being as far beyond what was taught in the district schools as his classical education was beyond Madeline's common one.

Remembering that the teacher of whom he had once been for a week a pupil, in the town of Framingham, had commenced operations by sharpening a lead pencil, so he now sharpened a similar one, determining as far as he could to follow that teacher's example. Maddy counted every fragment as it fell upon the floor, wishing so much that he would commence, and fancying that it would not be half so bad to have him approach her with some one of those terrible dental instruments lying before her, as it was to sit and wait as she was waiting. Had Guy Remington reflected a little, he would never have consented to do the doctor's work; but, unaccustomed to country usages, especially those pertaining to schools and teachers, he did not consider that it mattered which examined that young girl, himself or Dr. Holbrook. Viewing it somewhat in the light of a joke, he rather enjoyed it; and as the Framingham teacher had first asked her pupils their names and ages, so he, when the pencil was sharpened sufficiently, startled Madeline by asking her name.

“Madeline Amelia Clyde,” was the meek reply, which Guy quickly recorded.

Now, Guy Remington intended no irreverence; indeed, he could not tell what he did intend, or what it was which prompted his next query:

“Who gave you this name?”

Perhaps he fancied himself a boy again in the Sunday school, and standing before the railing of the altar, where, with others of his age, he had been asked the question propounded to Madeline Clyde, who did not hear the doctor's smothered laugh as he retreated into the adjoining room.

In all her preconceived ideas of this examination, she had never dreamed of being catechised, and with a feeling of terror as she thought of that long answer to the question, “What is thy duty to thy neighbor?” and doubted her ability to repeat it, she said: “My sponsors, in baptism gave me the first name of Madeline Amelia, sir,” adding, as she caught and misconstrued the strange gleam in the dark eyes bent upon her, “I am afraid I have forgotten some of the catechism; I did not know it was necessary in order to teach school.”

“Certainly, no; I do not think it is. I beg your pardon,” were Guy Remington's ejaculatory replies, as he glanced from Madeline to the open door of the adjoining room, where was visible a slate, on which, in huge letters, the amused doctor had written “Blockhead.”

There was something in Madeline's quiet, womanly, earnest manner which commanded Guy's respect, or he would have given vent to the laughter which was choking him, and thrown off his disguise. But he could not bear now to undeceive her, and, resolutely turning his back upon the doctor, he sat down by that pile of books and commenced the examination in earnest, asking first her age.

“Going on fifteen,” sounded older to Madeline than “Fourteen and a half,” so “Going on fifteen” was the reply, to which Guy responded: “That is very young, Miss Clyde.”

“Yes, but Mr. Green did not mind. He's the committeeman. He knew how young I was,” Madeline said, eagerly, her great brown eyes growing large with the look of fear which came so suddenly into them.

Guy noticed the eyes then, and thought them very bright and handsome for brown, but not so bright or handsome as a certain pair of soft blue orbs he knew, and feeling a thrill of satisfaction that sweet Lucy Atherstone was not obliged to sit there in that doctor's office to be questioned by him or any other man, he said: “Of course, if your employers are satisfied it is nothing to me, only I had associated teaching with women much older than yourself. What is logic, Miss Clyde?”

The abruptness with which he put the question startled Madeline to such a degree that she could not positively tell whether she had ever heard that word before, much less could she recall its meaning, and so she answered frankly, “I don't know.”

A girl who did not know what logic was did not know much, in Guy's estimation, but it would not do to stop here, and so he asked her next how many cases there were in Latin!

Maddy felt the hot blood tingling to her very fingertips, the examination had taken a course so widely different from her ideas of what it would probably be. She had never looked inside a Latin grammar, and again her truthful “I