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## Disappointed.

I thought, to-night, to see thy face, And mourn not for the sun gone down; But now the shadow in his place Hangs on my cheated heart its frown.

I could not doubt that thy dear voice Would cheer me more than bird or lute— How can my heart to-night rejoice, With bird and string and voice all mute?

The breath of June upon my cheek I bore, impatient for thy kiss; My fainting lips their anguish speak, The sweetness of thy breath to miss.

Oh, why did thy sweet steps delay, Since bird and song and breeze are gone? Slighted for hope of thee, the day! Without thee night puts sackcloth on!

Were I away, thou shouldst not chide One heedless moment of delay; I seek my sunshine at thy side— Thy voice my joy, thy smile my day.

## OUR SCHOOLMISTRESS.

An English Story.

I am a middle-aged lady, living quite by myself in the little town of St. Bridget's, where it happened, and I know the whole story from beginning to end, and the beginning was this:

I was paying a morning visit to dear old Mrs. Ambrose, our vicar's wife, when the vicar himself marched into the room with his wideawake on, and said—"Bother!"

I will do him the justice to say that he took off his wideawake as soon as he saw me, and met the requirements of the occasion by addressing me:

"Mrs. Acton, here's a bother!"

"What?" we exclaimed hurriedly, for we saw there was something serious.

"That—that 'prig' of an inspector says we must have a certificated mistress," replied the vicar; and then he sat down, and we all looked at each other in solemn silence for full three minutes.

A certificated mistress at St. Bridget's! That meant turning out the dear old woman who had kept the school for the last five-and-twenty years, and had taught our girls to hem and stitch and darn so beautifully that they got places as work-women far and wide! And she had taught both girls and boys the best manners of any children in Southshire, and had trained them up to be honest, God-fearing men and women, besides teaching them some reading and writing, and the first four rules of arithmetic. Nearly all the children who had stayed long enough at the school could read easy words in large print, and several of the clever ones had been known to write out the Lord's Prayer from memory, and to say the multiplication table quite perfectly. What could anybody want more? No wonder Mr. Ambrose called the inspector a prig. I called him something much worse, but as my thoughts were not put into words they need not be repeated.

"Oh, dear! dear!" cried Mrs. Ambrose, as the full meaning of the inspector's decision broke upon her; "what shall we do? Poor Mrs. Toddkins will break her heart."

There was no little difficulty in securing the certificated mistress.

"I'll write to Dobson," said Mr. Ambrose to his wife.

And he wrote to Mr. Dobson the next morning as soon as he went into his study.

Mr. Dobson was the principal of the great training college at Hatley, and an old friend of the vicar's, so he might just as well have written to him sooner, only none of us think of all the right things to be done just at the right time.

"If you want a mistress, offer seventy pounds," said the principal by return of post.

And the vicar did offer seventy pounds, though where the money was to come from I could not tell, and I don't think he could either.

Back came another letter from Mr. Dobson, to say that he had a mistress who had just finished her term of widow, exactly the person to suit St. Bridget's, and she would accept the situation on certain conditions. I don't know what the conditions were, except that her evenings were to be at her own disposal, only I know that it seemed to me very odd to hear of the schoolmistress making conditions, and accepting such an enormous salary, as if she were conferring a favor.

The vicar said it was the result of competition, the supply not being equal to the demand; but I thought it might be indirectly referred to strikes and unions, though I did not exactly see how; but when there are so many dreadful things going on in the country, they work into each other in a wonderful manner.

"It is a comfort that we are to have a widow," I remarked to Mr. Ambrose; "she will be staid and respectable, and not such a responsibility as a young girl."

"Oh, I don't know," sighed Mrs. Ambrose piteously; "I think I would rather have a young person, even if she did wear chignons and feathers. Widows are so—"

She stopped suddenly, remembering that I was a widow, and went on to a fresh sentence; but I wondered what she was going to say.

"I know I shall be afraid of her," she said. "And she is going to play the organ and manage the choir; she will be sure to want her own way in everything, and it won't be nice and comfortable as it used to be. And then, my dear, she is certain to be quite young; no middle-aged person would have taken the trouble to train herself, even if she had the cleverness, which isn't likely."

"Depend upon it, she will be young and pretty, and all the shopmen will be falling in love with her, and people will talk scandal, and there will be unpleasantness."

"I don't see that it follows," I said rather sharply; but I did not like the way she spoke of widows. It is very odd; but women whose husbands are alive always give themselves airs about it. I think it is because they are jealous of our power of marrying again, and as if were, two chances to their one; at least, I cannot discover any

other reason, but, of course, there may be one that I don't know of.

In a fortnight Mrs. Henry arrived. It was a long journey from Hatley to St. Bridget's, and the last four miles had to be done by road, in an omnibus that jolted a good deal, so that people were apt to be tired when they reached the town. Mr. Ambrose, like the courtly old gentleman he was, went down to meet the new mistress at the Silver Fish, where the omnibus always stopped.

"Now they are coming," cried the poor lady, as we heard the garden door open. "I shan't know what to say, Mrs. Acton; I wish I hadn't asked her to come."

"It's no matter, for the vicar is alone," I replied, looking out of the window, where I could see that gentleman rapidly approaching the house.

He came straight into us, but his face wore an expression of dismay.

"Well?" we cried as he entered; and, seeing his face, his wife exclaimed, "Oh, Justin, what is it? Is she so very bad?"

"Bad!" cried the vicar, standing in front of us. "What the dickens could Dobson send her here for? I wrote for I believe so," I replied meekly; "hasn't he sent one?"

"Oh, do tell us what she is," entreated Mrs. Ambrose, wringing her little white fingers. "Do tell us what she is."

"My dear, she is a lady," said the vicar; and then he sat down and looked at us, and we looked at him.

"For a few moments we were too much astonished to speak."

"A lady! what shall we do with her?" gasped Mrs. Ambrose presently, as all the social complications of the position rose before her.

"That's the bother of it; I foresee all sorts of difficulties," sighed the vicar; "but it can't be helped, and," he added, brightly, "perhaps other people won't find it out if we don't tell them."

"How is she dressed?" I asked eagerly.

"All in black, looking small and straight somehow."

"Is she pretty?"

"No."

"Then they won't find her out," I said emphatically. "If a woman isn't pretty and well dressed, and does not call herself a lady, she will only be found out by her own class."

"How can you know?" said the vicar, looking at me.

"Never mind how—I do know; and if we and Mrs. Henry are wise enough to keep our own counsel and our own places, it will be all right."

"But she's expected to be treated as a lady—asked to dinner and all that?" asked Mrs. Ambrose doubtfully.

"I think not," said the vicar; "and if she does we can't help it. If she is a lady, she will recognize her position and accept it."

I could not tell how old she was. She might have been thirty; she might have been five-and-thirty. I used to watch her for half-hours at a time to try and settle the question to my own satisfaction, but I was always puzzled.

But she showed her authority at the first sign of disobedience. There was a threatening, no talking about how she would punish them if they were naughty, but the punishment came swiftly on the commission of the offence, and in less than a month she had established such discipline as had never been dreamed of under the old rule.

And she taught them so wonderfully. I used to listen in amazement while she gave the lessons, and the children began to improve rapidly.

We used to wonder, Mrs. Ambrose and I, what Mrs. Henry did in the evenings. Her dress was so simple that needlework for herself could not occupy her time; yet she was seldom out of doors, until it was almost dark, and then she used to walk up and down the little garden that divided her house from the school for an hour at a time, more for the sake of exercise than enjoyment, it would seem by the rapid steady pace at which she moved. One night, when I was coming home late, I stopped and spoke to her.

"You walk late, Mrs. Henry; but perhaps it is the pleasantest time during the hot weather."

"It is the cheapest, Mrs. Acton. It saves an hour of daylight to come out now instead of earlier."

It struck me all of a heap, as the people say, to hear this woman, who was earning seventy pounds per annum, and appeared to have no one but herself to care for, talk of "saving daylight" in the case of a candle; were something to be avoided. I felt very sorry for her. I don't know why it came over me all at once, as it did, that her life was a very hard one. But I put my wrinkled old hand on the little firm white fingers which rested on the gate, and said—"My dear you must not work too hard."

I was frightened when I had done it. She was so self-possessed and reserved, that I thought she would be angry; but, instead of that, the steady little fingers began to tremble and twined themselves round mine with a clinging grasp, and then I found she was crying. I didn't say a word more to her. When people are so old as I am, and have gone through a great deal of trouble, they know what poor weak things words are, and how often they do more harm than good. So I held her hand without speaking, and presently she stopped crying.

"Sometimes I feel so lonely," she whispered, "and you are so kind; please forget it, Mrs. Acton."

"Yes," for I quite understand her. "But is not your life too hard? Can't you let an old woman help you, my dear?"

She took my hand, and kissed it.

"No, it is not too hard, and no one can help me; but it will be easier by and by. Good night."

And then she slipped away, as if afraid of saying more, and I went home and thought my thoughts in silence.

St. Bridget's was all alive, for the bishop was coming to hold a visitation in the town. No bishop had ever come there before within the memory of man; for the last one had been old and ill for years before his death, and the shepherds of those days had not thought it

needed to go about among their flocks so much as is considered right in the present time, and sheep living in remote towns had to make long journeys when they attended Episcopal gatherings.

But that was all to be changed under the new reign; for our bishop was not only a great scholar and a great divine, but a strong man also, who would go into every corner of his diocese, and see with his own eyes how matters were going on. He had only filled the throne for two years, and this was his primary visitation, and it was to be held in twelve towns instead of two.

St. Bridget's was one among the twelve, and Mrs. Ambrose had been thinking about her luncheon for weeks, when it occurred to the vicar that the bishop might find it convenient to sleep at St. Bridget's for a night either before or after the visitation.

He was asked, and accepted by return of post. He would be glad to stay at St. Bridget's vicarage on the night of the 26th, which was the date of the visitation.

Mrs. Ambrose was delighted with the honor, but bewildered with the responsibility; and we had many consultations about his lordship's comfort, and the proper mode of entertaining him, and were very nervous lest something had been omitted or forgotten at the last moment.

But when he came, we forgot our anxiety; he was so pleasant and genial, and took everything so easily, that I thought he was much less formidable than his chaplain—a dignified personage—who seemed oppressed by the dignity of his office.

It all went off nicely: the luncheon was charming; the bishop affable, the clergy in full attendance. Only one disappointment occurred.

Our singing in church was not up to the mark. Mrs. Henry's voice was not heard once during the service; and at luncheon some of the visitors noticed the omission.

"Have you lost your lovely contralto, Mrs. Ambrose," inquired the rural dean; "I did not hear her to-day."

"Oh, no, our mistress is still with us. I don't know why she did not sing; perhaps she has a cold," replied Mrs. Ambrose.

Then the conversation drifted into educational channels, and Mrs. Henry was forgotten.

But I knew that she had not a cold. I had heard her sing magnificently, as I passed the church when the choir were practicing an hour before service, and her silence puzzled me.

Presently the bishop's courteous voice was heard saying: "I hear your school is doing remarkably well. Mrs. Ambrose, will you take me to see it presently?"

"Certainly, my lord."

And as soon as the general gathering had dispersed, Mr. and Mrs. Ambrose and myself accompanied the bishop to the school-house. Neither the chaplain nor the rural dean came with us, for which we were afterwards thankful. I entered with the vicar, the bishop having lingered a moment at the door with Mrs. Ambrose to admire the view of the Southshire Wolds, with the sea glittering beyond them in the distance.

Here is the bishop come to see the school, Mrs. Henry," said the vicar blandly.

As he spoke, he glanced round the room, to see that all was in order. I not thinking of the school, was looking at Mrs. Henry. She flushed crimson, and then turned white to the lips. With a hasty movement, she passed round to the other side of the great black board on which she had been drawing a map, and the strange thought came into my head: "Is she trying to conceal herself?"

But the bishop was in the school by this time, and the children stood at attention, and stared at his apron and silk stockings with round-eyed amazement. He turned to the mistress with a civil little speech of congratulation. Half-hidden behind the board, she swept a courtesy, but did not raise her eyes; and the lower part of her face was covered, as if accidentally, by her handkerchief.

His lordship walked about among the children, and the Ambroses were delighted; but ever as he moved, Mrs. Henry kept behind him.

"Would you like to hear them sing, my lord?" inquired Mrs. Ambrose cheerfully.

"What would the bishop do but say that he should like it?"

"A short song, please Mrs. Henry," said the vicar, as he ranged up to the fireplace, where the bishop stood with his hands behind him.

Mrs. Henry, still on the other side of the great black board, made a sign to the children, who put their hands behind them. Hers were quiet as usual, but they were trembling. The song began: only some common school melody, but it startled the bishop, who stepped forward, and looking round the black board, he cried hurriedly: "Mrs. Henry had not sung ten notes. Once started, the children went on by themselves, and her voice was silent; but the bishop had heard enough.

Straight round the black board he went with long eager strides, and in another minute he had his hands on Mrs. Henry's shoulders, forcing her to look up.

"I knew it," he said emphatically, while Mrs. Ambrose and I and the vicar stared, and the children sang on noisily.

He was holding her hand in both of his now, as if he never meant to let it go again.

"My lord, you forget!" she said, trying to escape.

"Hester Murray, I remember!" was all he said, but her eyes sank, and the color came flushing over her face. Notwithstanding the quiet cast and hideous gown, she looked beautiful then.

Mr. Ambrose came to his senses first, and covered the situation. Luckily the children had not heard a word.

"My lord, I should like to have your opinion on enlarging the school. We think of throwing out a class-room over there."

And he pointed vaguely to the other end, while all the children turned their heads in the direction indicated, and kept them there while the vicar talked

on for three minutes about alterations of which I had never before heard a word nor have I since.

"Ah," replied the bishop in a composed voice, "if you want more accommodation, it will be best gained there. How does it look outside?"

And, followed by Mr. Ambrose, he went through the door, and I ventured to look at Mrs. Henry.

She was standing in her place, and making the children form classes as if nothing had happened. Her face betrayed no sign of emotion; and when I took Mrs. Ambrose's arm and wished her good afternoon, she replied in her usual voice. The little scene we had witnessed might have been a dream for all traces it left behind. I got Mrs. Ambrose out, and was thankful that the door closed behind us before she made a remark.

"My dear, what does it mean?" she whispered nervously, as we stood in the yard.

"Never mind; only don't talk about it," I replied in the same voice; for the bishop and the vicar were coming round the corner.

"I think you dine at seven, Mr. Ambrose?" said his lordship serenely.

"Yes, my lord."

"Then I will take a little stroll. I have hardly had enough walking to-day, and I should like to see a little of your beautiful neighborhood."

Without another word we marched way down the hill, and a few minutes later we saw his shovel back going along the field pathway to the river.

We three went home in silence; but as we parted at the vicarage gate, Mr. Ambrose said: "We always knew that she was a lady."

"O, my dear Justin, I had forgotten that," exclaimed his wife, in a relieved tone. "Then you don't think it anything improper?"

Heaven knows what terrible things the poor lady had been imagining during our silent walk; but the vicar's ringing laugh swept them all away.