

# MADLINE.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE EXAMINING COMMITTEE.

Twenty-five years ago the people of Devonshire, a little town among the New England hills, had the reputation of being rather quarrelsome. Sometimes about meek, gentle Mrs. Tiverton, the minister's wife, whose manner of housekeeping, or style of dress, did not exactly suit them; sometimes about the minister himself, who vainly imagined that if he preached three sermons a week, attended the Wednesday evening prayer-meeting, the Tuesday evening sewing society, visited all the sick, and gave to every beggar that 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 two or three Sundays it was all in vain that Mr. Tiverton read the psalm and hymn, and cast troubled glances toward the vacant seats of his refractory singers. There was no one to respond, except poor Mr. Hodge, who usually selected something in a minor key, and pitched it so high that few could follow him; while Mrs. Captain Simpson—whose daughter was the organist—rolled her eyes at her next neighbour, or fanned herself furiously in token of her disgust.

Latterly, however, there had arisen a new cause for quarrel, before which everything else sank into insignificance. Now, though the village of Devonshire could boast but one public school-house, 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 favourable, a slip of paper certifying his or her qualification to teach a common school. It was 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 a 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 were roused as they had never been before—the aristocracy abusing, and the democracy upholding the dismayed trio, who at last 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 the quarrel began, young Dr. Holbrook, a native of Boston, had rented the pleasant little office on the village common, formerly occupied by old Dr. Carey, whose days of practice were over. Besides being handsome, and skilful, 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 favourite 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 unless they happened to be sick; that he should make a miserable failure, and be turned out of office in less than a month. The people would not listen. Somebody must examine the teachers, and that somebody might as well be Dr. Holbrook as any one.

'Only be strict with 'em and draw the reins tight; find out to your satisfaction whether a gal knows her P's and Q's before you give her a stiffcut: 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 gen-