

THE NEW MINISTER.

WHAT do you think, Aunt Violet? The new minister is coming to-night!"

Miriam Blake and her cousin, Effie Towers, burst into the quiet old-fashioned sitting-room like twin gales of wind so fresh and sudden and inspiring were they.

It was a very cheerful apartment with the crimson carpet flooded with October sunshine, the canary singing from his cage among the geraniums in the window-sill, and a bright wood fire crackling from the most burnished of brass andirons on the hearth—for Aunt Violet loved an open fire, and adhered to it through all the modern innovations.

She was a woman past thirty, yet very pretty withal—a woman whose type of face and form would always remain youthful. Brown hair, with rippling lights of gold upon its surface; blue-gray eyes, large and shaded with long lashes; a complexion where the fresh white and red betokened perfect health and a smiling, cherry-red, melting mouth, whose smiles betrayed a singularly regular set of teeth—Miss Violet Brown was perhaps quite as attractive in her mature womanhood as she had been in her fresher girl-days.

"To-night?" said Aunt Violet. "And is the parsonage all in readiness?"

"All prepared, I believe. And what do you think, Aunt Violet?" went on Miriam, with girlish eagerness, "of old Mrs. Marsh going there with her two daughters to prepare tea, and make it 'sort o' hum-like,' as she says, for him the first night?"

And Violet smiled over her crochet. "Why," struck in Effie Towers, "the Marsh girls are as old as the hills."

"Not quite as old as the hills," said Aunt Violet, quietly, "Sarah Marsh is about my age, and Mehetable cannot be more than a year or two older."

"Oh, Aunt Violet!" said Effie, coaxingly, stealing both arms around Miss Brown's slender waist, "nobody ever thinks of your being old!"

"It's an indisputable fact nevertheless," said Aunt Violet, serenely.

"Aunt Violet," said Miriam suddenly, as she sat looking her aunt full in the face, "how I wish Mr. Smith would fall in love with you!"

Aunt Violet shrugged her shoulders. "My dear child, isn't Brown a sufficiently common cognomen but you want to change it into the still more hackneyed name of Smith?"

"I wasn't thinking of the name, Aunt Violet—I was only reflecting to myself what a splendid minister's wife you would make."

"I shall never make anybody's wife, Miriam."

"What nonsense!" ejaculated the gay girl. "Why, aunt, you are the prettiest of our whole set, yet with your sweet-pea complexion and those big innocent eyes of yours—"

But here Effie Towers interrupted, speaking gravely with serious glance. "I know what makes Aunt Violet speak so, Miriam—she has had a disappointment years and years ago."

"Aunt! Did you really?"

"Years and years ago," as Effie says, I had a lover," returned Aunt Violet, calmly. "And what interrupted the current of true love?"

"I was foolish, and wished to test my power, Clarence. That was his name, was hasty and impulsive, and my folly incensed him. So we parted."

"And he is married now?"

"I do not know. I have never seen nor heard from him since. He was only spending the summer vacation, a college student, in our quiet village."

"What was his last name?"

"Nimrod, Miriam, do not let us clutter any more of the horrid past. I have told you my folly. See that you take warning by it!"

And none of Miriam Blake's soft coaxings could win from Aunt Violet any further confidences.

"You are not an old maid, darling aunt," said Miriam, "but Sarah Marsh is, and I mean to enter the lists with her myself to win the new minister's favor. The parsonage would make a pretty nest for such a bird as I am, all enlivened in roses and clematis, and full of delicious little by windows and maple-shaded piazzas. I hope he's young and good-looking."

"He's just thirty-five," said Effie, "for Deacon Alden told me so."

"Did he say whether he was good-looking or not?"

"No, he didn't, as if Deacon Alden cared for his looks."

"Thirty-five—that is rather old-fashioned, but a man isn't totally past reform at thirty-five," observed Miriam, pensively. "If Aunt Violet won't have him I'll try my chance."

"I shall never marry," gravely reiterated Aunt Violet, with more seriousness than Miriam's light-jesting way seemed to call for.

"If that's the case," said Miriam, "I'll go and tip up the breadths of my lilac lawn dress, and have the doted ruffles done up. One can't be too careful of one's advantage of costume at such a critical time, and I know Mehetable Marsh has got a white dress with blue rosebuds all over it."

"Miriam, what a rattlepate you are," said Effie.

"Don't I tell you I need a minister for a husband, just to sober me down?"

And with this Parthian arrow of retort, Miss Miriam quitted the room, with Effie following her.

Presently she came back again, dancing merrily into the room.

"I've found out my future husband's name."

"What is it?"

"A decided novelty—John Smith."

Aunt Violet smiled, and Miriam vanished once more like a twinkling bit of thistle-down.

Violet Brown sat gazing into the coral depths of the bright embers that had fallen through the logs on the hearth. Somehow, spite of her assertion of self-reliance and independence, she felt very lonely that October afternoon.

"I'll go for a walk," thought Violet. "Perhaps a little exercise will dissipate this gathering despondency."

She tied a round hat under her curls, put on a coquettish scarlet circle, tasseled with white silk, which, according to her loving nieces, "made her look like a delicious little Red Riding Hood," and went out into the fresh autumn air, where the woods, all radiant with gold and crimson glories, were showering their leafy trophies on the walks below, as she entered their silent aisles.

"Autumn," she thought, sadly, "how soon it has come upon us! And it is but a little while since spring was here with her dew and roses. My spring has vanished, too, and unlike the sacred season of birds and blossoms, it will never return to me again. Heigho! I wonder what I was born for!"



"THINKING A LITTLE PENSIVELY."

into this world. I don't seem to be of very much use to anybody."

Violet was thinking thus, a little pensively, as she sat on a moss-enameled fallen tree, tapping the drifts of yellow leaves with the point of her parasol, and letting the fresh, fragrant wind blow the gold-brown curls back from her forehead. She was not thinking how picturesque was her attitude, nor how beautiful her face looked in its oval clearness, with pink flushes on either cheek, but both these facts struck the perceptions of a tall stranger carrying a valise in his left hand, who had just crossed the stile leading from the main road, and entered the illuminated glow of the autumnal woods.

He raised his hat with a courteous motion as Miss Brown started at his advancing footsteps.

"I beg your pardon; I fear I have unintentionally startled you."

"Not at all," Violet looked up earnestly at his face as she answered.

"Perhaps you can direct me to the shortest cut across these woods to Millhambury? I am not quite certain as to my localities."

"You are on the direct path now, Clarence Smith."

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glances of their new happiness had been exchanged, "I don't comprehend this at all. How did you come here? and how did you know where to find me?"

"I did not know where to find you, Violet. Chance has been my friend here, and as for my opportune appearance on the scene, it is very easily accounted for. I have been called to take charge of the parish of Millhambury."

"Clarence, you are not the new minister?"

"But I am the new minister."

"His name is John Smith."

"I beg your pardon, mia amina—it is John Clarence Smith."

And Violet's surprise was sufficiently amusing to the reverend gentleman at her side.

Old Mrs. Bezel Marsh and her two elderly, hard-favored daughters, had got the parsonage all ready, even to lighting the evening lamps on the study-table, and poking the clear anthracite fire that burned in the dining-room grate.

Miss Mehetable had turned the tumbler of crimson currant jelly into its cut-glass dish, and disposed the green sprigs of parsley to the most striking effect round the thinly-cut slices of boiled tongue, while Miss Sarah made a Leaning Tower of Pisa of the buttermilk biscuits, and whisked the flies away from the sugar-basin, in readiness for the expected guest, and like the hero of song, "still he came not!"

"The kitten's bollen," and the tea's all steeped," said Mrs. Marsh, as she sat in the big rocking-chair in front of the fire. "It'll be spiled if he don't come pretty soon."

"He'll be here presently now," said Miss Mehetable, loosening her curls from their confining papers. "Oh, ma! I wonder if he'll be pleased with what we've done?"

"He can't help it," said Mrs. Marsh, mentally congratulating herself on her double chances of being the minister's mother-in-law. But the words were yet on her lips and the triumphant reflections yet in her mind, when a knock came softly to the door, and Miriam Blake entered, rosy with her long walk through the frosty autumn twilight.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Miriam. "I thought I'd come over and tell you. The new minister has come."

"Sakes alive!" ejaculated Mrs. Marsh.

"I don't believe it," said Mehetable. "Oh, but he has for I've seen him. And you needn't stay here any longer, for he has concluded to remain at our house to-night."

Mrs. Marsh and her daughters both stared.

"What an alrith does it all mean?" demanded the elder lady.

"I'll tell you a very, very great secret," cried the delighted Miriam. "He's an old beau of Aunt Violet's, and the engagement has been renewed, and my dear little blue-eyed aunt is to be the minister's wife the very next month that ever dawn upon us!"

"Land o' Goshen!" cried Mrs. Marsh. "Well I never!" said Miss Sarah.

"I shouldn't think," venomously commented Miss Mehetable, "that he'd want to marry an old maid."

"There are more old maids than one in the world," observed Miriam, philosophically. "So if you'll kindly lock up the room, I'll take the key back to my new uncle—that is to be. I had thought of setting my cap at the new minister myself, but I cheerfully yield the palm to Aunt Violet."

She tripped home, through the dusk, laughing to herself at the discomfort of the Marsh family. Aunt Violet and Mr. John C. Smith were sitting cozily together over the fire when she returned, and, as she passed through the room, she only paused to throw her arms around Violet's neck, and whisper:

"What do you think now about never marrying, Aunt Violet?"—The Hearthstone.

Monkey Discipline.

One of the monkey cages in the New York "Zoo" contains a mother monkey and her baby. Some visitors one day gave the mother a chocolate peppermint. She tasted it, smacked her lips, winked, and put it all into her mouth—only to remove it at once, and smack and wink much harder. After a second she repeated her experiment, and again hastily removed the peppermint.

Once more she put the dainty in her mouth, but once more look it out. Then, with watery eyes, she laid the candy carefully on the ledge of her cage, turned her back, walked over to the opposite side, seized the rails with both hands, and gazed out as if she had never seen a peppermint.

Meanwhile the baby, who had been engaged with visitors in a corner, had returned to the front. Seeing the peppermint, he picked it up and tasted it. But his mother's three experiments had left only a nibble for him. That disposed of, he, too, walked to the opposite side, seized the rails, and stood gazing out with the same air of utter absorption as his mother's.

As soon as the latter had cooled down she came back again, and looked for the peppermint. Not seeing it, she swept with one paw all along the ledge where she had left it, but in vain. Suddenly she ran to the baby, and twisting his head to face herself, put one hand on each of his jaws, pulled his mouth wide open, stuck her head in, and gave a big sniff. Then she turned him over and spanked him soundly.

We don't know that the Latin inscriptions on tombstones stand for, but have an idea that, translated into English, they would mean: "He's all in."

OLD FAVORITES

Silver Threads Among the Gold.

Darling, I am growing old—Silver threads among the gold Shine upon my brow to-day—Life is fading fast away; But, my darling, you will be Always young and fair to me!

CHORUS.

Darling, I am growing old—Silver threads among the gold Shine upon my brow to-day—Life is fading fast away.

When your hair is silver white And your cheeks no longer bright With the roses of the May I will kiss your lips, and say: Oh! my darling, mine alone, You have never older grown.

Love can never more grow old; Locks may lose their brown and gold, Cheeks may fade and hollow grow, But the hearts that love will know Never winter's frost and chill; Summer warmth is in them still—

Love is always young and fair, What to us is silver hair, Faded cheeks or steps grown slow, To the heart that beats below? Since I kissed you, mine alone, You have never older grown. —Eileen E. Rexford.

The Star.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder what you are! Up above the world so high, Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is gone, When he nothing shines upon, Then you show your little light, Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

Then the traveler in the dark Thanks you for your tiny spark He could not see which way to go, If you did not twinkle so.

In the dark blue sky you keep, And often through my curtains peep, For you never shut your eye Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark Lights the traveler in the dark, Though I know not what you are, Twinkle, twinkle, little star. —Jane Taylor.

LIFE IN ENGLISH VILLAGES.

It is Not the Idyllic Form that Poets Sing About.

"I know a village where there are no fewer than thirty cottages with but one bedroom apiece, and in each of these single bedrooms six, seven and more people are sleeping," says A. Montefiore-Bruce, writing in the London Mail about life in the average English village. "In one of them, father, mother and eight children huddled together. In another, father, mother and six children—three of whom are grown up—are sleeping. In these cottages there is one living room downstairs and no sanitary arrangement of any kind. At the back of the cottages runs an open ditch. It is also an open sewer."

"Here, in the very heart of the country, I expect to find abundance of pure water, abundance of sweet air. Too often I find neither about the cottages. Hundreds of villages have no water supply, though a comparatively small expenditure could provide it. I know a village—it is typical of hundreds—where the cottagers have to go half a mile to get water. A foul ditch furnishes another village with the whole of its water supply. Offensive refuse heaps lie piled round the crumbling walls of the cottages. The wooden floors without are rotten with sewage."

"Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex contain many such villages, and other counties—such as Bedford, Cambridgeshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset—easily vie with them. I could write of lonely cottages far across the fields, with no water within a mile, whence the children morning after morning walk two miles to school, and drag their tired limbs that distance back again at night—and this whatever the weather; where the postal service comes but once a week; where the men and boys walk daily five or six miles to and from work; where of drainage there is none; where of the simplest sanitation there is none; where the medical officer of health comes not, and where the inspector of nuisances is unknown."

GLOVES MADE OF RAT SKIN.

Hide of Rodents Too Small for Even the Child's Size.

A report comes from Copenhagen that a great rat hunt has been organized there and that the skins of many thousands of the victims are to be used in making gloves. If the rat hunters in the Danish capital cherish any such hopes they are doomed to disappointment, says the Pall Mall Gazette. Rat skins cannot be made into gloves fit for commerce. The belief that a valuable raw material is being neglected here survives only in the minds of the inexperienced. The glove-maker knows much better. A Norwegian merchant once came to England and informed a well-known glove-maker that he had collected over 100,000 rat skins and was prepared to receive offers for them. He was fully convinced that the skins were suitable for glove-making. But the manufacturer found that the largest skin was only some six inches long and he held up a kid skin for the smallest size of glove, a child's, which was eight inches long, and asked how he was to cut such a glove out of rat skin.

SAVED THE WHOLE FAMILY.

Two huntsmen were out on a lake, rowing. From the rushes emerged a mallard surrounded by a brood of tiny balls of feather, and the mother duck headed the way across an arm of the lake. One of the observers tells the story in Forest and Stream:

When they were too far away from their hiding place to turn back we closed in upon them, drawing closer and closer; and with every stroke of our oars the mother bird quacked encouragingly to her brood to hurry along, the little ones giving out plaintive peeps that no doubt went deep into the mother's heart.

Wondering whether on our approach the mother bird would abandon her brood, we rowed close alongside of her, when we could easily have dispatched her with an oar; but with one eye upon us and the other upon her brood, she swam along in the lead, simply unmindful of the danger to herself. By this time the little ones began to string out, until they formed a thin, feathery peeping line behind the mother.

There was one little fellow who could not keep up, and who was a yard or more behind the end of the line, and who struggled and peeped bravely but slowly and weakly along. Upon him the attention of the mother was bestowed. Her voice seemed directed toward him, and her gaze, as she turned her head, concentrated upon him. It was such a sight as one but seldom has the opportunity to witness.

Allowing our boat to rest quiet, we kept close watch on the mother, who took the opportunity to spring clear of the water and fly to the little one. In a moment the feeble and tired duckling was snug upon its mother's back, and with a gladness quacking, faintly echoed by the peeping of the rest of the brood, she once more led the aquatic procession. In a few moments they were within the welcome rushes, and we saw them no more.

THE FIREMAN'S RISK.

Investigating the Danger Due to Electrical Shock.

One of the objections to the erection of electric wires on poles in cities is the hindrance which such wires offer to free access to a burning building, by means of ladders and fire towers. It is at times almost necessary to cut such wires to afford access to a burning building—a work which is not highly appreciated by the fire fighters. Another difficulty presents itself also, namely, the danger to the firemen from electric shocks due to current carried to the nozzle by the stream of water when it comes in contact with live wires. Such shocks have more than once been of sufficient strength to disable firemen for a time, but, so far as is known, no fatalities due to this cause have occurred. In order to ascertain to what extent firemen are subject to risk of life, if at all, when the stream of water thrown from the hose strikes against live wires, a series of experiments were recently undertaken in Germany. They were made with pressure of 6,000 volts alternating current, and 550 volts direct current. The stream of water was directed against a portion of the wires from which the insulation had been previously removed. With the 6,000 volts pressure it was found that the resistance of about one foot of ordinary hydrant water reduced the potential of the current to a point when it was not dangerous, but the effects were not pleasant. When the resistance of the water was lowered by the addition of 0.05 per cent of soda the minimum safe length of the stream was increased to about forty inches. With 550 volts direct current a dangerous voltage was not reached with pure hydrant water, but with the same percentage of soda in the water harmful potentials were indicated by the volt meters used in the tests when the stream of water was only three inches long. On the whole, the results of the experiments showed that the danger to firemen from the contact of water from the hose with live wires carrying high potentials is not ordinarily so great as has been generally supposed hitherto. This, however, is no reason for lessening the precautions looking to the safety and best interests of all concerned in this matter.—Philadelphia Record.

Freak Taxes.

Freak taxes are nothing new under the sun. In London there used to be a window tax, every household having to pay so much for every window in his dwelling. In the days of Charles II. the British capital had a tax on chimneys, which produced many a pound to gild the pleasures of the merry monarch. There was, the germ of an idea behind the chimney tax, for London was beginning to get smoky then, and it was thought that by taxing chimneys their number would be reduced and there would be less smoke.

A New Scheme.

"Say, boss," said the thin beggar, "won't yer help a poor, sick man? A kind doctor gimme a prescription an' I'd like ter use it."

"And you want me to pay for the medicine?" inquired Mr. Goodart.

"Oh, no; I got the medicine all right, but it's to be took before meals. I thoughta mebbe you'd gimme the price o' one o' the meals."—Philadelphia Press.

When there is a sudden shouting on the streets, a woman always looks down in an alarmed way to see if her skirt is coming off.