

CHAPTER II

The Pastor Begins to "Pull Wires"

THE summer months passed rapidly away. When October came, it brought with it a return of activity in the West End. Draymen laden with trunks; carpet-beaters at work; gardeners cropping the great undulating lawns and the summer's growth of shrubbery; maids rubbing a three months' dust from the steps and windows,—all bespoke an awakening in the fashionable part of Laurenboro. Soon the heavy carriages, rolling up to the mansions on Ashburne Avenue, told the passers-by that the *élite* had returned to resume their routine life of pleasure for the winter.

It was a raw and dreary afternoon, enlivened by a brisk gale from the southeast. The trees along the great wide avenue were shedding their sere leaves in myriads, and carpeting the gray asphalt. Workmen were busy putting up the winter windows in the Melgrove mansion, covering the flower-beds, tying down the ivy, and preparing for the long white season, which, coming as it did rather early, threatened to be more severe than usual.

In a small rear parlor sat Mrs. Melgrove and two