

HOME CIRCLE.

THE WEDDING FEE.

How very dark and stormy it was on that March evening! The doors and windows kept up a perpetual rattle; violent gusts of wind and dashes of rain now and then beat against the house, as if bound to seek shelter therein.

Little Robby was sound asleep in his crib, and the minister and his wife were spending the evening together in the cosy sitting-room. The hour for retiring had come, and while Mrs. Watson was bustling about, picking up and adjusting the numberless concerns which nobody but a careful house-wife can ever see or think of, there came a violent ring of the bell.

"Mercy!" exclaimed Mrs. Watson, "somebody must be dying or dead. What a dreadful night for you to go out in!"

Mr. Watson opened the door and peered into the darkness. Not a human being could he see or hear. A few seconds passed, when a loud, gruff voice was heard, asking:

"Can you splice us to-night?"

For an instant the minister was confused, not being accustomed to the use of that nautical term in relation to the duties of his profession. A second thought, however, made clear to him the possibility that splicing might be within the limit of his particular province; and so raising his voice above the storm he replied:

"If you mean to ask me, sir, to marry you, I shall be happy to perform the ceremony. Is the lady with you?"

"Ha, ha! that's a good one! Sara Ann, you mean! Don't suppose I'd come to get the knot tied without her, do you? No sir; she's right here in the cart."

Mr. Watson need not have stepped back to inform his wife of the great event which was to take place, for she had heard all the conversation and was using her utmost endeavours to expel the laugh from her countenance before the happy pair appeared.

It must be confessed that the sight of the couple was not conducive to gravity. They had passed a good while since the bloom of youth, and made no special effort to conceal the fact. Both had evidently come directly from their work, which, indeed, the gentleman proceeded to intimate.

"Fact is, parson, 'tis rather a bad night outside; and I says to Sara, 'What's the use; let's not fix up a bit, but go just as we are. The knot 'll hold just as well as if we had on our best bib and tucker.' And besides, parson, we want to take the old folks by surprise, and they'd be sure to 'spect something if we'd gone to work and put on all the riggin's." Mrs. Watson was glad of this little opportunity to smile, and promptly improved it. What would she not have given for the privilege of a good, hearty laugh!

The brief ceremony concluded, Mr. and Mrs. Watson extended their congratulations.

"Thar," broke in the newly married man, "is the ticket; guess you'll find it O. K. Now, Sara, let's be goin'. Plaguey tough ride before us. Good bye, parson. Good bye, ma'am. Much obliged for the job. Hope to do as much for you sometime."

The "cart" rattled away, and Mrs. Watson,

into whose hands her husband had delivered the license, made haste to open it, thinking that, after all, it wasn't best to judge people by the outside, and that the strange man might have done something by way of a fee. There it was? A bill! Yes, and upon it the magnificent figure of one dollar!

"Well, I do declare," shouted Mrs. Watson, "isn't this too mean for anything? Shame on that man; he don't deserve to be married."

"Now, my dear," said the minister, "you should not be too hard, for I think you had at least a dollar's worth of enjoyment out of the occasion."

"Yes, sir; and I noticed somebody who seemed troubled to keep from laughter."

Next day little Robby's shoes were bought with the wedding fee, the minister's clothes were brushed and cleaned for the hundredth time, and the good lady, by dint of extraordinary management, made the old dress answer an excellent purpose.

The spring passed away, and the summer in all its beautiful bloom and abundant fruitfulness came on. The wedding on the stormy night had almost passed from the minds of the minister and his wife; albeit, now and then she would break out with a laugh, and asked her husband if he didn't think it was nearly time for him to splice another couple. One day, as the happy little family were eating their dinner, and just as the parents were feeling uncommonly proud to some smart thing little Robby had said, there came just such another ring of the bell as that heard on the stormy night.

"Well, there," said Mrs. Watson, "one would thing for all the world that the splice man had come again."

Before the minister could reach the door it was opened, and astonishing to relate, there stood the identical hero of the wedding occasion.

"Arternoon, parson and ma'am; hain't forgot me, have ye? 'Member that job you did for me last spring? Never did anything better in that line, bet your life. Didn't know how it would turn out. Getting married is kinder risky, anyhow. But you won't find a happier pair this side o' Canaan, that's sure. And so I thought 'twas 'bout time I brought along the rest of the fee. Where'll you have these things, parson?"

The minister went to the door, and there was the "cart" literally loaded with fruit and vegetables. Such a store was never before brought to the house!

"Oh, don't trouble yourselves thanking about this," said the man. "Nothing but a fair trade, you know. But if you must thank anybody, thank Sara Ann. The garden sass is from her. She kinder thought 'twould relish this hot weather. Very hot and dry, parson, this season. Been 'specting the crops wouldn't 'mount to nothing, but they is gettin' on fust rate. The Lord generally brings things round 'bout right, I notice. Don't go much on the churches and plaguey little on some of its members, but you don't catch me going back on the Lord. Was tellin' Sara only last week that we must go over and hear you preach some pleasant Sunday. S'pose you give 'em the ra'al Bible religion don't you? That's what all say they do, anyhow."

The minister and his wife had but little opportunity to utter a word, their friend was so talkative; but they would insist upon expressing their warmest thanks to him and "Sara Ann" for the truly generous donation.

After the store had been deposited in the house, the man took the master by the hand, leaving in it a bill, saying:

"That's my part of the fee; thank Sara Ann for the sass." And then jumping into his waggon he drove away.

The minister unfolded the bill, and lo! its worth was twenty dollars! Mrs. Watson clapped her hands, and fairly shouted for joy. The needed dress and pants were bought, and to this day there is no story which the minister and his wife love so well to tell as that of "The Wedding Fee."

TEACHING ANIMALS TO CONVERSE.

Sir John Lubbock in a note to *Nature* says: "I take the opportunity of stating the progress which my dog 'Van' has made, although, owing greatly no doubt to my frequent absences from home, and the little time I can devote to him, this has not been so rapid as I doubt not would otherwise have been the case. Perhaps I may just repeat that the essence of my idea was to have various words, such as 'food,' 'bone,' 'water,' 'out,' etc., printed on pieces of card-board, and after some preliminary training, to give the dog anything for which he asked by bringing a card."

"I use pieces of card-board about ten inches long and three inches high, placing a number of them on the floor side by side, so that the dog has several cards to select from, each bearing a different word."

"One correspondent has suggested that it would be better to use variously coloured cards. This might no doubt render the first steps rather more easy, but, on the other hand, any temporary advantage gained would be at the expense of subsequent difficulty, since the pupil would very likely begin by associating the object with the colour rather than with the letters; he would, therefore, as is too often the case with our own children, have the unnecessary labour of unlearning some of his first lessons. At the same time the experiment would have an interest as a test of the condition of the colour sense in dogs. Another suggestion has been that, instead of words, pictorial representations should be placed on the cards. This, however, could only be done with material objects, such as 'food,' 'bone,' 'water,' etc., and would not be applicable to such words as 'out,' 'pet me,' etc.; nor even as regards the former class do I see that it would present any substantial advantage."

"Again, it has been suggested that 'Van' is led by scent rather than by sight. He has no doubt an excellent nose, but in this case he is certainly guided by the eye. The cards are all handled by us, and must emit very near the same odour. I do not, however, rely on this, but have in use a number of cards bearing the same word. When, for instance, he has brought a card with 'food' on it, we do not put down the same identical card, but another with the same word; when he has brought that, a third is put down, and so on. For a single meal, therefore, eight or ten cards will have been used, and it seems clear, there-