

THE MINISTER'S DINNER PARTY ;

OR, THE MINISTER'S WIFE.

The Rev. Mr. W—— was an officiating clergyman, who had charge of a little flock in the State of Massachusetts. He was possessed of an excellent temper, generous feelings, and a well cultivated mind : but he was eccentric, even to oddity. He was a powerful speaker, and his ministration was blessed to the conversion of many souls. At the age of thirty-four he became convinced that it was "not good for man to be alone ;" and for the purpose of bettering his condition, he made proposals to Mary B——, a beautiful, light hearted girl of seventeen, daughter of one of the wealthiest parishoners, and who imagined that to refuse the hand of the minister would be a sin bordering hard upon the unpardonable. In due time the marriage was consummated, the bride's snug portion paid, and the happy husband, as husbands in their first love are apt to do, gave up to the humor of his wife, and accompanied her to several festive parties given by his wealthy neighbors, in honor of his marriage.

One evening towards spring, the happy couple were sitting together in their comfortable parlor, the reverend gentleman deeply buried in the study of the venerable Bede, and his wife equally intent upon a plate of fashions, when she suddenly looked up with an expression of hope and fear, and thus addressed her companion :

"My dear husband, I have one request to make."

"Well, Mary, anything consistent."

"You do not imagine that I would make an inconsistent request, surely?"

"No, not a request that you would consider inconsistent. But come, what is it?"

"Why, my dear," and her voice trembled a little, "we have been to several parties among the neighboring gentry this winter, and now I think, to maintain our position in society, we should give a party also!"

The minister looked blank.

"What sort of a party, Mary?" he at length said.

"Why," she replied, "such a party as we have attended. We must have an elegant dinner and dancing after it."

"Dancing in a minister's house?" exclaimed Mr. W., in surprise.

"Why, yes, certainly," replied his wife, coaxingly. "You will not dance, the party will be mine ; and then we have been to similar parties all winter."

"True, true," he muttered with a perplexed air, and sat silent for some time. At length he said ; "Yes, Mary, you may make a party, give a dinner, and, if the guests desire it, you may dance."

"Thank you love, thank you," cried his delighted wife, throwing her arms around his neck, and imprinting a kiss upon his cheek,

"But I have some stipulation to make about it," said Mr. W—— ; "I must select and invite the guests, and you must allow me to place some of my favorite dishes on the table."

"As you please, love," she answered delightedly, "but when shall it be?"

"Next Wednesday, if you please."

"But our furniture and window draperies are very old-fashioned. It is now time we had new."

"I should hardly think it necessary to renounce our rooms, Mary. All our furniture is excellent of its kind."

"But our smooth carpets, white draperies, and cane chairs, have such a cold look. Do consent to have the rooms newly fitted ; we move these to the unfinished chambers."

"And of what use will they be in those rooms which we never occupy? Besides, it is now nearly spring, and to fit up for winter seems superfluous."

"Well, I would not care," she persisted, "were it not that people would call us parsimonious and ungentle."

"Oh, if that is all," he said gaily, I will promise to spend one thousand dollars on the evening of the party, not in furniture, however, but in a manner far more gratifying to our guests, and honorable to ourselves, and which shall exonerate us from all imputation of parsimony ; and you may expend in dress, eatables, and desert, just what sum you please, and do not forget the wines."

And so the colloquy ended. The minister resumed his studies, and his wife gave her mind to the consideration of the dress which would be the most becoming, and the viands that were the most expensive. The next day she went busy about her preparations, wondering all the time how her husband would expend the thousand dollars ; but as she had learned of the eccentricity of his character, she doubted not that he meant to give an agreeable surprise.

At length the momentous day arrived. The arrangements were all completed, and Mrs. W. retired to perform the all-important business of arraying her person in fine attire. She lingered long at the toilet, relying on the fashionable unpunctuality of fashionable people ; and at length, when everything was complete, she left the room, arrayed like Judith of old, gloriously, to allure the eyes of all who should look upon her, and full of sweet smiles and graces, notwithstanding the uncomfortable pinching of her shoes and corsets. Her husband met her in the hall.

"Well, my dear, our guests have all arrived," he said and opened the door of the receiving room. "Wonderful ! wonderful ! what an assembly ! There were congregated the maimed and the blind, the palsied and the extreme aged. A group of children from the almshouse were also there, some with their mouths wide open, others with both hands thrust into their hair, while others peeped out