

THE RECTOR'S CALL.

"Good morning, Mrs. Minty!" observed the Rector, as the door opened to his knock.

The door seemed to have a surly way with it, and opened scarcely wide enough to let the Rector in, although Mrs. Minty invited him to enter, and brushing some invisible dust from a chair with her apron, asked him to sit down.

The Rector saw at a glance that Mrs. Minty was not pleased, but he could not surmise what was the matter. He had accidentally heard that day of the sickness of her daughter, and at the first opportunity had called to see the young girl. Not seeming to notice the mother's manner, he said: "I hear that Miss Maria is sick."

"Yes! and she might ha' died for all she's seen of *you*!" replied Mrs. Minty with an energy that almost shook the good Rector out of his seat. The Rector was a meek man, and overlooking the readiness to her reply, he asked:

"How long has she been sick?"

"Two weeks, and over," said the mother.

"Have you had a physician?" enquired the Rector.

"Had a physician! What a question! Why the girl has been almost dead! I wonder *you* got here before she was dead! Had a physician!" These last words Mrs. Minty fairly ground out between her teeth, with ill-suppressed scorn.

It now became evident that Mrs. Minty on each day of her daughter's sickness, and the Rector's delay in calling, had added to her wrath, and it had now reached a degree of intensity that suggested strategy or flight. The Rector resolved to try the former first.

"Ah! you have had a physician?" he observed. "How did *he* happen to call?"

"How did he happen to call? Well, did any one ever hear such a question as that?"

"Perhaps some one told him Miss Maria was sick; or, perhaps he was passing and dropped in; interjected the Rector.

"Do you suppose I'd let my own daughter lie sick in the house and not send for the doctor!" fairly screeched Mrs. Minty.

"Oh, you sent for *him*!" said the Rector.

"Do you think he'd come if we didn't send for him? How'd he know Maria was sick!" replied the mother looking at the Rector as though she pitied his stupidity.

"Do you always send for the physician when you want him?" asked the Rector with provoking mildness.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Minty, "What do you ask such a question as that for?"

"I did not know," said the Rector, "but that as you expected the clergyman to find out as best he could that your daughter was sick, without sending for *him*, you might do the same with the physician."

Something had gradually been dawning upon Mrs. Minty's mind, which the last words of the Rector, uttered with inimitable good-nature, resolved into a full intellectual surmise. Her severe face relaxed into a broad smile. "Oh, I see! I see?" she exclaimed. "I thought them was mighty queer questions. Well I had ought to ha' sent for you too, seeing as how I sent for the doctor." And you didn't know Maria was sick?"

"No," observed the Rector, "If I had I should certainly have called before this. I accidentally heard of her illness this morning for the first time."

"Well, really, I hope you'll excuse me! Step this way, Maria's in the back room; she'll be all sorts of glad to see you!"—*St. John's Chronicle*.