

The Minister's Second Wife.

HOW SHE FELL INTO DISGRACE, AND HOW SHE GAINED THE HEARTS OF HER HUSBAND'S FLOCK.

Great was the excitement at Crump's Corners (popularly called Crumpses Corners), when the minister brought home a new wife. No one exactly objected to his marrying again. Miss Savory Jones had been heard to remark that she would have been the *last* one to say a word if he had only married a person of fitting age and attainments, and, as Miss Savory was well known to be alluding to herself, no one doubted her statement. The Widow Wilkins has also had a matrimonial eye upon the minister for some time. His first wife had been dead two years, and as the Widow often said, "Dear knows, the poor children needed some one to do for 'em."

But now all the Crumpian hopes were blasted at a breath. The Rev. Phineas Ford had been absent for a fortnight's holiday, obtained every year by exchanging with the minister of a little mountain village; and when he stepped off the evening train, on his return home, he was accompanied by a girl—a new girl—with dark bright eyes and short curly hair like a boy's. The elite of the Corners were all on hand to see the train come in of course, little expecting the shock that was in store for them. But they had barely time for one horrified look, before the minister, passing through them with a pleasant word and smile, helped his wife into the old buggy sent to meet him, and was gone. The population gasped once or twice at the suddenness of the apparition, put in about ten minutes of uncommonly vicious gossip, and then went home to bed.

"I am sorry, Kitty, my love," said Mr. Ford, as they drove along, his kind, worn face beaming on the little figure at his side, "that I did not spend a little money on the house and the children before you came. I am afraid you will find them much neglected."

"Never mind, Phineas," said the little woman, brightly, "it is only what I expected, and as to the money, I would ever so much rather spend it myself, and I know you don't mind."

"I don't, indeed," said her husband fervently. "But I wish it was more. Thirty dollars is all I have put by for the purpose."

"Well, we will make it go as far as sixty, as you shall see," said Kitty. "And now, here we are at home and all the dear children at the door to meet us."

The next minute Mrs. Ford was in the shabby dining room, talking, laughing, and greeting right and left and carrying the younger children's hearts by storm. The eldest, Jean, a rather pretty girl of fifteen, stood apart and had but little to say, but the young step-mother took no notice, and soon the whole family were gathered round the supper table. Old Debby, the minister's housekeeper, who had lived with his first

wife for years, was an excellent cook, and every one did ample justice to her fragrant coffee, hot biscuits and ham and eggs, followed, on this auspicious occasion, by a great dish of wild raspberries and rich, yellow cream.

It was not until supper was over and the children in bed that Mrs. Ford had time to take a look at things in general. The minister was called away to interview a parishioner in his study, a small, dull room across the hall, and she was quite alone. She walked round the room examining closely.

"Rag carpet," she commented cheerily, terribly old and worn, red table-cloth full of holes, faded out of knowledge, lace curtains old as the hills—may wash once more perhaps—cretonne cushions on the chairs perfectly worn out and—well, never mind, we'll see in the morning."

The next day at breakfast, Mr. Ford announced that he had to attend a meeting ten miles off and should not be home before night, and shortly afterwards he tore himself regretfully away. Mrs. Ford busied herself in getting the children ready for their long walk to school, while Debby put up their lunch. The children, like the house, were in the last stage of shabbiness. Debby had kept their clothes mended, but she had no further ideas on the fitness of things, and Mrs. Ford saw at a glance that the dresses of the three little girls were badly made and ill-fitting, as well as old and dingy, their stockings faded to the dulllest of hues and their boots unblackened. There was no time to do much more than see that hands and faces were clean and send them off, each with a kiss and a lunch basket, and then the little new mother turned to the ancient handmaidens.

"Now, Debbie," she said gaily, "you and I don't want any particular dinner, and we are the only ones at home, so I want you to finish up your work while I unpack, and then show me all over everywhere."

The grim Deborah looked for a moment at her mistress, and then her hard features relaxed into the semblance of a smile, and she expressed her readiness to do all that was required of her. An hour later the two women stood in the garret, whither they had repaired after a cursory examination of a shabby parlor and shabbier bedrooms.

"Now, then," said Kitty. "First of all, what is in all these boxes? Old clothes, though, I guess." "They're all about gone," said Debby. "They ain't no sort of use."

"Let us see," said Kitty, lifting a cover off a huge old chest. "Ah, I see these things are all cotton, and I suppose you have woollens in the others. What is this?" she went on, lifting out an immense bundle of cotton stockings of all sizes and the most doleful shades.

TURKISH DYES ARE THE CHEAPEST.