

HOW IT HAPPENED,

BY MRS. LAWSON.

"Were you nervous, grandpapa, when you preached your first sermon?"

The old clergyman looked at his wife with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"Yes, my young masters; extremely nervous. So much so that I never preached that sermon yet."

The youngsters looked at their grandfather with delighted curiosity; it was so funny to think of grandpapa; dear, serene-faced, calm-eyed grandpapa, being so nervous as not to be able to preach. Grandmamma smiled.

"And what did you do grandpapa? run away?" "Exactly so, that is exactly what I did do. Ran away—at midnight—some six miles under the moonlight—to where I came from. Ha! ha! ha!"

Here the gentle old man lay back in his chair and chuckled as he looked back at that remote episode of his youth.

"Tell us about it—how did it happen?"

"Shall I tell them, mamma?" he asked, with an enquiring look at his wife, and a smile the significance of which she seemed to understand.

"I don't mind—it will amuse them," she said.

"Well, this is how it happened, my young masters, and I trust you will not withhold your sympathy when I have told you.

I was a very young and downy licentiate when a minister in a neighbouring parish sent his man on horseback with a note to me one Saturday evening, requesting me to come and stay over night, and as a very great favour preach for him on the morrow. He was troubled with a painful throat affection which made it impossible for him to preach when he had a bad cold, such as he had now.

When I was a youngster, I was more a student than anything else. I did not, somehow, lay such stress on the study of the conventionalities as young people seem to do now-a-days; the manners and customs of the ancient Greeks and Romans

were more familiar to me than the manners and customs of the present day; consequently when I received this note I was not a little flurried. Not on account of my speaking capabilities, nor of my ability to hold my own with this clergyman on any learned point whatever, for as I said before, I was first of all a student and had studied to some purpose. I had one or two splendid sermons, too, which I was not ashamed to preach anywhere and I had also that great desideratum, 'a delivery.'

No; none of these things gave me a thought. But I knew that the wife of this clergyman was a lady who was a stickler for conventionalities; that there were two pretty daughters in the house, and that these daughters were reputed clever and highly accomplished.

Straightway I bethought me of my attire, and my deportment before ladies, which I now for the first time felt I had shamefully neglected. However, I answered the note, saying that I would walk over later on, and would be pleased to preach for him on the morrow. An Established Church minister could not afford to have his pulpit empty even for just cause of sickness then, for the Free was but a new broom yet, and the Auld Kirk men had to mind their p's and q's. So I packed what necessities I required in a small grip-sack, and starting out, arrived at Ferngrove Manse about nine o'clock or so. The minister himself shook hands with me kindly—I had met him before and this put me more at ease—but the ladies! The mother I found to be a most charming lady, perfect in manners and dress, and quite motherly in her kindness. I was introduced to her daughters and felt my face burning at my own awkwardness, and their suave and smiling efforts to put me at my ease. However, I got into an interesting conversation with the father which helped me considerably, and by and by, as Longfellow says—I became calm. Only