



OUR MONTHLY,

A

RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY MAGAZINE.

AUGUST—1871.

THE RIGHT OR THE WRONG WIFE?

BY MRS. J. M'NAIR WRIGHT.

THE congregation of Buttonville were unanimous on one point. It is so encouraging to contemplate congregational concord, that we find ourselves peculiarly ready to mention the subject upon which the Presbyterians of Buttonville were a unit—they thought that it was quite time for their pastor to seek a wife.

During the three years that had elapsed since Mrs. Rufus had laid down the burden of life, matters at the parsonage had gone from bad to worse, until now the manse, the ministerial wardrobe, and especially the apostolic infants, were fit subjects for the commiseration of the community.

The people felt that they had been patient, and had not looked for a speedy marriage, for the wife had been universally loved, and her death had been a shock to every one. It was not that violence or suffering had accompanied death; she had gone to her bed as usual, but in sleep had wandered farther than the land of dreams, and entered that golden country, fairer than lost Arcadia, or Utopia, that has never been found, the land whose beauty beguiles one to linger in its boundaries forever.

The people, believing themselves, as is usual, the keepers of their reverend servant, had waited two years, had provided a motley succession of kitchen divinities for the parsonage; had by turns brushed the pastoral clothes, and darned the sacred hosiery; and had then after much consultation decided that the Rev. Rufus ought to marry Miss Vina Merryfield, a maiden whose virtues had long been known to local fame.

Miss Vina was perhaps a little older than the pastor but, as every one knows, a widower ought to marry a person suitable rather to his children than himself,—and what a mother Miss Merryfield would make for the four bereaved juveniles! Miss Merryfield was doubtless not unaware of public sentiments and desires concerning her; for though she gave the curly head of the youngest Rufus tender and almost wishful pats in Sabbath-school, she never went near his home.

The Rev. Rufus was a shy, reserved man; a hard student, a faithful pastor; he had been offered "semi lunar" decorations to his name, once upon a time, but had been too bashful to refuse them. He was quite the idol of his people; and anxious only for his good, as he made no

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871, by ALFRED MARTIN, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

advances to Miss Merryfield, his kind friends next fixed their affections on Miss Anna Gracy, in his behalf. Miss Anna had delicate health, and but a small amount of energy; but she was pious, pretty and rich; she had pleasant manners, good family, and was a general favorite; Lucy, the eldest Rufus, doted on her.

But not for one moment did the eligible widower seem to incline to Miss Gracy. The courtly bow, the genial smile, ever ready for all the sheep and lambs of the flock, were bestowed on Miss Anna, as on the rest of Buttonville; but there was not a look or a word that Buttonville could hang an expectation on.

There was the widow Ford, "fair, fat and forty," and blessed with two children;—*was* it possible that Mr. Rufus would choose the widow? Well, "she would be better than nobody," said Buttonville; but the reverend widower appeared to prefer "nobody."

Lastly, said the anxious church, there was Miss Mary Hays. If anybody could quiet crying children, mend hopeless-looking garments, bring order out of confusion, and make something out of nothing, that executive genius was Miss Mary. The afflicted Rufus recognized this; he wished Miss Hays were older and poorer—if the wish were not wrong—so that he might hire her for a house-keeper; and that was the extent of his wishes concerning her.

Lucy Rufus, now nearly fourteen, was growing up an awkward, unhealthy, care-worn child, who needed some one to teach her how to dress her hair; and put on her clothes, and what to do with her hands and feet, and to take the burden of responsibility off her heart, bringing a new sunshine over her forlorn life. Her clerical father felt this; he compared her with girls who had mothers, and grew fairly soul-sick over the difference.

Bob Rufus was a noisy, furniture-destroying, effervescing, untidy clod-hopper-looking child; the last youth one would suspect of belonging "to the minister's family." He was fearfully in need of some one to tone him down, and screw him up, and keep at him generally, until

he became a more harmonious domestic element.

The Celts in the kitchen of the parsonage said Hettie Rufus was "*sassy*," and the point will not admit of a dispute; this testimony concerning Hettie was universal: but after all, she was as hearty, generous, jolly a little soul as you would meet "in a six months."

Poor Georgie, the last on the list of Rufus infants, being now four years old, wore light jackets, long trowsers, and stockings whereof the ungartered tops were prone to fall down over his shoes and trail behind his heels. This babe was given to crying himself to sleep, and rolling out of bed; which last proceeding brought bruises and loud wails.

The Rufus carpets were ragged, the chairs scratched, the curtains were soiled, and the dishes "nicked." The unfortunate widower had never been five miles from Buttonville since he lost his wife, and was getting wrinkled and gray in the worry of his present existence.

Patience had had its perfect work in the Buttonville church, and the people resolved to "do something."

The senior of the church functionaries made a tea-party, and invited all the other functionaries and their wives, the avowed object of the gathering being to take into consideration affairs at the manse. Under the cheerful influence of cups of the best tea, this social band fell into a warm discussion of "what they ought to do about it."

"I told him right to his face the last time I went there," said Mrs. B., "that he ought to get married for the sake of his children. George had the very worst cold I ever heard of, and Lucy was crying because Hettie had had a flare-up with the hired girl. When I just spoke my mind right out, all he said was 'Ah-h!'"

"You got about as much satisfaction as I did," cried Mrs. L. "I told him I wished to goodness he'd marry Viny Merrifield, and he said 'O-h-h!'"

"He's got in a rut; he's discouraged, and moody; he'll never marry any one here, and we'd better send him abroad to get a wife," said the senior functionary, speaking emphatically.

"O, I'm afraid he'd make some poor choice," exclaimed the senior's wife, anxiously.

"I'm not half so afraid of that, as of his not making any choice at all," said one of the gentlemen.

"My proposition is," said the man who managed everything, "that we send Mr. Rufus to this Convention that is going to meet next week. We'll tell him we want to be represented there: we will hand him his travelling expenses, and tell him the ladies will look after the family. We must rouse him up. This will give a new turn to his thoughts, and maybe he will see some one to take a fancy to."

"I hope then," cried Mrs. B. with fervor, "that while he is gone we'll have a chance to get his house cleaned, and the clothes and carpets mended, for everything is just going to rack and ruin!"

"Now I'll tell you," said Mrs. B., "I'll have Mary Hays come stay at my house, and I'll go and stay at the parsonage, and if the rest of you will help me, I'll straighten things up there for once."

"Then I propose," said old Mrs. L., "that you just bundle up Lucy's clothes and send her out to daughter Mollie's for a visit. I'm truly afraid Lucy will be worried into a consumption."

"I shall tell him not to come back under a fortnight," said the autocratic functionary, who always did as he pleased.

Thus we see that it was taken for granted that the Rev. Dr. Rufus was going to the Convention, ostensibly to represent the religious interests of the Buttonville church; and in the secret hopes of the people, going to seek a mistress for that comfort-forsaken manse, that was moving the sympathies of all Buttonville.

These admirable people pleased themselves with air-castles about better days for the clerical family, and with plans for the changes that should be effected during the pastor's absence.

The functionaries having with all authority ordered their minister to go to the Convention in their behalf, that forlorn gentleman, roused up to a little interest, had his locks shorn at the barber's, bought himself a high silk hat, a

new suit of clothes, and a supply of shirts and collars, his present possessions in that line being for the most part frayed and buttonless.

On the morning set for this hapless divine's departure, miseries in his home seemed to have reached their climax. Clad in his new garments, and serenely conscious that Mrs. B. had neatly packed his valise, Rufus, D. D. descended the stairs to bless his household, eat his breakfast, and say "good-bye." He found in the untidy dining-room Hettie, sobbing furiously, having come off second best from an encounter with the Irish power that ruled the kitchen. Poor Lucy was pale and nearly distracted by endeavors to hurry up the breakfast, dress George, quiet Hettie, and induce Bob to wash his hands and comb his head.

The maid refused to come to prayers. Hettie cried so that she must needs be dismissed to the bed room, and when the family were seated at the table, lo, the potatoes had been forgotten, and a plate of burned biscuits served to keep in countenance a huge platter, containing one half-raw and very diminutive mutton chop!

Lucy rang her bell. "Is this all the meat you cooked, Biddy?"

"Aint it enough, by the powers?" cried the maid, waxing belligerent.

"And the coffee, Biddy, what is the matter with that?" queried the despairing child, as a thick black stream issued from the nose of the dingy pot.

"Holy Moses! it is meself as forgot to put in any wather whin I added the grounds! Troth who wouldn't forgit the very head off their bodies wid thim two children round actin' worse than ould Nick!"

"I prefer you should not use such language, Bridget," said the Rev. Rufus, in the despairing tone he always used about domestic troubles.

"Saints and angels! I'll not have a word of language at all; I'll pack me box and leave this hour," said Bridget, rushing off rampant.

"There now, I must stay at home," said the minister, deeply melancholy.

Lucy burst into tears: Georgie followed suit; Bob was unexpectedly moved to sympathy: in rushed Hettie, accusing herself as the cause of all, clasped the paternal neck, rumbled the new collar, and wildly implored pardon.

Just here appeared Mrs. L., welcome as mellow Indian summer after a furious equinoctial. She hustled her respected pastor off to the depot to catch the early train, calmed and fed the children, said she was glad the servant was going; paid her wages, sharply scrutinized the proportions of her bundles, and before night had got Lucy's clothes in some sort of order, and sent the over-taxed child into the country.

At tea time, the Rev. Rufus having presented himself to the "Committee on Entertainment," and been given an address, found himself in a luxurious dining-room, beside a table furnished, like Eden, with all that was good for food; and even Eden's crowning glory was not wanting—for opposite the clerical guest were a pair of sisters with ravishing voices, masses of shining hair, and garments that the visitor was fain to believe came rather from paradise than Paris, so entirely becoming and enchanting was every glossy fold and fluttering lace and ribbon.

Rev. Rufus, so long the luckless, had been carried into fairy land; this is evident, or he would not have been so deluded as to dream that silk and valenciennes came direct from "Jerusalem the Golden," "milk and honey" being the only authenticated productions of the land of our desire.

Now as soon as supper was over, Doctor Rufus and his brother delegate adjourned to the Convention rooms, to take part in a world of business; and their hosts, the Cutlers, retired to their own apartments, to array themselves for the evening meeting.

Thus the paternal Cutler, reading his daily journal behind the stove, was presently besieged by the feminines of his household; the wife of his bosom, magnificent in moire antique and furs; and the daughters of his heart, quite captivating in velvet jackets and plumed

velvet hats, set high above their pretty heads.

"Who are those gentlemen, sir?"

"The younger is Mr. Wells; been married a year, and therefore, nobody of importance. The other is Doctor Rufus of Buttonville; a widower two years, and has six children," replied the father of the family, speaking with the usual charming accuracy of gossips.

"Doctor Rufus," says the matron Cutler. "And how large a church is Buttonville?"

"Membership two hundred and fifty," says Cutler senior, who has taken care to inform himself.

"And how much salary, Pa?" asks the mercenary Inez.

"O, fifteen hundred, or two thousand. But he has some property."

"And how old is he, Pa?" demands Ella.

"Well—forty, thirty-eight, or thereabouts," replies the domestic oracle, who has only had the ordinary means of judging.

When the Convention opened, there was a decided flutter among the Cutlers when they found Doctor Rufus chosen chairman.

Going home, Cutler mère took pains to learn the opinion of her dearest friends concerning Doctor Rufus; and Cutler père, careful of his darling girls, and watchful that no wolf in sheep's clothing should enter his fold, diligently made inquiries concerning this gentleman's means, social standing, and future prospects.

The family being left alone after their guests had been shown their rooms, mamma says, "Now girls, here is a good chance for you."

"But Ma, he is so grave, and I doubt if he likes rose-colored neck ties!" cries the airy Inez.

"I don't think he's too grave—for a minister," says Ella, the elder hope of the house.

"And children! six children!" continues Inez, the irrepressible.

"Ah, poor little tots—what does he do with them all?" sighs Ella.

"I know Mrs. Jenks felt disappointed

that he was not sent to her house. Mary Anne is twenty-six—a year older than you. Ella my love—just unpin my collar, will you? I really doubt if we have been doing right to let time slip by so—we were all so well satisfied with each other; you are twenty-three, Inez my dear, and ought to consider—just unhook my glove, child, I never can do it in the world.”

So having glibly hinted of the flight of time, and of their respective ages, mamma Cutler kissed her girls, and bade them good night.

Inez dreamed of a rose-hued silk dress, with a lace over-dress—Ella, of darning socks for a countless whirl of children.

The chairman of the Convention, making neat little speeches, and acquitting himself in every way to the intense satisfaction of Buttonville, where the daily reports of the Convention were rather devoured than read, our friend, the Rev. Rufus, was in a maze of satisfaction and admiration, which he could neither explain nor comprehend.

The elegant comfort of this carefully ordered home of the Cutlers' formed a delightful contrast to his own long un-governed household; from the well-spread table the friends of dyspepsia, juvenile complainings, and Celtic wrath were banished: the Rev. Rufus ate in peace, with no barefooted vixen, with arms akimbo and frowzy head bursting in upon his meals with complaints of Bob, the neighbor's chickens and a leaking cistern; with announcements of coffee and sugar deficiencies, or never executed threats of instantaneous departure. Nor was all his present enjoyment to be attributed to these minor points; what a pleasure was there in companionship, to be able to sit down by the fireside and indulge in reasonable or lively conversation; to lean back at ease in a well-stuffed chair, and be lulled into forgetfulness of all vexations by the witching voice of music; it was to our wanderer like a resurrection of buried joys.

We have told you that this reverend doctor was simply content without stopping to analyze his feelings; very likely he would have been shocked at tracing his new comfort to its legitimate source,

and put the question, ever recurring since the Lord brought Eve to Adam, “Who is she?”

The Convention being over, the Cutler family seemed loth to have their favorite guest depart. Doctor Rufus was engaged to preach for a brother minister in the city the next Sabbath, and his hosts insisted upon having him remain with them until the beginning of the ensuing week.

Doctor Rufus having received a cheerful letter from Mrs. L., bought presents for his children—by this time he had told the Cutler family the number, names and ages of these infants.

On Tuesday he went to an adjacent town to see some old friends, and Saturday morning, strangely enough, he was back at Mr. Cutler's, much to the satisfaction of the mistress of the family. Here he remained very well contented until Monday, the time set for him to return home; but so bashful was he of speaking particularly to either of the young ladies, so punctilious in his attentions to the elder people, that despite her secret longings the maternal Cutler was forced to believe that the congenial society of herself and her husband had proved the attraction that called him a second time to their residence.

Too much of a lady, and too good a mother in any way to compromise herself or her daughters, this worthy matron made anxious inquiries about the prosperity of the Rufus juveniles, and one while casually hinted Ella's great success as teacher of the infant class in Sunday-school; or suggested how popular her Inez had always been among the young; and what dear comfortable girls they both were, relieving their grateful mother of all domestic cares, and what should she ever do without either of them!

Brother Rufus being much too good a man to break in anyway the tenth commandment, felt sure any man would be an utter reprobate to rob this fond parent of either of her treasures; an effect Mrs. C's words had not been intended to produce.

As to the sisters, they were to the hapless Rufus like the rays that make pure white light: he rejoiced in the light,

and did not stop to separate its component parts.

Monday afternoon he was home again; he felt unaccountably blue, homesick, lonesome, and as if he had lost something—he did not know what it could be, for Mrs. Cutler had obligingly seen to counting up the shirts and collars, and he knew he had brought back his new hat and overcoat.

Mrs. L. had done her part admirably at the parsonage; there had been a cleaning and a sewing-bee going on all this fortnight, and the children were for once "clothed and in their right mind."

The sitting-room curtains had been washed, the windows polished, the carpet darned and turned. In this new brightness were the four motherless children, and for them the reverend parent felt a new tenderness and compassion.

Lucy's face looked rosier and less careworn.

"I've had *such* a good time in the country," she cried; "not a thing to worry me, and I felt just like a little girl!"

Just like a little girl, poor, luckless fourteen year old!

"And how has Bob done?" asked the father.

"Right slap up good!" says Bob, to the horror of his apostolic progenitor.

"Bob does first rate when there is any one to notice him a little," hints Mrs. L., knowing that books and sermons got more notice than the children from the absorbed preacher.

"I minded you every minute, didn't I?" demands Hettie of Mrs. L. "I wish you were my mother; then I wouldn't be always fussing with the girl." Wise old Mrs. L. glances at her pastor, to see what is the effect of this bow shot at a venture, and she thinks he blushes a little.

"We've dot a new dir!" exclaims Georgie.

"Her name is Katrina—she is Dutch," says Hettie, and here the new girl, a ponderous offshoot of the Germanic Confederation, comes in with the grace of a hippopotamus, shouting, "Ja! das ist right; das mannehen ist right!"

"And father," explains Bob, as if an-

nouncing some high virtue in the new maid, "she is just as Dutch as she can be, and hardly knows any English."

The present incumbent of the kitchen was certainly good-natured, for on hearing this statement of her exceeding *dutchiness*, she burst into a "haw, haw, haw!" that tortured Doctor Rufus' sensitive nerves, and then she departed to her work.

"Well, Doctor," said Mrs. L. after some chat, "I'm glad you've had a good time; and I think I've straightened up your house a little. There's good bread made, and supper and breakfast ready; pies and cake in the closet. I hope you'll get along; but, Doctor, man wasn't made to live alone, especially when he's got a house and children!" With this parting suggestion, Mrs. L. returned to console her husband after her fortnight of absence.

Despite Mrs. L's preparations, the ministerial supper fell very far short of the irreproachable arrangements known at Mr. Cutler's. The difference jarred on the lately happy Doctor Rufus; jarred even while he was asking a blessing; jarred so, that he inadvertently opened his eyes before the benediction was concluded, and, horrible to relate, saw Rob's stubby fingers fishing a peach out of the preserve dish—which sight caused the concluding form of speech to run—"and Lord, make us thankful, Amen—Bob, stop that!" which, uttered all in a breath, and being without precedent in the family history, caused the mild Lucy to open wide her eyes; the naughty Bob to be nearly annihilated; and Hettie, viciously rejoicing at such a breach of parental etiquette, to tickle Georgie until he rolled off his chair like a ball, and disappeared beneath the table.

For the next week the children were at school as usual; the newly introduced Teuton was not a priceless jewel; home-matters jogged roughly in the old rut, and Mr. Rufus, pondering deeply, very much to his own surprise, made up his mind that he ought to marry.

Having thus decided, his thoughts turned spontaneously to the Cutler homestead, blessed with two charming daugh-

ters. But surely the Rev. Doctor was not so wicked as to wish to marry both the sisters: if he had inclinations to the Cutler home it must be toward one daughter in preference to the other; and thus he sat down to carefully satisfy himself on this point.

Yes, surely; both the young ladies were admirable, but Doctor Rufus shortly became conscious that one pair of eyes seemed to hold the more blissful light; one smile was more entrancing, one voice lingered more sweetly in his ear; one fair head seemed to hold more sunbeams captive in its shining hair.

Alas, that a reverend minister, chairman of a Convention, and staid writer of unexceptionable sermons, could be beguiled by a pair of dimples in a smooth pink cheek, and a friz of pretty hair! Yet so it was, and when this fallible creature set himself to divine to whom this preference which he acknowledged belonged—whether the favored eyes were the blue ones or the gray; whether the beloved damsel were the merrier or the graver of the pair; whether the ensnaring locks were the golden or the brown—unhappy mortal! he could not tell.

In a tremor of distress the Rev. Rufus set himself to collect his thoughts, and select the lady of his love. Alas! collecting his ideas did not do the least morsel of good; he was as far from the truth as ever. He could not tell which of the sisters was the elder: he had heard their mother call them "Inez and Ella," mixing these names with "child," "love," and "dear," but which was Inez and which was Ella, he could no more tell than he could edit the Gazette of the Moon.

The more he thought the less he knew; to say that he spent hours of intolerable anguish, would be to speak lightly of the sufferings of this wretched man. Day and night, for a horrible week, he tried to be sure whether he wanted to marry Inez or Ella Cutler, and at the end of seven days torture he was still in the dark as to his own wishes. He was too shy to dare to go back to the home, and choose, as he knew he could when he saw the sisters. He must first pay his ad-

dresses by letter to one or the other, and if happy enough to be favorably received, he would go there on invitation; he could not creep in like a wolf to carry off a lamb: he must go with his intentions known, and welcomed. If he left home so soon again every one would guess what he went for; and then suppose both Inez and Ella were otherwise engaged. No, he must write—surely he must write; he *could* use his pen, but he was by all odds too bashful to use his tongue. But O, to whom, *of* whom should he write?

He could compose no sermon that fatal week, and was forced to appear on Sabbath in his pulpit with an old discourse, and an apology.

At this amazing proceeding his people took courage: the pastor was in love, and had been writing letters. Miss Merryfield looked a *little* disappointed; Miss Gracy looked relieved; Miss Hays anxious; and the functionaries and matrons covertly congratulated each other with nods and winks.

Dr. Rufus had now been two weeks absent from Mr. Cutler's; he had been one week fixed in a resolution to marry, Heaven permitting, and distractingly striving to find out whether Inez Cutler or Ella Cutler was his unalterable destiny. Another fortnight of such woe would certainly rob the four children of their last surviving parent: the reverend lover saw plainly that he could not decide for himself; helpless and unhappy, he bethought himself of the life-long care which had preserved him; of the overshadowing Providence which guided all events; the eternal Intelligence that knew the end from the beginning. Prayer was a refuge in which this man had full faith: God had never failed him; the heavenly Father had never disappointed him; the reverend Doctor could pray if he could not choose; and though hot-headed young lovers may laugh, and worldings scoff over this quandary and hesitation between Ella and Inez, this worried pastor prayed almost incessantly for a week. He prayed until he had made up his mind to choose one of these girls by name; write to her, offer himself, his four children, his congregation, all that he had or hoped, for

her acceptance, and if she accepted, he would go there to her home, and stick to his bargain, whether she proved to be the girl he wanted or not!

Over the tremendous issues of such a determination our hero trembled and hesitated, and prayed from Monday morning until Saturday afternoon. Then, knowing that there must be a "preach" for the morrow, he wrote the two names on a strip of paper, and sat down to consider them.

Inez was certainly a romantic name; scarcely suited to a pastress; not exactly the cognomen for a matron entering upon married life with four "responsibilities" ready to her hand. Ella, on the contrary, was a name he had always liked; it was a good, honest, gentle, reliable name. But after all, what is in a name? And Inez or Ella, which should it be? He gave one final prayer in the fashion of a man who shuts his eyes with an ejaculation to heaven before he leaps for his life. Then starting from his knees, he rushed to his table, looked at the names, concluded upon ELLA, and sitting down, wrote her a grave, kind, scholarly letter, expressing his sense of her own great worthiness, and his many disabilities, and offering to devote himself to her for the remainder of their two existences.

After this Doctor Rufus felt decidedly better; he went out and furtively slipped his letter in the mail box, came home and calmly looking on his troubles as nearly ended, bade his children study their Sunday-school lessons, and then hastening to his study, made what speed he could with his sermon.

In due time came a letter from the paternal Cutler, and a note from Ella, each expressing gratification and acceptance.

By this time our brother Rufus was sensible of an ever-increasing preference for one sister rather than the other; but in vain did he study Ella's note, for something to indicate with certainty whether he had made the *right* choice.

"To be sure I have chosen right, for I left it to the Lord," he said to himself; but after all, had he chosen the girl he really wanted?

He was invited to make his fiancée an early visit, and he had double reason for doing so. "I must go," said Mr. Rufus, "before this foolish fancy gets the upper hand of me, and is able to prevent my being happy with the other one."

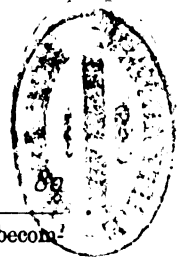
Therefore Doctor Rufus informed his people that he should leave home for a week, and even ventured so far as to ask Miss Mary Hays to stay with his children. This request, showing that the question of Miss Hays becoming Mrs. Rufus was definitely settled, still farther encouraged Buttonville to believe the pastor was thinking of marrying some one from abroad.

With trembling hopes, and quite as many fears as hopes, did the Rev. Doctor Rufus make his appearance for the third visit at Mr. Cutler's. He had been able to state neither the hour nor the day of his expected arrival, for Miss Hays had had company, and Georgie had been indulging in an attack of croup.

It was very painful for a bashful man to ask after Miss Ella at the door, knowing, of course, that the servant in attendance, as well as the rest of the household, could only view him in the light of a lover coming to pay his devotions to the beloved of his soul.

Introduced to the well-remembered parlor, he spent a few moments of unapproachable misery in a final wonder as to whether Ella were the "right one." The door opened; he was certain now, certain for one ecstatic moment, that this dazzling damsel who entered was the very girl he wanted; certain as he hastened, with an ardor that in other men would have been the quietest composure, to meet and salute her. Certain, until meeting him half-way she cried, "*Ella* will be here soon, Doctor; we did not expect you to-day, and she and mother are out. Meanwhile *I* am very glad to see you!"

Horror! here was the right one, and he was engaged to the wrong one! To cover his distress he took her hand and bowed profoundly. Inez was a kind girl; she knew the man was bashful exceedingly, and she wanted to set him at ease. "I am *very* glad to see my future



brother," she said pleasantly; "I always wanted a brother!"

This did very much to set the Doctor right.

This girl was to be his sister; the other his wife. It *must* be all right, for he had asked the Lord to choose for him, and when did the Lord ever do wrong?

"I thank you for your welcome," he said to Inez, "and trust you will find me worthy of a brother's place in your regard."

He had dropped her hand now, and took his favorite chair, to which she motioned him. O, what a pretty Inez she was, and if he had just written Inez for Ella, she might have been *his* Inez—perhaps. Then he fell back on the providential directing, on his solemn contract with himself to hold to his offer, right one or wrong one; his letters to Ella—he would never give a regret to this gold-haired maiden more.

As for Inez, she was contented. She was glad Doctor Rufus had chosen Ella; Ella would just suit him, and his children, and the congregation, and every body.

As for him, she had felt no special inclinations to four children, and the duties of a minister's wife. They chatted, or rather Inez chattered, and Dr. Rufus replied in monosyllables. She did not mind that; she knew he was shy, and that he was longing to see Ella. As for the reverend suitor, he was reviewing the history of his new love, was fighting with the disappointment he felt, and was convincing himself that all would prove for the best. He was glad that he was a calm undemonstrative man, and had discovered the truth so soon; if by any means the facts, as he knew them, had been revealed to Inez, what should he have done? The bare imagining of such a crisis was worse than an ague.

He was his own master now, and the lively musical prattle of Inez rippled into "There is Ella, I'll send her in"—and Inez went—and Ella came, a fair girl truly, shy as himself; and blushing consciously, and believing that Heaven had ordained her his wife, he gathered up his

courage, and acquitted himself becomingly.

The Doctor pleaded his loneliness, the forlorn estate of his children, and his failure to find a suitable housekeeper to hire, and urged a speedy marriage; six weeks was the longest period that must elapse before he found again the comforts of a home.

Mamma Cutler laughed, Ella blushed, Inez sided with the Doctor, and so the matter was settled.

After a three days' visit our clerical friend returned to Buttonville to inform his people of his matrimonial intentions, and get his home in some sort of order for his bride. In these days he became more reconciled to his *mistake*, because he was resolved to be satisfied.

As for Buttonville, Buttonville was unspeakably glad; it had heard of the Miss Cutlers. Doctor Rufus made no more visits until he went to be married; but Ella's letters, and Ella herself in bridal array made him quite sure that his mistake was not a mistake: he had reached a frame of mind wherein he felt certain that "it was just as well," and that he did not quarrel with the Lord's part of the business. Time sped. Home was regenerated; children remodelled; Buttonville serenely approbative; Ella developing new virtues day by day—and Doctor Rufus said no longer that his *mistake* was "just as well," but assured himself that it was *a great deal better*. The wrong girl proved exactly the right one, and Doctor Rufus not only refrained from blaming overruling Providence, but was devoutly grateful.

After a visit from Inez, at the end of a year, the senior functionary who ruled the church, thus addressed his pastor: "Doctor, I always knew you were a man of sound good sense. I'm more satisfied of it now than ever. Between two such pretty maidens, not one man in a hundred would have chosen the *right* one. You did. Miss Cutler is a smart one, and a handsome one, but she don't begin with Mrs. Rufus for a minister's wife. How *did* you happen to hit it so exactly? The church always felt terribly afraid you'd make a balk of the thing."

To this admiring functionary Doctor Rufus replied cordially: "I left it to the Lord, and I am very glad that I did."

But how entirely he had "left it to the Lord," only himself and that Divine Disposer of events could fully tell.

THE SILENT WORLD.

BY H. A. F.

IN days of yore, when we were young, one of the first things we had to learn at school was the answer to the question, "How many senses have you?" and then, "What are they?" And how proud we were, as, standing in a row, with toes upon the mark, and eyes fixed upon the teacher, we pointed to each particular organ in succession, and chanted in concert, "Hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling,"—accompanying the last word with a resonant clap, that not only filled the house, but made the fingers tingle for half an hour afterwards.

In our catalogue we followed the order of position, and *hearing* naturally came first. Those among us to whom the harmonies of sound minister greater pleasure than do those of sight, will doubtless give it the first place also. But, viewed in its relations to the intellect, its usefulness in conveying a knowledge of external objects to the mind, it must take the second place, that of sight coming first.

But, whether its rank be first or second among the senses, it is one which no one likes to lose, and for the loss of which there is scarcely ever any help. The knowledge of the ear, its diseases and their remedies, seems scarcely to have kept pace with the progress made in the other departments of medical science.

The position of the organs of hearing, mostly hidden within the head, and having no outward communication save by means of a tube which is difficult to reach, their complex and peculiar structure, their extreme delicacy, which resents much intermeddling, and the ignorance even, of some of their uses, must account in part for this.

When the trouble is in the external

ear, it is usually temporary, and may often be reached and cured; when in the internal, a cure is seldom or never attained.

When a celebrated oculist was congratulated upon the success which he had attained in his profession, he replied, that in order to arrive at that success, he had been obliged to spoil a hatful of eyes in experimenting. It must have been a consolation to the owners thereof to know that their loss was likely to be some one else's gain, and that others were to see by the quenched light of their own orbs.

It may be that in the department of aural surgery the requisite number of martyrs to science has not yet been found; but certain it is, that while fevers that were once a scourge have become harmless; while cholera and small-pox have, in a great measure, lost their terrors; while incipient consumption is conquered, the blind are restored to sight, the lame walk, the dumb speak, and the demons of dyspepsia and neuralgia are cast out, it cannot yet be said that the deaf do hear. Even though a man spent all his living upon physicians, he will be healed of none.

The cases which scarlet fever leaves behind as remembrancers, are considered the most hopeful, and are sometimes alleviated. I recollect the case of a young lady who had suffered for years from this cause, and who was entirely cured by a severe attack of diphtheria. Another deaf person was restored by a stroke of lightning. Still, such surgeons as these are not always at hand, and even if they were, one might feel some modest hesitation in applying for their services.

It is astonishing to notice how greatly