



## MARRIED WITH A RING

BY JUDITH UNDERWOOD.



OW, who would think that I, a grandmother, would ever get such a foolish, fashionable notion?" Mrs. John Burns, pudgy and comfortable, reviewed in her mind the incidents which had led up to the fancy which was distracting her.

She had never worried over such a thing when she and John were married. Far from it. And as for John, he was a sentimental sort of a person, to be sure, always quoting the verses of that other Scotchman of the same name, but the poetic idea, or the "fashionable notion" (whichever it might be), of a ring to seal his troth with her, either when they were engaged

or when they were married, had surely not occurred to him. And Mrs. Burns herself would have said then that rings were a nuisance to a body. They always had to be hung on a nail on washday, sometimes they rolled through knot-holes under the house, and at best the children were apt to swallow them.

At any rate, there were things then more important to think about. She and John had been pioneers. With infinite pains the virgin soil of the hills had been prepared for planting, and years of diligence had elapsed before she and John were surrounded, as now, by fruitful acres of oats and wheat and corn, reaching to east and south as far as they could see, and

rippling like the ocean tide with every breeze that blew toward the valley.

In many ways—and Mrs. Burns was proud of the fact—the household observed old-time traditions scrupulously. New-comers in the neighborhood might skimp themselves with “art squares” in their houses, with bare floor showing around the edges, they might call it stylish, but Mrs. Burns was grateful to Providence that she and John, after the first few years, had always been able to afford carpets reaching quite up to the walls. It made no difference that these people talked about their fine yellow pine floors, with narrow boards; Mrs. Burns knew in her heart it was far more “respectable” to have the solid oak, hewn direct from the forest, as she had it for the floors of her house, strong enough to last for the great-grandchildrēn, and never showing a grease-spot. And the old, tall clock in the dining-room, which Mr. Burns had brought from Scotland, was al-



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ways regulated by the sun and the sun alone. The younger folks in the house might have their watches, set by the railroads, if they really wanted them, but when it came to the big clock, Mr. Burns said, and his wife fully endorsed the sentiment: “We were here before the railroads. Why should we change our time to suit them?”

When her daughters began to be married, however, each one, according to the Episcopal ceremony, by a minister from the city, Mrs. Burns weakened toward just one “fashionable notion.” She admired, she coveted the plain gold ring which each of her daughters wore. At last John, Jr., was married, and he and his bride, with her plain gold ring, came to live in the house with Mr. and Mrs. Burns. When she saw the symbol every day Mrs. Burns grew fairly melancholy over the matter. Every one who was married had a ring except her. Her hands were work-worn, her fingers were short and brown, but still!

Blushing like a girl, she broached the subject to John one morning, as he and she were digging around the rose bushes. “I’d like a wedding-ring, John,” she said.

“An’ who is goin’ to be married noo?” exclaimed John, in amazement. “The last o’ the bairns is gone.”

“Nobody, John,” said Mrs. Burns, shamefacedly. “It’s myself. I’ve a notion more and more that I want you to get me a plain gold wedding ring. When I die it can be buried with me, and my hands folded over my bōsom, with the wedding ring on them.”

“Oh, woman!” cried John, distractedly. “Hae ye no heart? Whaur