



JIMMY AND HIS FATHER HELP POOR AUNTIE.

THIS IS ANOTHER OF JIMMY'S SCRAPES, BUT HIS FATHER IS ALSO TO BLAME THIS TIME.

"Imprudent" Marriages.

By "marrying imprudently" I do not mean marrying in haste, or for money; I mean just what most people do, when they use the time-honoured phrase—marrying young.

But this theory does not apply to a king, or a crown prince, or the eldest son of a peer. Were you to occupy any one of those positions, you would be expected and implored to wed long before you were five-and-twenty—sometimes while you were still legally only an "infant"—and nobody will tell you that you cannot know your own mind, and so on.

But if you are merely an ordinary mortal, whether you are rich or poor—but more particularly if you are poor—to marry your first love in the flush and heyday of your mutual youth will be looked upon as little short of a crime.

It is rather ridiculous, isn't it? Especially considering that the great majority of those kings, princesses, dukes, etc., who married very young are at present

sent engaged in living happily ever after; and remembering that our admirable ancestors, of all ranks in life, made a regular practice of doing so, too. And everybody knows, nowadays, what splendid men and women they were, and how well they brought up their dozens of children, and how extremely rapidly the British Isles are said to be going to the dogs, simply because we have let off being like them!

We have certainly left off being like them in one particular, and that is our view of marriage. To grandpapa it was a solemn career, of which the duties were as important as the pleasures—in fact, its duties were its pleasures—whereas the modern idea seems to be that a wife is a luxury to which a man should only aspire when he has about finished his business career, and is decidedly in comfortable circumstances for his particular position.

"Consider the cruelty," says the worldly-wise mentor to the modern Romeo, "of taking a delicately nurtured girl, and, instead of supplying her with a first-floor flat, an Empire drawing-

room, Paris frocks, nightly amusements, and a Norland nurse, to ask her to drudge over housework, bathe her own babies, knit your socks, and spend evening after evening at home with only you for company! To let Juliet know you love her before you can offer her a home as good as—if not better than—the one she leaves, would not be the action of an honest man?"

And poor dear Romeo believes this—there must be some crumbs of truth in the assertion that we are degenerating, after all—and dutifully goes off by himself to wait till his hair is thin and his illusions worn out, and his bachelor ways so fixed, that when he does marry he finds it very hard work to be a satisfactory husband.

And Juliet is hardly likely to prove a satisfactory wife, because even the best of women cannot live on chocolate cream alone, and that is what—metaphorically, of course—the wife of the average successful thirty-seven-year-old husband is expected to do.

They may "rub along" together fairly well, on the whole, but—

But if Romeo had married his first love some dozen years ago, and Juliet had married her first love, too, they would each have had a solid hundred-to-one chance of an ideal marriage—the kind of union which brings two people to their diamond wedding-day with their great-grandchildren round their knees, and that glowing spiritual beauty of happy and reverend age which outshines the very pink and white of youth.

Because, as in every other art, ordinary persons should embark upon marriage before their character has crystallised in its minor details. At twenty-two there are very few men and women who cannot adapt themselves, all unison, seriously, to some constant, loved companion.

At thirty-two this entails hard sacrifice; at forty-two it is all but impossible. Now, it is not because the husband is a Home Ruler, or the wife an admirer of Bernard Shaw, that married people are made miserable, but because of the perpetual pinpricks which two people not absolutely run in the same mould are pretty sure to give each other.