

Papa on Weddings.

ALSO WHAT HIS DAUGHTERS THINK ABOUT THEM.

Papa's eldest daughter was working a mysterious table-decoration for that equally mysterious receptacle known amongst young ladies as a "bottom drawer."

Papa's second daughter was busy on a set of hand-painted doyleys, also destined to be stowed away in the bottom drawer of papa's eldest daughter.

The remainder of papa's daughters were also employed with needlework of various descriptions, mostly destined for that omnivorous and rapacious bottom drawer, which was beginning to earn for itself the title of "bottomless drawer," so great was its capacity.

So there was quite a forecast of matrimony in the air.

Indeed, the only member of the industrious circle who was not engaged upon work for the "bottom drawer" was papa's fourth daughter, who was working a slipper-bag for the curate to keep his pipes in.

It had been whispered in the family circle that papa's eldest daughter would enter the matrimonial state some time towards the autumn.

It was also whispered that it was to be quite a quiet affair.

But papa, who knew mamma's ways better than any other member of the family, had his doubts on the point.

"If there is one thing that I dislike more than another it is an ostentatious wedding," he began, speaking generally, but casting a somewhat self-conscious glance in the direction of mamma, who was busy in working a tea-cloth for the bottomless drawer.

Nobody had any comments to make so papa, emboldened by the general silence, continued, in a slightly louder voice:

"If, as a man with eight marriageable daughters, I was not afraid of appearing to shirk my responsibilities," he remarked, "I should raise a public protest against the extravagance of the modern marriage."

"But it only comes once in a lifetime," protested papa's second daughter, who is looking forward to real orange-blossom, and a string of twenty carriages, not to speak of a full choral service and half a column, with photographs, in the six-penny papers.

"Don't know so much about that, my dear!" answered papa, nodding his head sagely. "There was Mrs. Major Mantrap, at Delhi. She buried four husbands in the six years before she married Mantrap! Capital fellow was Mantrap! Played a first-rate game of whist, and was the best judge of a polo-pony in the garrison. Everyone warned him against marrying Mrs. Mantrap—Mrs. Smasher she was then; Smasher was the name of her previous husband. 'Number Four Smasher' they called him. But Mrs. Shrapnell (Shrapnell, of the Artillery, was her previous husband) snatched him."

"Goodness gracious, papa, don't go back to the first husband! What happened to Major Mantrap? Did he die?" asked papa's eldest daughter.

"Worse than that, my love," answered papa, shaking his head sadly.

"What could be worse than that?" answered papa's youngest daughter, who still finds life a sort of sweetstuff shop.

"He retired—out the Service—and is now a borough councillor," answered papa, shaking his head again.

"I think that Mrs. Smasher-Shrapnell-Mantrap person was a horrid woman," said papa's second daughter judicially.

"Never met a more charming woman in my life," replied papa—"with the exception of yourself, my love," he continued, bowing politely

in the direction of mamma, who discreetly kept her eyes upon her tea-cloth.

"Pancey! Five husbands! When so many nice girls have no husbands at all!" echoed papa's fourth daughter. "I call it perfectly shameful!"

"As bad as those horrid trusts that the papers are so full of now!" chimed in another daughter.

"Well, these four were the only trust that Mrs. Mantrap ever had in husbands," chuckled papa. "She never trusted Mantrap far beyond her eyesight after she married him."

"Punning, papa, is the poorhouse of wit!" severely answered papa's eldest daughter, who brides herself upon her epigrams, and regards herself as a sort of feminine Anthony Hope.

"And matrimony is the mother of invention!" answered papa in a sprightly vein. "I have never heard a man make so many excuses to justify himself in running out to post a letter as my poor friend Mantrap."

"Some of us are awfully clever to-night!" casually remarked papa's youngest daughter with a yawn.

"There is nothing that makes me feel so tired as to hear clever people talk cleverness. It is like sitting in the front row of an empty pit without the actors and the smell of orange peel. Talking about orange peel," continued papa's youngest daughter, "when I am married I am going to wear real orange-blossoms, with a train that I can kick, and two pages in 'Henri Quatre' costumes."

"That I can kick!" interrupted papa's fourth daughter, who has strong ideas on the simplicity of weddings. "When I get married," she continued, "I am not going to let anyone at all know about it but papa and mamma."

"I wouldn't forget to drop a post-card to the bridegroom if I were you—of course, he's not very important, but, like the pinch of salt in the potatoes, he's very necessary," interrupted her eldest sister with some sarcasm.

"I am going to be married at six o'clock, and no one is to be there but papa and mamma and the pew-opener," resumed papa's fourth daughter unmoved.

"Then I suppose the menu for the wedding-breakfast will be kippers, bacon, and marmalade, with perhaps a plate of porridge for the bridegroom, who will read the newspaper at breakfast, and will occasionally throw you a fact like a bone, to the effect that Notts are all out for a hundred and seventy-five runs, or that South Eastern A's have gone up a couple of points since the last Stock Exchange settlement. Upon my word you are a romantic bird!" exclaimed papa's eldest daughter with withering scorn.

"And you wouldn't get many wedding presents!" suggested papa's youngest, with practical foresight, praiseworthy in one so young.

"I don't want wedding-presents!" rejoined papa's fourth daughter indifferently. "I think that the custom of asking a lot of people to a wedding just for the sake of wringing electro-plate out of them is a detestable one. I am sure that anyone who cares for one will send a wedding present whether they are asked to the wedding or not."

"Then, like the man who wants to borrow half-a-crown, you will find out how many people in the world really care for you, and that is never a very pleasant experience!" rejoined papa's eldest daughter.

"A wedding without cake," remarked papa's youngest daughter, generally, "is like a young man without money, or lamb without mint sauce!"

"You mean, dear, that a young man without money is like a lamb without mint sauce," replied papa's fourth daughter. "I think that cake ought

to be made compulsory at every wedding, by law," continued papa's youngest. "They ought to fix the size of the cake on a graduated scale to agree with the income tax, and anyone daring to send cake without lots of almond icing, as Mary Morrison did the other day, ought to be prosecuted."

"I'm not going to have any cake," replied papa's fourth daughter bravely; "I think that just to send a card is much nicer—"

"Cards!" ejaculated papa's youngest daughter with disgust. "I hate cards, they are the bane of modern existence. They show the hollowness of society more than any other social institution. People send cards for everything nowadays. They send them when they get born, when they get married, and when they die. They send them to people whom they won't ask to dinner, and whom they intend to polish off by gangs and afternoon tea and music, or, worse still, ping-pong. There is nothing so insincere as a card!"

"But, my dear—" began papa's fourth daughter.

"Give me cake!" replied papa's youngest—"cake and plenty of it. Anyone who wishes to earn my gratitude and respect must send out their wedding-cake in two-pound wedges. Anybody can have the card and silver-edged box, but give me the cake!"

Then she sighed.

"But, after all!" she continued, "the postman would be sure to get it! Postmen are such awful fellows for wedding-cake. I believe that is why our postman is so fat. He must steal all the wedding-cake that comes through the Sorting Office. I don't altogether blame him, for if I were Postmaster-General I should just sit in my office all day long and take my pick from the wedding-cake mail-bags."

Mamma, who seldom joins in the conversations of papa and his daughters, here interposed.

"They say," she said, with the air of one who was imparting a new and important piece of information—"they say that every piece of wedding-cake one eats brings one a happy month."

"Perhaps that is why our postman always looks so jolly!" suggested papa.

"I don't think that can be true," remarked papa's youngest daughter judicially—"the last piece of wedding-cake I had—that was Mary Morrison's—didn't give me a very happy month, but I had a most unhappy night after eating it. I only ate a little bit of it, too, and I put the rest under my pillow so that I should dream of my future husband, and I dreamed of nothing but mad bulls and runaway railway engines all night!"

"That means that you are either going to marry a butcher or ticket-collector!" interposed papa's fourth daughter, who poses as a palmist, and is much given to the interpretation of dreams.

"On second thoughts," replied papa's youngest daughter, "I don't think that I shall marry at all! I

shall just be an old maid, and stay with papa and mamma as long as ever I live.

Then papa's youngest daughter rushed upon him and butted her curly head into his shoulder, as was her affectionate custom.

"You don't want all of us to go away, do you, papa, dear?" she murmured, in a voice that should have coaxed a stone lion off a monument.

Then papa slid his arm round her, and cleared his throat, and blinked because besides the usual tear in his dim old eyes there was another.

For, although papa seems a tearfully stern old gentleman, he has a lot of soft places.

That is why his fourth daughter calls him The Lobster. He is very red and hard outside, but under the shell he is awfully soft and sweet!

The Charge of the Ping-pong Craze.

Half the world, half the world,
Going Ping-Pongward,
Earl, duke, or servant girl,
Bunge in its mighty swirl:
Ping till they Hong and die,
Sing then their song on high,
Join in the angels' cry,
"Vive la Ping-Pong!"

My heart and voice I raise,
To sing its live-long praise;
Let the whole world resound
With its sweet sing-song sound:
"Forward, the Ping-Pong craze!"
Both old and young one says,
Priest, dean, and curate pray,
"Vive la Ping-Pong!"

Ping-Pong to right of them,
Ping-Pong to left of them,
Ping-Pong in front of them,
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Stormed at with celluloid,
Of fear and care devoid,
Chairs, lamps, and clocks destroyed,
"Vive la Ping-Pong!"

When shall its glory fade?
Oh, whild whild charge it made!
Where-wide its fusillade;
Pinged loud and ponged hard;
Girls with their fancy bloke,
Kitt-raff and gentle folk,
All have their little poke,
"Vive la Ping-Pong!"

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