

"I thought she was positively plain," and Miss Redfern's usual affectation gave place to contempt. "Her face was absolutely expressionless, and her movements fearfully stiff. There's so much of her too, she must be quite five foot eleven, and she's as thin as a lamp-post!" and as she spoke she surveyed her own prominent and boldly displayed charms in a mirror opposite with an air of great gratification.

One of the guests present remarked that Haines the artist had been raving about her ever since he saw her, to which Lady Redfern replied—

"Of course she has a style of her own. I've no doubt some people would admire

her exceedingly, but she was altogether too stiff for our taste, and quite the last woman one would have expected Guy Fawcett to choose."

"Perhaps she has money," suggested another guest.

"Of course she has," sneered Miss Redfern. "Guy Fawcett is clever in some things, if he is like a mummy in a drawing-room."

"Oh, he's a very decent man is Fawcett," put in another voice. "You want to get to know him, that's all. I don't think he'd marry for money."

"Then he must be a stupid man," said Miss Redfern, who was out of temper. "No one else would marry a

woman who reads Darwin's *Theory of Evolution* except for her money."

"How do you know she does?" he asked.

"Because it lay open on the table, and we all know Guy Fawcett hadn't been reading it. He's too much taken up with his betting-books to read anything worth speaking of," with which parting, malicious shaft she changed the subject.

But it was quickly spread abroad that Mrs. Fawcett was "peculiar" and "a lady of views," and she was not much troubled with unwelcome callers after Lady Redfern's call.

(To be continued.)

## SOCIAL EVENTS IN A GIRL'S LIFE.

By LA PETITE.

### PART V.

#### REMINISCENCES OF A BRIDESMAID.



BELIEVE it is usually considered very unlucky to be a bridesmaid too often, but this thought has never deterred me from acting in that capacity whenever any of my friends have required me.

It is said that you never become a bride yourself if you have been a bridesmaid three times, but the idea of being an old maid has no terrors for me, and I am quite content to remain single if so it is ordered.

I quite well remember the first time I was called on to act as bridesmaid. I was very small and too young to really know what it all meant.

With my eyes shut the whole scene comes before me again like a picture—our upstairs sitting-room "between the lights"—papa reading in his big arm-chair on one side of the fireplace; mamma, just returned from paying a call, leaning on the back of her special chair opposite, and their tiny daughter hovering between the two like the restless sprite that she was.

Mamma's voice sounds in my ears saying tentatively: "Minnie wants Jeanie to be her bridesmaid! What do you think of it, papa?" and then a misty veil descends between me and my dream-picture, and I hear and see no more.

Evidently papa's answer was favourable, for the next thing I remember is the day itself and my being arrayed in what was then the fashionable mixture of palest Cambridge blue and sage-green cashmere. I was too young to take much interest in my appearance, but I remember my dress was completed by blue silk stockings and green silk shoes and a tiny green velvet mob-cap with a jewelled butterfly in front.

You will guess how long ago it was when you hear that it was the time of morning weddings, so we began at an early hour with a tiring day before us; but I was not at all daunted at the prospect, and was quite ready to begin when the carriage containing the other bridesmaids drove up.

There were only five of us, though there were to have been six, but the bride's dearest friend, who had come all the way from Ireland to be one of her train, developed mumps the day before the wedding, and had to be at once condemned to solitary confinement in consequence.

Of course one cannot remember every single detail of the day, but here and there a phrase or an incident starts out of the mist exactly like a spark on a piece of burnt paper. I remember the bridesmaids calling for me, and the remark of the prettiest one as we prepared to get out at the church, "Now to be stared at!"

I recollect feeling very solemn as we stood waiting for the bride, and of being conscious of great responsibility as I headed the procession after her, not at all lessened by the principal bridesmaid's whispered injunction to walk a little faster and not to step on Minnie's train.

It evidently was borne in on me that a good deal depended on my behaviour, for a good authority assures me that our rector's wife said to me afterwards, "Well, Jeanie, were all the ladies in church very prettily dressed?" to which my answer was, "I don't know. You see, I was so busy praying that Minnie would be happy that there wasn't time to look about me. We had to pray for her, because, of course, that's what a bridesmaid is for."

Then honestly my recollections grow vague, till it comes to the drive back from church with a kind-hearted young groomsman taking care of me, and laughingly saying he did not think it was usually considered quite the correct thing for a groomsman to be sitting with his arm round a bridesmaid's waist.

This remark puzzled me and made me wonder, especially when they all smiled, but the gorgeous (and tedious) wedding breakfast soon drove it all out of my head, especially the cake, which was a marvel of beauty, each bridesmaid having her initials traced in coloured sugar on little white sugar shields which ornamented the base. Mine lasted for a long time under a glass shade in the drawing-room, but at length succumbed to old age and many infirmities.

I vainly tried to get a glimpse of the bride round this huge bride-cake with an uneasy sense of her being altered now, but she did not see the wistful face of her youngest bridesmaid, till the good-natured young man pointed me out to her, and then she too dodged round the obstruction and gave me a beaming smile which greatly comforted me.

I remember refusing the bride-cake on principle, because I thought mamma would think I had had enough, and then it all fades away except a dim recollection of the bride's leaving her old home in all the glories of "going away costume" and brand new trunks, to drive to our house a street or so off and change to an ordinary travelling dress and an unobtrusive box.

This plan had been an old arrangement, and strikes me now as a very good one, for it did away with the conspicuous "newly-married" look which draws public attention to the situation, and makes it doubly trying to a sensitive girl who is perhaps already overwrought by the fatigue of all she has gone through and the pain of parting with her parents and old home.

I have no souvenir of this occasion, as my parents thought me too young to wear or accept jewellery, but Minnie presented me with a superb doll nearly as big as myself, who turned her head whichever way you liked, and possessed a travelling-box stored with a veritable *trousseau*, every stitch of which the bride had made herself in the intervals of getting her own ready. This beauty I promptly named after the giver, and henceforth she (and her box) accompanied me wherever I went, and proved a never-failing source of pleasure on wet days or fine, for I never tired of dressing her in her various costumes (of which she had a greater variety than I had), and of trying the effect of her numerous hats on her flaxen head.

Years ago she fulfilled her mission of amusing me and went the way of all my old dolls, namely, to some less fortunate child, whose hours of pain and weariness she beguiled by that fetching little turn of her head and the somewhat diminished glories of her *trousseau*. Ah, well! the last time we saw my first bride was on the shores of a Swiss lake, where we were all staying together, including the unlucky bridesmaid who had had the mumps; but as we steamed away, leaving her surrounded by her children, we little thought it was the last time we should ever meet on earth.

Yet so it was, for some months afterwards she set sail for a West Indian island, whence we received the news of her death.

My next recollection does not end so sadly, for its heroine is still alive and prosperous.

I was a good deal older now, but it was still in the days of morning weddings, and there were a good many journeys to and from various shops, and much excitement in the air.

I chose a personal wedding-present for the

bride, which I myself paid for out of my munificent allowance of sixpence a week (liable to be stopped if my lessons were not satisfactory or my conduct not all it should be). My choice fell on a perfectly hideous brown and green china butter-dish which, I argued, was certain to come in useful, as they must have butter whatever else they did not want, so a butter-dish more or less would not signify, while this particular one struck me as being the loveliest thing of the kind I had ever seen.

The bride was charmed with it, as, being a person of great taste, she was of course bound to be, making me feel myself triumphantly a perfect genius.

There were only two bridesmaids this time, myself and the bride's sister, and our dresses were cream-coloured nun's-cloth and crimson velvet.

My chief pride was my gold locket with the initials of the happy couple intertwined on it, and my chief anxiety signing the register, with an uneasy feeling that my governess would say it was very badly done.

Then came the long drive to the house for the breakfast, a stately affair which, however, I must have enjoyed, as I find put down in my diary of that date a minute inventory of everything I ate.

I will spare you the details; suffice it to say I was thrown into agonies of nervousness by someone jokingly saying that the youngest bridesmaid always had to reply to the toast of "the bridesmaids," but my unhappiness was relieved by the assurance that it was only meant in fun. My mind was extremely literal in those days.

If things really go by contraries, the third wedding on my list is the happiest of all, for several little things went wrong.

The bride was the eldest girl of a large family who lived next door to us, and who were always as good as brothers and sisters to me.

Her engagement, being the first in the family, was naturally a source of great amusement to the younger members thereof, who had no reverence whatever for their elders, so many are the stories handed down of the pranks they played on her.

For instance, the engagement took place at a country house, and as the courting was mainly carried on in a large tent erected on the lawn as a shelter from the sun, one of the boys in the house wickedly stuck up outside it a huge placard bearing this announcement, in letters too large to be overlooked, "No admittance except on business." Her brothers and sisters also took a mischievous delight in hiding his photograph in various unlikely places, in which, I am afraid, I often aided and abetted them.

My favourite place was the cribbage-board, until she got accustomed to it, and used to walk straight off there directly her treasure was missing in order, as she said, to rescue him from such "low company."

It is very difficult to be sentimental or romantic when you are one of a large family. However, she was excessively good-tempered and took it all in good part; and, of course, we were very fond of her all the time, though certainly we teased her unmercifully.

When the letter came, inviting me to be one of her train, I was enchanted and joyfully accepted.

Our dresses were pale-blue silk and primrose-coloured velvet, as it was a January wedding, so the bride's youngest brother sent round a fancy portrait of the bridesmaids with very red noses, as he was convinced we should all have them on the happy occasion.

There was what the bridegroom ungallantly termed quite "a crowd of us," as we numbered no fewer than ten; but at one time I really thought I should have to drop out, for a week before the ceremony an abscess developed in my nose which threatened to totally ruin my appearance, and had it not got better I must certainly have sent in my resignation, for I should have spoilt the look of the whole procession.

However, "All's well that ends well;" the horrid thing disappeared just in time, and on the day itself not one of us was missing.

It was an afternoon wedding this time, so I had the whole morning in which to get ready, but I had shown myself *en route* to the lady who had been the "Queen," and to whom I always go when looking specially nice, so our carriage arrived at the church a little late, but the bride had not yet come, so it did not matter.

Instead of bouquets we carried little wooden sabots filled with moss and primroses and slung on our arms by yellow ribbons. As we carried in our hands big feather fans these wretched little sabots were a fruitful source of misery to us, for if carried in the orthodox way they promptly tipped up and deposited their contents on the floor. We soon found that the only thing to do was to grasp them firmly and uncompromisingly by the middle like a book, and, having discovered this, we had time to get uneasy over the bride's non-arrival.

At last, just when we began to think something serious must have happened, she appeared, leaning on her mother's arm, and we fell in behind them relieved of our fears.

A wee, curly-headed boy, dressed in a cavalier suit of blue and primrose, carried her train, and won all hearts by his quaint solemnity and angelic face.

He was so good, for he never once tugged at her dress as if he were playing horses, or smelt the flowers round the edge to see if they were real, as I have seen other small pages do.

He was made much of afterwards in the drawing-room, and the proud young father declared that he was quite content to sink his own individuality altogether and be known simply as "the page's papa."

As to the bride's delay it transpired later that with praiseworthy regard to strict truth

the bride had told her dressmaker the exact day and hour for which she wanted her gown, and she did not reap the reward of virtue, for the garment arrived only when all we bridesmaids were waiting at the church.

Then the bride's mother in her agitation and distress could not find her gloves anywhere, so snatched up a pair lying about, and forcing them on in the carriage, they split in all directions.

The chapter of accidents was not yet complete, for, the ceremony over, we all disappeared into the vestry to sign the registers, congratulate the bride and have our respective groomsmen portioned out to us; but the one destined for me could nowhere be found, and a substitute had to be hastily summoned from the body of the church.

It mattered very little to me who it was, as I did not know either of them, but still, I did wonder what had become of him.

A good deal of merriment was excited by the crossing-sweeper, who would persist in poking his head in at the carriage window and begging for a contribution in honour of this "sus-picious occasion," so we arrived at the house in a very jubilant state of mind.

Presently in the drawing-room there wandered up to me an apologetic young man looking remarkably ill who began hesitatingly, "I beg your pardon, but I believe I was to have been your best man."

"Not quite that," was my polite answer, whereupon he faded away, as it were, in confused murmurs of contrition and was seen no more.

As a matter of fact, the unfortunate individual had been attacked by influenza (which was raging at that time) in the church, and was ill for weeks afterwards, hence his mental confusion.

The time passed pleasantly in talk and music till the bride's departure drew nigh, and then another young man made his way up to me and observed, "Will you please come and line the hall?"

My look of vague alarm (for the thought struck me that he was another victim of the prevailing malady and that this speech was the first feverish symptom of a wandering mind) recalled him to himself, for he hastened to add, "I don't mean by yourself, of course, but with the other bridesmaids."

To this I had no objection, so cheerfully assented, and we sent our friend off right royally to begin the new life that lay before her.

At the very moment of writing I am wearing the gold brooch which, with the feather fan, was the bridegroom's souvenir of the occasion, and so end my reminiscences, grave and gay, as most recollections are.

I am not likely to serve in the same capacity again, but I hope the custom will never die out, for to me there is something beautifully appropriate in a girl being attended by her girlish friends when she crosses the threshold of womanhood.

VARIETIES.

WHATEVER IS, IS BEST.

"I know there are no errors  
In the great eternal plan,  
And all things work together  
For the final good of man.  
And I know when my soul speeds  
onward  
In its grand eternal quest,  
I shall say as I look back earthward,  
Whatever is—is best."

Elia Wheeler Wilcox.

SHOWING SENSE.

"Mabel has a lot of sense."  
"How does she show it?"  
"She never permits herself to appear more intelligent than the person who is talking to her."

OURSELVES AND OTHERS.—Every girl is ready to give in a long catalogue of those virtues and good qualities she expects to find in the person of a friend; but very few of us are careful to cultivate them in ourselves.

THE REASON.

Teacher: "Now, Patsy, would it be proper to say 'You can't learn me nothing?'"  
Patsy: "Yes'm."  
Teacher: "Why?"  
Patsy: "'Cause yer can't."

DOING GOOD.—She who does good to another; does also good to herself; not only in the consequence, but in the very act of doing it; for the consciousness of well-doing is an ample reward.