

WEDDING BREAKFASTS.



IT cannot be denied that births, deaths, and marriages form no unimportant epochs in life's history. It cannot be denied, also, that on each of these occasions those interested too often commit absurdities quite as great as our old friend Artemus Ward, who celebrated the birth of his

twins by mounting the roof and blazing away with his double-barrelled gun. It would indeed be well if the waste that almost invariably occurs over each of these occasions was confined to a little powder. Funerals are not subjects for jest, and we use the word "absurdity" in no jesting sense when we call attention to that common one of wasting a large sum of money out of respect, as it is falsely called, to the dead. The truest form of respect to the dead is care for the living. Many a poor widow and orphans have absolutely suffered want, owing to the mistaken feeling that has caused them to part with nearly their little all in funeral expenses. Indeed, among quite the lower classes the same feeling is often shown, and the departed is often paid more honour in death than he was ever known to receive in life; and the feeling of pride amongst some of the mourners in riding in a coach with two horses quite swallows up the lesser feeling of grief.

Next let us turn to the beginning of life. Why should such a sum of money be absolutely wasted in buying a baby a christening robe quite out of proportion to its position in society at the time, or probably ever after? A foolish mother, to gratify a silly pride, and to be admired by her neighbours, will often waste in lace, &c., for the robe in question a sum of money which, if put in the savings bank, and allowed to accumulate for fourteen years, would probably keep the youngster in the far more suitable and appropriate "corduroys" for the remainder of his days. Why, too, should a baby be presented with a silver mug, or a coral and bells?—things that cost a lot of money, and are really practically worthless. It does not require any great intellect to choose a present practically useful for a child of six weeks old.

We next come to weddings; and before commencing the subject of our article—the wedding breakfast—let us have a few words of preface about wedding presents. Why should a newly-married couple have nothing presented to them, as a rule, but nic-nacks? Who ever heard of a gridiron for a wedding present? but I will be bound to say there are many persons who would gladly change one of their dozen ornamental inkstands—far too ornamental for anything so vulgar as ink—for a good circular gridiron, that would cook a chop or steak as it ought to be done. I have been thinking over what is best to give to a newly-married couple, and have just decided on a dripping-pan. If they send it back in disgust, I will let you know in my next article of my failure at being practical.

Of course these remarks only apply to those couples whose means are, comparatively speaking, limited, and whose first start in life—including, as it generally does, furnishing—is not always so smooth as it might be.

How often is it found that an amount of money is wasted in furnishing that least-used room in a little house, the drawing-room, at the expense of all the rest, especially the bed-rooms! I recollect some years ago staying at a small house in the country, where the tiny drawing-room was so stocked with what had evidently been wedding presents that it resembled a stall at a fancy fair—costly inkstands innumerable, Parian marble statuettes, china vases, &c.; and yet, when I went to bed, on attempting to open a lower drawer, I sat down on the ground without intending to, with a knob in each hand. Now this is not real comfort. But with regard to the breakfast, I would ask any young couple at the end of the first year of their married life to make a tour of inspection round their new home—which probably looks none the worse for having had the outside gloss worn off—and I would ask the wife the following question:—What would you not give now for the money your father paid for your wedding breakfast, if you might lay it out judiciously upon useful things? What a different house it would be for comfort!

My article on wedding breakfasts must not consist in saying, Don't have one; though I must in the name of common sense enter my protest against the vulgarity—for it is nothing else—of giving one out of proportion to the means of the giver. Where money is no object, of course the simplest plan is to go to some first-rate confectioners, and let them supply the breakfast at so much a head. Where, however, economy is a necessity, much can be done with a little good management to avoid waste. I will give an instance of a wedding breakfast that took place during the last six months, and the cost. For it often happens that during the last week before the wedding there is so much to be done at home in the trousseau line, that any elaborate cooking in the house is almost impossible. The following bill of fare is one supplied for

over sixty persons, at 14s. a head, in February last:—

- POTAGES.
Printanier.
- Purée d'Artichauts à la Palestine.
- ENTRÉES CHAUDES.
- Chartreuse de Homard à la Cardinal.
Petites Timbales à la Grande Duchesse.
Quenelle de Volaille à la Sefton.
Côtelettes de Tortue.
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- Saumon à la Mayonnaise.
Dindon aux Truffes.
- Gelantine de Veau à la Jardinière.
Langues de Boeuf.
- Pâtés de Faisans à la Française.
Jambon braisé. Poulets rôtis.
- Faisans rôtis.
Anguilles en Gelée à l'Aspic.
Petits Pâtés aux Huitres.
Pâté de Foie-gras en Aspic.
Mayonnaise de Filets de Soles.
Salades de Homard.
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- Gâteaux de Fruit à la Richelieu.
Fanchonnettes à la Prince de Galle.
Macédoine d'Abricots.
- Gelées de Citron. Gelées de Marasquin.
Crèmes d'Ananas.
Petits Choux à la Madère.
Chartreuse d'Orange à la Tangier.
Gelée à la Dauphine.
Meringue à la Suisse.
- Petites Pâtisseries à la Bonne-bouche.
Meringues à Crème à la Curaçao.
Fruit, &c. &c.
Glacés.
- Boudins à la Princesse Alice Maude.

Now a breakfast like this, including as it does two soups and four hot entrées, cannot as a rule be done in a private house. This of course does not include wine; and when the breakfast is ordered from a pastrycook's, I would always recommend the wine to be supplied from the home cellar. A first-class cold breakfast from a good pastrycook's, with soup and ices, will cost about 12s. 6d. a head; and unless the weather be really very hot, soup is always desirable. Without soup and ices, a saving of about 1s. a head can be made.

There are many persons, however, who cannot afford even so much as 10s. a head for a breakfast from the pastrycook's. When, therefore, the breakfast is made at home, it had better be all cold except the soup; and the great secret of success will be found to be in the old adage—"Never put off till the morrow what can be done to-day." Have plenty of flowers, and if summer time, have plenty of ice. Were I to go through a set of dishes, I should simply be repeating what I have already said under the heading of "How to give a Nice Little Supper." Fruit, flowers, and ice make the greatest and best show possible for the money. Then, too, a few dishes can be bought which are not easily made at home. Some of those Italian shops where they sell ices have excellent Meringues very cheap.

Perhaps the greatest sacrifice of all to that monster, Custom, is the wedding cake. I suppose there never will be a case of a couple sufficiently strong-minded to forego themselves this luxury, on the ground of "what would people say?" Unless the cake required be

very large, it is by no means a difficult thing to make at home, and it can be sent to be baked at the baker's, who will probably know it only requires a moderate heat, and that the oven should be kept an even temperature all through the baking process.

Take first of all some candied peel, orange, lemon, and citron, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of each, and cut them into small, thin shreds; $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of flour; $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of butter; 1 lb. of dried cherries, which should be cut up, but not too fine; $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of currants, which must be thoroughly washed, picked, and afterwards dried; 8 oz. of almonds, well pounded; eight eggs; the rind of four oranges rubbed on to sugar; $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of spices, consisting of ground cinnamon, nutmegs, and cloves in equal proportions; about a tea-spoonful of salt, and half a pint of good brandy. The butter should be well worked with a wooden spoon in a large, strong basin, till it has a sort of creamy appearance. The flour, eggs, and sugar should be added slowly, while the spoon must be kept working the whole time. After this has been thoroughly well mixed, the rest of the ingredients mentioned may be added, only a little at a time, to insure the whole quantity being properly mixed up. When this is done, it should be poured into a tin hoop, placed on a metal baking-sheet. Two sheets of well-buttered paper must be placed on the baking-sheet underneath, and the hoop itself must be lined with a double band of well-buttered paper, or else the cake will be sure to burn round the edges.

The cake may now be taken off to the baker's oven, and as it will keep good for a long time, and in fact improve in flavour by keeping, it should be made some time beforehand. The icing of the cake should not be done till a short time beforehand, as it of course has a tendency to get dirty.

First the almond part—which is the only part of a wedding cake, to my mind, worth eating. Take $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of almonds, and having skinned them by throwing them into boiling water, rubbing off the skins, and then throwing them into cold water in order that they may not lose their colour, pound them very thoroughly in a mortar with 1 lb. of the finest white sugar, add a very little orange-water, and sufficient white of eggs to make it all into a soft paste; but take care not to fall into the common fault of making the paste too soft. This paste may now be spread over the top of the cake, taking care to avoid its getting over the edge as much as possible, and the cake must be put in a dry place. When the paste is sufficiently hard, the whole may then be iced over with sugar as follows:—Take six whites of eggs, and add to them about $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of very finely sifted, powdered white sugar. The whitest sugar must be chosen for the purpose. This must be worked well together with a wooden spoon, and a very little lemon-juice now and then dropped in while it is being worked. The mixture should properly have a shiny appearance, and if not thick enough it only requires a little more powdered sugar. This must now be put all over the cake to about a quarter of an inch in thickness. Some little skill will be necessary in order to avoid unseemly ridges in the icing on the top of the cake, which when



(Drawn by M. E. EDWARDS.)

A WEDDING BREAKFAST.

See WEDDING BREAKFASTS (p. 363).

covered must be put in a warm place in order to allow the icing to dry; only be sure to put a piece of paper as soon as possible lightly over the top, as should the dust settle while it is drying, the cake will not have that snow-white appearance it should have.

Little knobs of icing may be arranged round the edge to make the cake more ornamental, and on the day of the wedding a simple wreath of white flowers and green leaves will be found quite sufficient an ornament: in fact, a plain wreath of orange-blossom, when it can be obtained, looks far better than any more elaborate attempt at ornament.

A wedding cake is an expensive thing to make at home, but a far more expensive thing to buy. For a highly-ornamented wedding cake almost fabulous prices are asked; and there is something very satisfactory in having it made at home. A little ingenuity will easily enable any one whose fingers are gifted to make a small round centre ornament with glazed white cardboard, a little silver paper, and orange-blossom. When the cake is large, something raised in the centre is a great set-off to its appearance.

I trust what I have written may be the means of enabling some young couples to start in the world with some extra £20 or £30 in pocket; but it is not so much to them that I would speak as to the conscience of the bride's father. You know you are really a little proud of what you think is getting your daughter off your hands respectably. You know, too, that you have never opened so many bottles of champagne in your life before. You know, too, that many members of your son-in-law's family will visit your house on this

occasion, who will probably never visit it again. Now has that fact anything to do with all this outlay, which you know you can't afford? Very likely: but then it is really very snobbish. No, paterfamilias, don't show off, and no one will think a whit the worse of you for it. Pocket your £50, give quite a plain breakfast—no champagne at all—brave the world, and then furnish a room in the new house with the money, and instead of calling it "the breakfast room," call it "the wedding breakfast room."

Yes, you will feel more really happy; your voice may tremble while you make the dreaded speech at breakfast, while your pretty daughter hangs her modest head, far more nervous than yourself lest you should "break down," and while her husband whispers in her ear a few words quite as much intended to relieve his own feelings as hers—for who does not know the relief felt in saying something at those critical moments when we dread those dear to us possibly making an exhibition of themselves?—the room may be small, and the table not particularly showy; but you will feel you have manfully done your duty, and your grey head will go down to the grave the more honoured, inasmuch as you have not on the very threshold of your daughter's life set a bad example of extravagance.

One word in conclusion. If you *will* give champagne, give it good, or they will all laugh at you—they will indeed, they will laugh. Young men, bachelor friends of your son-in-law, will say, "Did you taste that champagne? Wasn't it awful?" Therefore, whatever you do, give good champagne or none.

A. G. PAYNE.

ELSIE CROFT. A LOVE-STORY.



I.

HEN John Croft, the Curate of Rowandale, died, and was carried to the quiet churchyard, whither his wife had preceded him some six years before, his only daughter Elsie, then twelve years old, went to live with her Uncle George at the High Farm, Rowandale. John Croft had come of a humble stock, and the squire had paid for his schooling, and afterwards supported him at college, so that even when he was ordained and obtained the curacy of his native place, the people always "reckoned him," as they said, one of themselves. Nor did the quiet curate give himself any airs. He was a modest, unassuming man, with a far-away look in his eyes, much given to solitary strolls on the moors which encircled Rowandale, and in no way inclined to plume himself on his educational advantages. He seemed to value them mainly because he was able to teach his little Elsie more than she could learn at the village school, and at the age of twelve she was considered in the primitive hamlet "quite a scholar."

But there came a day when father and daughter, master and pupil, had to part, and very bitter it was to both of them. It seemed to Elsie, when the freshly cut sods were ranged upon her father's grave, as if all the brightness had been taken out of the world. The very heather seemed to have lost its colour, and the sunlight scarcely shone upon the far-off sea as of old. She went contentedly enough, however, to her Uncle George's, and he and his wife, Aunt Jane, a good, motherly woman, were very kind to the orphan girl. True, she had to work and help in the house, just as their own daughter, her cousin, did, for Uncle George had a hard task to make a living out of the High Farm, situated as it was on the edge of the moor, and consisting mainly of very unproductive land. And doubtless the active housework kept her from brooding over her father's death, while the fresh moorland air and invigorating breezes from the distant sea brought a brighter flush of health to her cheek.

Still the girl had thoughts and aspirations which no one in the humble farm-house could share, feelings she inherited from her father, who had inspired her with a passionate love for poetry; and she often had strange dreams of the wonderful world outside the