

"That's because he couldn't see anything in that fat dowdy Beatrice of hers," whispered a pretty girl behind her fan.

"But," said Mrs. Lattimer, "I'm sure he has done nothing to shock us; he must have married some time."

"Don't you think it shocking for a man in his position to go off and marry so quietly, not to say secretly? I think it is disgraceful," said the stout dowager, ruffling her plumage and looking for all the world like a fussy old hen. "And mark my words," she continued, "there must be something to hide or there would not be such profound secrecy. Who is the girl anyway?"

"There," answered Mrs. Lattimer, nodding to a gentleman who had just entered the room, "ask Colonel Ormond; he is a friend of her family, was at the wedding, in fact gave the bride away."

Hearing this, the cries were: "Do tell us all about it, Colonel? Who is she? Where did she come from? Is she anybody? What was her wedding dress made of, etc?" The poor man looked distracted and turned from one to another in a vain attempt to speak.

The pretty girl with the fan, however, came to his rescue saying, "Come and sit by me, Colonel. Here is a nice seat, and then you can answer all their questions comfortably."

As he sank back into the seat he mopped his bald head with his handkerchief, saying, "Thank you, my dear. I never thought I would live to see the day that I would run from under fire and take refuge beside a petticoat."

"Well," she laughingly answered, "since you feel in safe quarters here, in gratitude for that safety, be an old dear and tell us all about it."

"Bless my soul! All about what?"

"All about the quiet wedding in Dublin at which you gave the bride away," she explained.