

The Wedding Present Problem.

By ANNE WARNER.

When Mrs. Clutterback and Maria received the news that there was to be a marriage in the family they sat quite still for a little. To speak frankly, they were appalled.

"We'll have to give her somethin'!" Mrs. Clutterback said at last.

"Oh, mother, do you really think so?" cried Maria.

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Clutterback, firmly, "she's your own cousin, Maria, and besides"—here a gleam of Mrs. Clutterback's natural spirit fought to the front—"maybe, if we give her somethin' she'll ask you to visit her, and if you was to visit her, and was to marry there in the city, I'd so enjoy livin' with you, Maria—oh, you ain't got no idea how I'd enjoy it!"

Mrs. Clutterback's forte was cheerful prophecy and unlimited enthusiasm over everything and everybody. She was a bright-eyed woman who took

wedding present was surely going to be provided for the cousin who lived in the city.

"I don't see how we can buy her anything," said Maria, "and I haven't time to crochet her anything, and you always forget to keep count of your stitches."

"Maybe we've got something in the house we could give her. We've got that wooden soap-box we could pack it in, and we'd only have to buy six nails to nail it up." Mrs. Clutterback's eyes shone bright at the thought.

"I don't believe we've got anything in the house that would do for a wedding present," said Maria, looking meditatively about the room.

"How would one of the samplers do?" queried her mother eagerly, "they're rare nowadays, and we've got grandmother's and Aunt Bathsheba's and Mrs. Kent's mother's, too. Don't you believe they'd prize one of those in the



Then they laid in the Pieces.

two naps a day, read profusely, if not profoundly, late into the night, gave the world only smiles in return for their scowls, and was unusually popular. Maria, her daughter and only child, was big, with pale eyes, and hair the color that is no color; she did the housework at home, the sewing for almost everyone, took care of the minister's children on Sewing-Society-afternoon and Prayer-Meeting-evening, and sang in the choir three times a day on Sunday. She was paid for the sewing only, and she wanted to give up the choir, at the age of forty-nine her voice was breaking somewhat. But her mother wouldn't hear of it.

"Your voice is just like a heavenly spirit's yet, Maria," she declared reassuringly; "and when you've got your book in front of your face you don't look sixteen, really you don't."

By this you may judge the general cut and calibre of Mrs. Clutterback's enthusiasm, and also discern why that

city?—Oh, Maria, just to think if you was to marry in the city!—I'd be so happy—I ain't ever rode on a tramcar pulled by electric wires yet."

"The clock wouldn't do," said Maria, thoughtfully, "it's too old to be new, and too new to be old."

"We could have it painted over, or else scratch it more," suggested her mother, looking alert to paint or to scratch as the case might call for.

Maria shook her head. "Let's go and see the china," she suggested, rising, "there may be something there."

"Oh, Maria!" Mrs. Clutterback exclaimed, "I'll tell you what we can send her—the broken cut-glass vase that Mr. Snap, the china-man, give you to see if you could mend it for an ornament, and then we never could. We could put it in a box, and she'd think it got broke going."

"Oh, we couldn't do that," said Maria, almost shocked.

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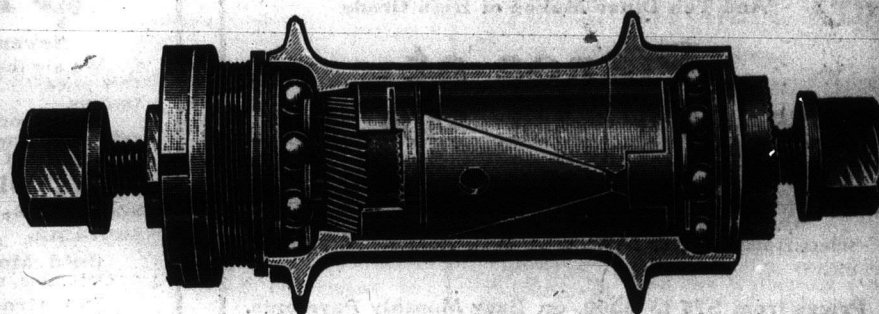
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