

"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 your 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