

## Papa's Orgy.

Everybody in the office felt sorry for Papa, from the Old Man, who was, of course, the head of the firm, to the freckled office boy, whose fiery hair gave to a somewhat grey place its one dash of color. The head clerk had been heard to say that Papa led a dog's life and the cashier often remarked that how Papa lived and supported that family on that salary was clear beyond him. The cashier knew what it was to support a much smaller family on a much larger salary, and found it a problem that taxed his management to the utmost. What, then, became of Papa at the first of the month, asked the cashier?

It was part of the irony of fate that Papa who was pale and wrinkled, and altogether out of proportion to his huge moustachios, should have six tall handsome daughters (all at home.)

Time was when his salary had been a little larger than now, and he had hesitated a long time before marrying. It seemed like flying in the face of Providence, he said, to ask any woman to live and keep house on a salary like that; but eventually he asked her, and she undertook to make the salary suffice for herself and him.

When the first little girl came she might have noticed a look of dismayed speculation on the countenance of Papa. His real name was John Henry Craig, but he became Papa from that date. As the five other girls came in rapid succession the look of speculation deepened, and yet, somehow, the salary stretched to cover all of them, and clothe them, and give them a fair education.

If there had been another 'one of 'em' it couldn't have been done, Papa was wont to say cheerily. 'As it is, there's just enough; but another would have meant hard times for all.'

Those were the days when somebody was always hurrying Papa.

'Hurry now, Papa,' Mrs. Craig would say, the moment he arose from the breakfast table. 'Hurry and get off—you'll be late for work—and you know you can't afford to lose that job.'

And Papa hurried with cherubic cheerfulness, and trotted lightly off along the same old streets, around the same corners, over the pavements his feet had helped to wear away.

Papa's clothes had a guilty way of falling into disrepute and looking sneaking and uncomfortable, but Mrs. Craig patched and darned those time worn garments with exemplary fortitude.

Of course, it doesn't so much matter what a man wears, Papa, she said. 'Nobody ever notices what a man has on. With the girls, now, it's different. They have to look nice.'

'Certainly, Mary,' said Papa, brushing away at the garments which might be shabby, but were always clean.

'Certainly. Do they need anything special just now?'

Two or three years ago Mrs. Craig had died. She was believed to be delirious towards the last, for she kept muttering incoherently:

'Winter coming on—jackets for all the girls—your old coat will have to do another winter, Papa.'

Having buried his wife Papa went on taking care of the girls. The coat did not only for another but for still another winter after that. Shabbier, smaller, more bent, a little more bald, Papa was always at his desk, working with unflagging cheerfulness.

'No—I would rather keep my girls at home,' he said to a good natured friend of his one day, when the said friend suggested that the girls might help Papa make a living. 'Of course, if it were really necessary, you know—if I were to break down, or anything like that—why then I wouldn't mind it so much. But I don't like to see women out working, when there's a great, strong man that ought to stand between them and the world.'

And Papa lifted his head and squared his thin little shoulders in such a manner that the friend did not laugh, as he had meant to do at first. Papa had forgotten for a moment that the friend was six feet tall and strong in proportion, and that the friend's two daughters stood behind a counter from nine till seven.

About this time Papa discovered to his amazement that one of the six girls had a lover, and was thinking of being married some day not far off.

'Well, well! That Baby!' Papa said to his pipe half an hour afterwards. 'I wonder what Mary'd say to that?'

And then Papa searched about and found some extra work that he could do outside office hours.

'One of them's going to marry,' he explained cheerfully to the Old Man.

'She'll need a lot of things, of course, and it's going to take some thing. Anything you can throw my way now—I'll be much obliged.'

Papa had scarcely recovered from the marriage of the first daughter before there were two more who wanted to have a double wedding.

'It's good they gave me a little time, or I'd never have done,' Papa said, drawing a long breath when it was over.

'Then, in a little while there was another, and then another. Amazed and bewildered, Papa found himself all at once with only one of the pretty daughters at home, and that one receiving the attentions from the male sex. He knew what to expect now, any day. You might think they were babies, but suddenly you discovered that they had grown up and wanted a home of their own. Papa came out of a brown study thinking of it.

'There's only one of them left now,' he told the cashier genially. 'When that one marries I'll feel as though my responsibilities were pretty well done with. I've been thinking that I ought to celebrate it, somehow. It struck me just now that, when Lena's married and got someone to look after her, I'd go out and have an orgy.'

The astonished cashier could not get rid of the remark. Papa going out and having an orgy! He mentioned it to the Old Man with forebodings.

'It would be just like him to go all to pieces,' said the Old Man judicially.

'When people have had something to hold them right up to the scratch for goodness knows how many years, and it's taken away all of a sudden, they generally go down with a bang. Take to hard drinking, more than likely. Pity! He's a very useful man to have about.'

'Yes, sir, I've fully decided to have an orgy,' said Papa a little later. There was the far away light of speculation in his eyes. The office boy had been so startled by it that he removed the brandy ball he had been sucking and threw it under the desk.

'Whatcher going t' do?' asked the office boy hoarsely. Nobody was afraid of Papa.

'I haven't decided yet,' said Papa musingly. 'Something altogether out of the usual line, though. Something, that'll make me feel I'm free, you know, and can do as I please. It'll be a queer sensation, I haven't any doubt of that, but I think I'd like to try it once.'

Papa spoke quite recklessly, and with a devil may care manner that thrilled the office boy to the marrow. The cashier shook his head with a slow smile. The idea of an orgy appealed to him; in connection with the strange little personality of Papa it struck him as irresistibly amusing.

He made it known to the office that Papa might shortly be expected to break out; in the kindness of his heart he added a rider to the effect that nobody was to chaff Papa whatever the scrape he got into. The cashier apparently judges Papa by himself and pictured an uncertain gait and the clutch of the long blue arm of the law as the slightest evils that could result.

'She's going to be married next month,' Papa whispered mysteriously to the cashier one day; and though Papa was close beside him, and the cashier could not say a word, he made signs so effectively behind Papa's back that all the office understood at once. It is sad to relate that the cashier pictured forth the coming orgy by tilting his hat very much to one side, turning up his collar in the back, and making circular motions with his fists, as one who dares somebody to come on.

As the time drew near, Papa gave indications of a lightening heart. He was seen to sit at his desk with his faded brown hat at the back of his head, instead of hanging decently on its hook, he was heard on more than one occasion to warble under his breath a ditty which consisted principally of stirring words like, 'Tum tee tiddle dum tum tum tee.'

It was about this time that the cashier told him a man ought always to have his card in his pocket with his name and address so that he could be identified in case—er in case anything happened him.

The point of this advice escaped the penetration of Papa. His experience in orgies, as the cashier reflected, was hitherto nil; the cashier himself remembered an occasion on which the card with name and address, had been most necessary in his own case. Somehow he did not care to relate the incident to Papa.

The Old Man was generosity itself.

'I understand it is quite an event with you, Mr.—Mr. Craig,' he said. (He had come within an ace of forgetting the name.) 'Your last daughter marries this afternoon, you say? Well, now, suppose you take a week off—salary to go on of course. Oh, don't mention it! You've been with the firm a long time. And you'll find an extra sovereign in your envelope. Good-by! Hope you'll have a good time.'

'Say, now, take care of yourself, said the cashier urgently. 'You know you ain't used to high jinks, you know.'

Papa looked knowing and intimated to the cashier with an approach to a wink that he could, and would, look after himself, always putting enjoyment in the first place. He promised to relate his experiences in full on his return.

On the first day of Papa's week there was much talk in the office about this orgy. Predictions were numerous and gloomy; bets offered and taken as to the way in which Papa would make merry. But it was universally decided that (out of respect for the correctness of Papa's behaviour hitherto) much that was unseemly should be passed over this time. The office only hoped (so they said) that it might be this time only.

When the cashier reached the office on the morning of the second day he was surprised to find Papa at his desk. Papa's hat was in its place on the hook, and Papa's self was the shabby, neat, well-brushed self he had seen in that place for so many years.

'Back already!' cried the amazed cashier. 'What about that orgy you've been thinking about for so long!'

'Well, I had it!' said Papa, beaming at him radiantly. Had it. The mischief! You don't look it! said the cashier, who remembered an orgy or two of his own.

'Why, it wouldn't change my looks, naturally,' said Papa mildly. He had left off his work for the moment to rub his hands together with enjoyment. Happiness beamed in every glance.

'You see, I don't care for much excitement,' he explained. 'It's been excitement enough for me to make a living. What I want now is quiet, you know—and so I took a few shillings and a bag of buns down to the river and went and sat down. I've often wanted to do it. And I ate the buns and threw bits at the gulls. Then I took two "buns" drives, which cost only sixpence. I don't know when I ever had such a day!'

The cashier was dumb. After a while he shook hands with Papa, and then they went to their work. —Julia F. Bishop.

## THE STAGE.

### The Casket.

The Rev. John Talbot Smith has for many years been a champion of the stage, and he is not yet convinced that it is a lost cause. In the January number of Donahoe's Magazine he admitted that an otherwise respectable play, 'The Cardinal,' is marred by a breach of the seal of the confessional. That fact was pointed out in these columns more than a year ago, at the time when the play was produced in Montreal. Undertaking to show how easily the author might have avoided this mistake, Father Smith says that the Cardinal might have saved the innocent man charged with murder by notifying the authorities that he knew the real murderer through the confessional. This, says Father Smith, he might have done without breaking the seal! It is amazing to find such a statement coming from the pen of a priest, even a priest whose interest in matters theatrical may have allowed his moral theology to grow rusty. When Hall Caine justified the Pope's breach of the seal in 'The Eternal City' on the ground that several ecclesiastics in Rome had told him it could be done in certain circumstances, we thought the man did not know what he was talking about. But if there are any Father Talbot Smith's in Rome, Mr. Caine may have been speaking the literal truth.

The Rev. John Talbot Smith seems to think the stage is growing better instead of worse, and mentions a few plays which he thinks justify his opinion. We have said before now in these columns that there are a lot of decent plays for those who want to see them, and that these plays are money-makers, too. But the fact remains that these plays are regarded as being of inferior literary merit, and that people of 'culture' are ashamed to admit having witnessed anything so 'vulgar.' The plays alleged to be of surprising merit, if we except Shakespeare's, are nearly all indecent. Of the two greatest theatrical artists in the world to-day, one never took part in but one decent play in her life and the other won her greatest triumphs last season in plays which shocked the most case-hardened critics in New York. Sarah Bernhardt has never appeared on the stage other than as an adulteress, except for a few months when she made a comparative failure as Joan of Arc; Eleanora Duse is not ashamed to represent a she-devil combined of incestuous sister and faithless wife. The play is the work of an Italian author who uses the blasphemous pen-name 'Gabriel of the Annunciation' (Gabriele d'Annunzio). It is the greatest literary success at present on the stage. It is played by the greatest in the world. And Father Smith thinks the stage is getting better.

### THE CARRICK FIDDLER.

By Rev. Wm. Dollard in Donahoe's for March.

Where is the Carrick-man of the seventies who doesn't remember Theevin? Poor old bowed, blind John! John of the gentle voice and the soft hands, around whose knees the delighted children gathered, when he had taken his shining violin from its green baize bag, and with the aid of a door-key, in some wholly miraculous manner made the instrument say 'Ma-ma' during the intervals of a most melodiously accordant Gaelic lullaby, whose silvery sonorous cords linger in our hearts to this hour, and fill them with poignant love and sorrow and sighs of Fad O, Fad O! Old times, old times!

John of the gentle voice and face and gesture, John the beloved of children, from afar, across the years and the yeasty leagues and over that bourne whence no traveler returns, I hail thy hallowed spirit and pray thou hast found the Father's smile gentle as thine own to us, the harping of His harpers as full of melody, and the sound thereof as sweet and as ravishing to thine ear, as that forever haunting 'Ma-ma' lullaby was to the little ones who loved thee!

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