

## While The Kettle Boils

Dear Friends,

I have just returned home from a really lovely wedding. Satin and tulle, bridesmaids in big picture hats, groomsmen in morning dress — and all the accompaniments.

To-day the materialist scoffs at sentimentality. And who can deny that weddings are sentimental occasions? But I rule out the scoffing. The scoffer himself, as a rule, is a mere poseur, and if you scraped away all the carefully built-up shell about him, you'd find the same old sentimental streak that most of us are proud to own. Of course, too much of anything becomes cloying, and sickly sentimentality is one horrible example, but a fondness for weddings is a wholesome form of sentiment that most of us possess.

For the two principal parties it is the day of their lives. No other day has been quite like it — and no day to come can ever be the same. So let them make of it a memorable occasion; something they can look back on with a renewal of tenderness when life threatens to become too prosaic.

At weddings elderly people re-live their own romance — their own special day. To the young, it is a promise of love and adventure — the fulfilment of a dream they will one day realise.

The excitement of a wedding, the solemnity of it. Two people joined together "till death do us part." Then the rejoicing, the toasts, the speeches, the wedding breakfast and wedding gifts. All the love of the world seems to centre round a girl on her wedding day. Her friends cluster around, bringing her their admiration and their good wishes. By her side is a man who adores her. Could any woman ask more?

When we attend a wedding, we catch something of that contagious spirit. Some of the love and harmony and beauty of the moment is communicated to the onlooker.

In Sydney there is a mysterious and familiar figure. The papers describe her as "The Woman in Grey." She is a small woman, always dressed in grey and closely veiled. Few have seen her face, and no one knows her name. She is a familiar figure at all the big weddings. If three or four happen on one day, she manages to be present at them all. Intending brides have been heard to express the wish that The Woman in Grey might be present to bring them luck. What story lies behind that mysterious figure? Some broken love affair, perhaps? Or an ardent sentimentalism re-living its dreams at the altars of romance.

There is one figure, however, whose eyes are dulled to the sentimental side of weddings. This is the church's sexton. He has lived through so many that they have become a part of the day's work.

Recently a sexton was interviewed in a well-known church overseas. He confessed to have "seen out" 9,000 weddings. The rich and the poor, the young and the old. At one ceremony, he said, the bride, groom, bridesmaid and groomsmen were all over 80 years of age—320 years represented between them. At the

other end of the scale were youngsters of 18 and 19. The picture of an irate father rushing in at the last minute to stop the ceremony is no myth, he says. He has seen it happen more than once. Then there is the woman who returns to the vestry some time following her marriage, and asks to be allowed to correct her age. She subtracted a few years for the bridegroom's benefit, and

now some occasion has arisen that demands her rightful age.

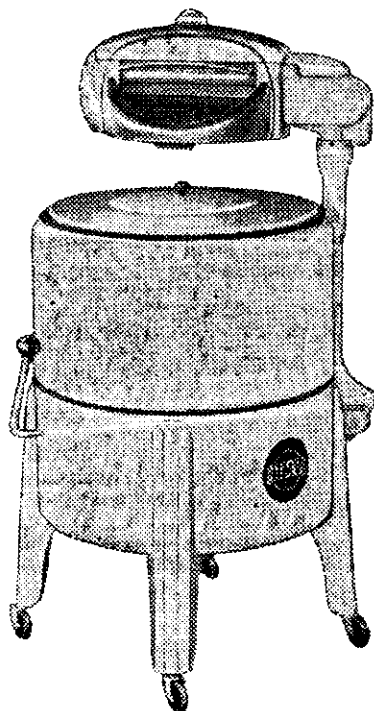
He tells a classic story of one bridal pair. When the minister said to the bride, "Will you have this man as your lawful husband," the lady replied enthusiastically: "I will, indeed, your reverence!"

Boxing Day, the old sexton declares, is the favourite day for weddings. He

has seen as many as 17 ceremonies on that one day. It has this advantage: an anniversary and Christmas present can be combined.

Yours Cordially,

*Synthia*



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