

 **THE TAPPS' TROUBLES**

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# THE TAPPS' TROUBLES

## DIPPY DOMESTIC DISCORDS

### Rubbing Martha's Head--"Too Flirty-like for Me"

#### The Old Story of "Your Kids and My Kids are Walloping Our Kids"

The Tapps last week played a two days' season at the New Plymouth Supreme Court in the comedy drama "Your Children and My Children," to large audiences on both days. The performance was under the management of Mr. Justice Hosking. The play was based upon an appeal against the decision of Magistrate Wyvern Wilson, at Hawera, in refusing an order of maintenance in favor of Martha Tapp against Jesse Tapp, under the provisions of the Destitute Persons' Act.

Mr. P. O'Dea appeared to coach Martha and Mr. A. H. Powell boosted up the allegedly erring "hubby."

Counsel's elucidation of the case was distinctly illuminative. The appellant, a fine-looking woman approaching middle life, had met the respondent while travelling on the train between Wellington and Auckland, and the two lonely spirits, drawn together by some instinctive bond of sympathy, had foregathered. After an interchange of preliminary courtesies, Tapp told his new-found friend of his need for someone to

look after his domestic menage, and invited her to come and drive the household 'bus. She pleaded that her health would not permit her to undertake strenuous duties, but he assured her that she would not have much to do, as his three grown-up daughters would look after the housework. He only wanted her to be a,

#### GUIDING SPIRIT AND DIRECTOR OF THE HOME.

After various cups of tea and much swapping of experiences, the lady gave a reluctant consent, and ultimately, with three children hanging to her skirts, she joined Tapp and his little eight at his place at Alton. Within a week of her arrival Tapp suggested matrimony, but the lady modestly declined this honor. But this Tapp was some pressing fellow, and by and by he stormed the fortress, and feminine weakness yielded to masculine importunity. One clause in the Treaty of Alliance was that all the children were to be treated as if they belonged to "either, aither or both" of the contracting parties and there was to be no most-favored-infant clause. So, after a three months' interlude as a sop to the proprieties, with "every prospect pleasing," the ceremony was undertaken at the Registrar's Office at

(Crown Prosecutor, Greymouth).

Amongst the miners he's a shiner,  
He is their legal "pick."  
He's bluff and tough and up-to-snuff  
And likewise quick and slick.  
The whole West Coast drinks to the  
toast,  
"Here's lookin' at yer, Mick!"

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Patea, some time in 1916. Then the fun started. Tapp took home his bride, and, ushering her into the sitting-room where the cake and wine were spread, he proceeded to call in his elder children to inform them that they now had a new mamma, a formality which he had overlooked precedent to the ceremony. They signalled the announcement by

THROWING WINE OVER THE  
BRIDE

and making a rough house of it generally. A thin veneer of compromise was spread over the position, but from that out Martha A. alleges that her life was one long unadulterated misery. She suffered from varicose ulcers on one of her legs, and found that the girls, who were supposed to look after the housework, would do nothing at all, and that she was expected to attend to everything. As a result she got so "crook" that she sent for her sister in Auckland to come and stay with her. This added fuel to the crackling fire, for Tapp, not content with hitting up his new-found missus, proceeded to make himself a consistent "nark" to his sister-in-law, an attitude in which he was admirably seconded by his dutiful children, the younger ones embroidering the position by having innumerable scraps among themselves. A climax was reached one night when Mrs. Tapp left her connubial couch, and said that she would go and sleep with her sister. Thereupon Jesse arose in his wrath, grabbed a razor, and swore she would never go out of the room alive. He did not touch her, though he threatened her with the razor, and night garments being at best a scanty equipment for war, the offensive cooled off. Thereafter the children from day to day were alleged to have amused themselves by throwing potatoes and table-forks at their new mamma, and her complaints were met by respondent with the laughing remark that she "could expect nothing else." Various changes of residence followed, and Martha A. repeatedly left her "better" half, but returned again and again at his urgent representations that he "would be a good boy" in future. Penitence on one occasion so far overcame him that he sought her with tears in his eyes, and acknowledged that he had "been a rotter and not fit to live with her." However, she declined to paste together the torn scrap of paper, and told him that all she wanted was her clothes and furniture from his house. To this he placidly replied that as he had married her he had also

MARRIED HER FURNITURE

**MARRIED HER FURNITURE,**

and another little separation marked the spot. Martha A., however, was not without resource, and seeing her Tapp on one occasion running rather freely at Hawera, she secured a motor lorry and sent out to the house for her furniture. Fearing that his irate "missus" would get a maintenance order against him, Tapp made over his Alton farm to his son. On another occasion while the two were still living together, when faced with a possible bankruptcy, Tapp made over his bank account to his "missus" with a request that she should tell his creditors that she was the family

financier. During all this time of married "bliss" Martha's health grew rapidly worse, and a cook was engaged.

The story thereafter develops into a record of fires being doused with water, legs of chairs and wood being flung at her, narrow escapes from knives thrown at her face, and sundry other ventures by field and flood of a harrowing nature. These, together with the fact that she was kept in a state of continual impecuniosity, went to make up a record of two-and-a-half years of marital misery that seldom falls to the lot of a woman, and Martha left her Jesse finally and "for keeps" at the beginning of last August. Since then she had received no maintenance from him.

At this stage of the evidence His Honor stopped the proceedings whilst he ordered three young people, who were behaving with undue levity in the body of the Court, to leave the premises, same three being Tapp's eldest daughters.

The defence set up was that Martha left her husband without "reasonable cause." Respondent told the story of his first meeting with Martha on the fatal railway train. She looked lonely, and he was

**"TOUCHED WITH A SYMPATHY WITHIN,"**

and paid her some considerable attention. She said that she had been to Wellington on a fool's errand. She went to collect £1200 insurance on the life of her late husband, only to find

that the dear departed had sold the policy for a paltry £200. After many heart-to-heart talks it was finally arranged that the two should put their little belongings into one barrow and wheel them together down the primrose way of life. This was done, and Tapp paid for the transfer of Mrs. Connor, as she then was, and her furniture from Auckland. "I have a heart, and felt for her," he said lugubriously. All went well for a few months, when the children started scrapping, and Tapp decided to send Martha out into the cold world. She pleaded with him on her knees not to be so "crewel," and a friend of the family who happened in on the tragedy suggested that the best way out of the difficulty would be for the pair to go into double harness. Tapp agreed to this, and the pair were duly hitched. Things went on all right, according to Tapp, till his wife's sister arrived on the scene and brought a foreign influence to the home. The new arrival offended his artistic sense of beauty. "She had a very bloated face," he said, "and I did not like the look of her." She was in the habit of coming home drunk, and brought liquor into the house—"A thing I never did in my life, thank God," he added, thumping the witness box. "She couldn't even come from Auckland without bringing two bottles of rum in her luggage," he declared. Sundry collisions between Tapp and his new-found sister-in-law were attributed to her alleged liking for drink, and he even accused his wife of culpability in this respect also. Respondent denied the razor episode absolutely, and then gave an account of how Martha and her sister had held down and thrashed one of his boys, a story which was with difficulty related in tearful tones. Then came allegations of undue familiarity with at least one man on Martha's part. "I saw him myself one day," he said, **RUBBING HER OVER THE HEAD,** and so on." He admitted that proceedings for divorce by him had been stayed at his wife's request. "She asked that they should be stopped,

and I was a bit soft-hearted and stopped them." On one occasion, the day before his wedding anniversary, appellant had come to him "crying with outstretched arms to be taken back," and he had suited the action to the words. The story of his making his farm over to his son and his banking account to his wife was explained on the plea of happiness. He thought his wife would be more satisfied if she had control of the finances, and when such an arrangement was suggested he gladly acquiesced. "All I wanted was 'appiness, Your Honor!" and another thump smote the unfortunate witness-box. He had made his farm over to the boys in order to free himself to go to the front. He paid all the bills and his wife had credit at the stores. He denied putting out the fire in the bedroom with a kettle full of water, but admitted spilling a kettle of water in the dining-room. He mopped the mess up, and his wife, with an oath, expressed her regret that the water had not gone all over the floor, as then she would have got the whole room cleaned. His wife was in the habit of using bad language. With regard to the treatment of the children, he always had a supplejack on the table, but it was for apparances sake only. His wife had urged him to use it, but he pleaded plaintively, "I'm not a thrashing man, and never thrashed my children in my life." Before her final departure he guessed that she was going away, because everything was being allowed to get dirty. After she left he washed eighteen sheets, two counterpanes, and all the boys' shirts, and was up till 11 p.m. at work on them. He was ashamed to be seen hanging them out next morning as the neighbours were going to the factory. Mrs. Tapp never had a washing day while she was in his house. He always took her breakfast up to bed, and all the work she ever did was to boil a little rice occasionally—and the kettle.

Under cross-examination, respondent admitted that when he first met appellant his wife was still alive, though

ON HER DEATHBED.

He did not remember any party on the wedding night, but there was one a few nights later, when the factory hands came over. It was a tin-can party, and about sixty of the visitors were regaled on tea and cakes. When he dismissed her on account of her not getting on with the children, she returned in a few days' time with tears in her eyes, and "flung herself into my arms—a most unusual thing for her to do." He was shocked and disgusted, but she stayed on her knees for five or ten minutes, crying and appealing to him. When Mr. Owen came on the scene and suggested matrimony as a solution of the differences, he replied that she was "too flirty-like" for him. He agreed to the tying of the connubial knot when it was pointed out to him that as mistress of the house, Mrs. Tapp would probably be obeyed by the elder children. In family differences he always took the wife's part.

"You're fond of ladies, aren't you?" queried Mr. O'Dea.—"I don't know if I'm fond of ladies," was the response, "but I like a good woman."

It was only a day or two after he dismissed her that he consented to marry her, he said. "She softened my heart," said respondent, "and it happened very sudden-like." He was still willing to have her back if she would give up her home at Hawera and let her children and his children go to school together.

Mr. Justice Hosking, after commenting on the contradictory nature of the evidence, said it was the old story of two families, where "my children and your children" could not get on together, and reserved his decision.

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