

Marrying in the Fifteenth Century

There was a cynical fellow in the Middle Ages, who, under the sarcastic title "The Fiftieth Joys of Marriage," wrote an elaborate description of fifteen woes which were likely one or all, to distress the foolish man who has slipped like a fish into the great net of matrimony. It is not probable, however, that his little treatise turned a single man from the error of his way. How should it have, when the great weight and authority of Mr. Punch have not been able in these days to make any appreciable difference in the issue of marriage licenses? Yet the genial philosopher's advice, which is an everlasting shame to Mrs. Judy, was perfectly decided. The truth is, men will not take advice which they do not want, no matter who offers it. They know that all the world loves them when they are lovers, and so the vain creatures will go a-wooing. All the pretty business of kneeling and sighing is becoming; when a man is courting he is more interesting than he has ever been or ever will be again. Whether it be Jockey who dons his Sunday coat to propitiate his goddess of the hay field, or the fine gentleman who swears at his valet for a speck of dust when dressing for a certain important interview, he is worthy of notice; and even the frog, when he will a-wooing go, becomes a hero fit for poetry. The uneasy period of courtship tries the souls of men and shows what stuff they are made of, and, therefore the manners of men of the fifteenth century when marrying or trying to marry indicate very fairly the refinement of society at that time.

A Venetian who was in England toward the end of the fifteenth century reported that he did not see a lover in that country. He would not dignify by that name the cool, calculating young squires whom he saw eagerly scanning dower contracts, nor would he give such a title to maidens like Elizabeth Paston, who was "so willing to none as to" an old pock-marked widower, "if so be that his land stand clear."

The adventures of John Paston, the younger, in search of a wife, form a romance in which the hero is enamored of title deeds and mortgages, courts real estate boldly, routs stingy fathers and guardians and skillfully manages to feel some real affection just at the right moment for just the right woman. He was a canny young fellow, and quite early in life commenced to think of settling himself. As he had great confidence in the diplomacy of his elder brother, Sir John Paston, both brothers bore the name John, who had been much about court, he deputed the most of his wooing to that knight. Whenever John heard of a marriageable woman, maid or widow, who had a comfortable fortune, he would dispatch his gallant brother with a message of love. The youth knew a little Latin, and had probably learned that Cupid and cupidity were derived from the same root. So when he felt a longing to possess the property of any lady, he imagined that the sensation was caused by the fierce darts of the little god of love.

Mistress Alice Boleyn was one of John's first loves. Lady Boleyn "was in no wise agreeable" to his suit, but, although she would not advise her daughter to marry John Paston, still she would not prevent her doing so if she liked him. Sir John, who was conducting the negotiation, accordingly counseled his brother to speak with Mistress Alice herself. "Ye be personable," he wrote the knight encouragingly, adding, with an air of great wisdom, "Bear yourself to the mother as lowly as ye list, but to the maid not too lowly, nor that ye be too glad to speed, nor too sorry to fail." The young squire's best chance was to show himself to the girl and to disclose "somewhat of his good will" to her, and this he had an opportunity to do, as Lady Boleyn with "no other errand but for to sport her," brought Alice to Norwich, near which town John was living. Although John flattered himself that the lady came for the express purpose of letting him see her daughter, he was too bashful to urge his suit in person, and wrote that he would not speak to Mistress Alice or her mother until his brother, Sir John, came home, even if he did not come for seven years.

John's love swelled like the Solway, but ebbed like its tide, and when his heart was rejected he wasted no time in regret, but promptly offered it to some one else. There was a Mistress Elizabeth Eberton in London for whom he professed an unusually warm feeling, and to whose parents he sent his brother with certain proposals. To make their bids lively, Sir John was to represent John as "going, going," and almost "gone," to another party. It was to be carefully mentioned that John was offered another marriage in London, which was worth more than 600 marks, and which Sir John was commissioned to conclude if the Ebertons would not deal with him. He was to tell them, however, that they were to be preferred, even if they could not give as much with their daughter as John could get with the other woman—"such fantasy" he had in Mistress Elizabeth. It was probably this other woman with the attractive dowry of whom John Paston politely wrote to his brother, "See and speak with the thing yourself."

Courting by proxy must have been sometimes a dangerous business for the proxy. Sir John was a gay young knight, dashing enough to be chosen to ride in a tournament with the king, and it may be that some of the wealthy widows and maidens that he courted for his brother with gallant diplomacy were tempted to bid him speak for himself.

Mistress Kathryn Dudle gave him to

understand that she recked not how many gentlemen loved her, and that she was not at all displeased at his visiting her in his brother's behalf, although she was not thinking of marrying just then. Lady Walgrave also was a coquette of whom a susceptible man might well have been ware, and she entertained the ambassador of her suit by singing and playing on a harp. She was charmingly capricious, and Sir John in courting her for John in the country had to compose wily compliments and use deep stratagems.

"I spoke for you that in faith I trow I could not say so well again," he wrote after one battle of words, in which he had attacked the lady with all his artillery, and in which she had managed to completely evade and puzzle him. One day "her dealings and answers" were so favorable that "a fainter lover" than John "would and well ought to take therein great comfort, so that he might sleep the worse three nights after." (That comfort should have anything to do with sleeplessness is strange only to the uninitiated.) Sir John hoped to be able within three days to tell his brother with certainty how Lady Walgrave would be disposed toward him thereafter. But she had a fancy to live up to "matrimonial semper," and the next message to John announced that there was in her "no matter or cause for comfort." She positively refused to receive John Paston's ring. "Yet I told her that she should not be anything bound thereby," wrote Sir John, "but that I knew . . . ye would be glad to forbeare the dearest thing that ye had in the world . . . that should cause her once on a day to remember you." His eloquence was in vain: Lady Walgrave said she would do nothing that might cause John Paston to hope.

Before this interview Sir John had stolen a musk-ball from her to send to his brother as a token, but the lady demanded that it should be restored to her. Without giving it back, Sir John asked humbly whether she was displeased with him, for having taken it, and she answered, "Nay." Emboldened by this the ambassador told the coquettish dame that for sin of his soul, he had not sent the musk-ball to his brother, lest it should cause the ardent young lover to sleep the worse, but that now, God helping him, he would send it to him. However, he would tell John "not to hope over much on her, which is over hard an hearted lady for a young man to trust to." This was a cruel thrust, but Sir John made reparation by saying he feared, for all his advice, his poor brother would not and could not give up hope. "Again she seemed not displeas'd," she did not forbid that John should not have the token. "Wherefore," wrote the ambassador, "I send you herewith your ring, and the unhappy musk-ball," adding, slyly, "Make ye matter of it hereafter as ye can."

John was accustomed to disappointment. The names of many ladies were connected with his. There was Stocton's daughter who married Skeerne. She opened her heart to a seamstress making her trousseau, and related regretfully that she had come near marrying Master Paston, who had wanted to come with twenty men and run away with her. The seamstress thought she spoke of Sir John, but the knight said indignantly that he would not have married the woman for 3,000 marks. Then there was Mistress Gryscresse, who chose another man, and was to John "a foul loss," and Lady Elizabeth Bourchier, with whom John's suit did not prosper, probably because of some awkward interference from himself. It may be, however, that John was more piqued at Lady Walgrave's suggestion than was his wont, for he wrote shortly afterwards to his elder brother, "I pray you espise some old thrifty draf (worthless) wife in London for me." Nevertheless, he was soon courting again, this time actually hazarding a sentimental, heart-burning love-letter to the lady herself.

He offered his "poor service" to Mistress Margery Brews, protesting that he was and would be hers and at her commandment during all his life. He besought her to ease his poor heart that once was at his rule but now was at hers, and entitled her his "own fair lady" as romantically as any knight or troubadour. The letter is refreshing. The practical youth seems to have fallen genuinely, wholesomely in love. But one unfortunate fact spoils the story. John was wholly unacquainted with the lady to whom he wrote his ardent billet-doux. Very probably he had heard descriptions of her; he had friends who knew her; perhaps he had even heard what her dowry was; but information at second hand, though useful, is not enough to inspire the sacred flame, and John was the same "crafty wooer" as ever.

His promise to Mistress Margery to serve her all his life did not prevent him from looking about to see whether he could do better. His brother was commissioned to speak for him to a Master Fitz-Walter, who had a sister-in-law to marry, and with whom John thought he might make a "bargain." The faithful proxy was also sent to inspect a Mistress Barly, whose dowry, he discovered, was so small that marriage with her would be "but a bare thing."

Meanwhile the courtship of Margery Brews went on somewhat slowly. Her father demanded a larger settlement than John Paston could give, although his mother and elder brother were kind in helping him. There was some queer diplomacy practiced on both sides in the negotiations that followed. Sir Thomas Brews, the father, showed himself a hard man and refused his consent to the match unless a certain income were assured to the young couple. He was willing to increase Margery's dowry, he said, although it would be an injustice to her sisters, if John's relatives would add to his fortune. Dame Elizabeth Brews's role was to encourage John and keep him from giving up the game. She told him to put his suit in her hands, and invited him to come to Topcroft for St. Valentine's day. "Every bird chooseseth him a mate at that time," she said, and encouraged him not to despond by quoting the elegant lines,

It is but a single oak
That is cut down at the first stroke.
Her letters were skillfully composed. After telling him her husband's stern demands she wrote, "But an we accord I shall give you a greater treasure, that is, a witty gentleman, and if I say it, both good and virtuous; for if I should take money for her, I would not give her for £1,000." John's policy was to make his expectations seem to Sir Thomas Brews somewhat greater than they were, so as to induce him to increase Margery's

dowry; which in turn John represented to his own family as a trifle larger than it really was, in order that they might be encouraged to assist him the more; and very cleverly did the youth manage the business. Margery played the prettiest part of all. Very early in the affair she declared her fancy for John. Perhaps, she was touched by his letter which was "moughty foine language entirely," and after his visit on Valentine's day, her heart was completely won.

"Right reverend and worshipful and my right well beloved Valentine," she wrote to John, mingling affection and respect very neatly, "my lady my mother hath labored the matter to my father full diligently, but she can no more get than you know of, for the which God knoweth I am full sorry. But if that ye love me, as I trust verily that ye do, ye will not leave me therefore; for if that ye had not half the livelihood that ye have . . . I would not forsake you."

Later, when the negotiations seemed at a standstill, she wrote again, "I let you plainly understand that my father will no more money part withal in that behalf (her dowry) but £100 and 50 marks which is right far from the accomplishment of your desire. Wherefore, if that ye could be content with that good and my poor person, I would be the merriest maiden on ground; and if you think not yourself so satisfied . . . good, true, and loving Valentine . . . take no such labor upon you as to come more for that matter, but let it pass and never more to be spoken of."

A great many letters were written on the subject, and every one concerned must have become heartily tired of it. Sir Thomas wrote that he was "agreeable to make the bargain sure," if his conditions were agreed to, otherwise he wished to hear no more about the marriage. Sir John said to his brother, "I pray you trouble me no more in this matter," and the patience of Margaret Paston, John's mother, was also exhausted. She told Dame Brews that for this marriage of Margery and John she had "been as glad, and now lately as sorry," as ever for any marriage in her life.

At last, however, John's romantic troubles came to an end. He married Margery, and retired from the weary business of offering himself to the highest bidder. She was good-looking, young, well-born, and in love with her prosaic "Voluntyne." The lucky dog got more than he deserved, but he seems to have made a kind and careful husband.

HIS WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENT.

The Brief Despatch to His Parents in Shanghai, China.

When a man gets married away from home he naturally feels it necessary to acquaint his folks with the joyful news as soon as possible. John Liddell, the handsome Englishman, who led Miss Marion Hellyour to the altar in Chicago last Saturday before a large party of fashionables, was thoroughly impressed with his study in this respect, and so he hunted up the nearest telegraph office and set about to compose the message telling of his good fortune.

Some men would have gone into details to the extent of naming the bride and the time and the place, and soliciting the parental blessing. But telegraph companies do not handle messages for nothing, no matter how felicitous they may be in their character, and everybody knows, every additional mile travelled by the message makes it that much more profitable to the grasping corporation.

Inasmuch as Mr. Liddell's home is in Shanghai, China, he prudently refrained from committing the fault of verbosity. Of course his people were expecting something in confirmation of what had been discussed in letters from time to time, and he found it much easier on that account to practise brevity and economy without sacrificing the meaning of his message. This is what he sent flashing over the wires and under the ocean on its long journey to Shanghai:

"Hurray!"
At any other time the receipt of such a telegram or cablegram by Mr. Liddell's people might have caused them some concern, but the happy groom was thoroughly confident of being understood. He has money to "burn," and could have cabled a full account of the wedding without creating any financial distress to himself. As it was, there was nothing cheap in the message.
It cost \$8.10.

A THOUGHTFUL GIRL.

That is your final answer, then? said Wallingford J. Crackenjump.

It is, replied Theresa S. Westering-ham.

Then I have only to add that life henceforth has no charms for me. I will quit it. I will put an end to myself.

In what way? asked the girl, apparently touched by her lover's deep dejection.

I don't know. Poison myself—drown myself—shoot myself. Any way—every way—so that I do but end this miserable existence. But what is it to you, fair creature and false, which method of death I choose?

Well, if you are bound to commit suicide, and cared to go by the pistol route, I have a suggestion to make.

What is it? he asked hoarsely.

That you purchase your pistol at my father's hardware store. Here is his business card.

Handing him a piece of pasteboard she left the room, and Wallingford J. Crackenjump groped his way to the street as one in a dream.

MEDICAL.

They say now that a bicycle cures consumption.

Yes, I can't expect three meals a day until I get mine paid for.

FORETHOUGHT.

This butter seems strong, said the young husband, at their first breakfast at home.

Yes, she answered; I talked to the market man about that, and he said that it was economy in the end never to buy weak butter. He said that even though this might cost a little more, people could get along with less of it, and it would last longer.

About the House.

NEATNESS IN THE KITCHEN.

So many housekeepers find it necessary to get into a "muddle" on baking day, or at almost any time when they do more cooking than usual. There are pots and pans everywhere; the sink and every available chair and table is littered with knives, spoons, cups and other utensils. So when the weary woman is through with her baking, her kitchen is in most discouraging disorder, and she must commence to put things to rights. The dishes are hard to get clean, and the pans defy scraping. Now how much better it is to wash every article as far as possible and put it away directly after it is used. Or, if that is impossible, they should be put into a big dishpan full of water immediately after the contents have been removed, or after they are used. It will be found that any dish or pan is much easier cleaned then. No pans should be put back on the stove or allowed to stand after using without first being filled with water.

With but very little care a kitchen need not be thrown into confusion and disorder every time a cake is to be baked or some biscuits made. If everything is got into readiness before beginning to put the article together there will be but very little trouble to clean up the place afterward. Weigh or measure out the ingredients, grease the pans, see that the ovens is right, etc., before mixing the cake or whatever it may happen to be. Put the baking powder into the flour the first thing, mix it and empty all the flour needed into the greased baking pan. Stir up what butter is needed in the cup in which the flour was measured, and after the butter is added to the sugar and eggs, use the same cup for measuring the milk. The bowl for mixing, one cup and probably two spoons are all the dishes necessary for stirring up a plain cake if one will only think ahead a bit. If the dishes are then put immediately into water, and not allowed to stand about and dry in the warm kitchen, they are easily washed. That is just the secret of easily washed cooking utensils. Of course, knives and wooden bowls, should not be allowed to stand in water.

The housewife who does her own cooking, and must also wait upon the table, can arrange almost everything before sitting down, so that it will not be necessary for her to leave the table often. A small side table is a great help here. On it can often be placed the dessert and dishes to be used during the dinner and for which there is no place on the table. All the plates and platters that will be required during the dinner can be placed out in readiness for meat and vegetables which are not put upon the table at first. By such thoughtful arrangements a housewife can enjoy her dinner with her guests. Then as the dishes are removed after each course, they should be scraped clear of bones and leavings and set into a neat pile either in the dishpan or near the sink. By observing such order the housewife will find she is spared much unnecessary work, and her kitchen will be the neater for it.

SOMETHING ABOUT MEATS.

We weary of the same old "stereotyped" dishes. All sorts of food, especially the different kinds of meat, need to be varied. Even roast lamb palls upon the appetite when served too often in just the same style. Too much roast pork is not considered wholesome, although accompanied by the indispensable apple sauce. Many will not touch pork, unless they "knew the pig," and roast beef of the best gets to be an "old story" after awhile. Poultry is not always within reach, as to place or price.

To make a substantial and satisfactory dish from what is left over from regular roasts is indeed quite an art, and opens the way for some most interesting experiments in cookery, as well as for the presentation of some most delicious and attractive dishes. If few are to be served, or but little meat is wanted, a forequarter of lamb will do for roasting, and the meat is very sweet, for the "nearer the bone, the sweeter the meat" is a true old adage, but it is poor economy to pay for so much bone.

So the leg of lamb with the bone taken out, and put in roasting shape by the butcher, is by far the easier and more profitable way to invest in this particular meat. Stuffing the leg gives a variety, but without this we suppose it roasted, well done, and plenty of rich brown gravy to go with it, and be left with what is not used, at the first serving.

The next day's dinner can be made very acceptable by slicing, rather thickly, and across the grain, of course, the cold lamb, covering it with the brown gravy, and making it very hot, as to cook it would only make it tough. It is very easy to serve this way, tastes differently from the original roast, and is often preferred to it.

More meat would be left from a leg of lamb, of moderate weight, in a family of six. The homely, ragged parts left can be utilized in many ways for breakfast dishes. When finely chopped, and barely moistened in some of the brown gravy, it makes a most delicious hash, plain or served on toast, and some of the chopped lamb, held together by an egg and a little mashed potato, makes a dish of croquettes that no one will object to. The butcher upon request will send home the bones, with the meat, which will make the foundation for many a kind of soup. So a leg of lamb is a most economical investment, and one need not weary of the roast either.

A round steak can be treated so that it will make a nice and handsome dinner dish as acceptable quite as a roast. Get a thick slice from the tender part of the round. Trim off all the fat and cut it in small bits to put under the meat in the oven. Trim

the meat to a long oval in shape, but it may look well. Lay it for a couple of hours on a platter, with a half a cupful of vinegar under it, and another half a cupful of vinegar over it. This will make the toughest meat tender, this as tender as porterhouse steak. Then dry off with a clean napkin, and make a dressing of stale bread, crumbled, highly seasoned with salt, pepper, cayenne, and a little powdered thyme, moistened with melted butter, one well beaten egg, and enough hot water to make it spread easily. Lay the steak in a dripping pan, with the chopped bits of fat under it. Spread the dressing smoothly all over the top of the meat, place it in a hot oven and bake twenty minutes, or a little more if the steak is very thick. This is a simple, inexpensive dish and the thyme gives it a special relish.

A plain dinner dish that is also very nice cold for supper is made of a combination of pork and lean beef, a pound of each, chopped very fine, and thoroughly mixed together. Add a level spoonful of salt, a generous allowance of pepper, a little powdered thyme and nutmeg, also a small onion and a few leaves of parsley, all finely minced. To these ingredients add lastly four eggs and a pint of fine bread crumbs. It should be stiff enough to mold into a loaf, yet not too dry. Put into a dripping pan, and put little bits of butter all over it, basting occasionally with the drippings of butter, till it is a rich brown.

French livers are a dainty and inexpensive little side dish. Boil and mash the livers of two or three chickens. Make a rich drawn butter gravy, and when cold, mix with the livers. Add four or five beaten eggs, salt and pepper to the taste, and a little cinnamon if liked. Bake about twenty minutes and serve with a tomato sauce.

HOW TO COOK OYSTERS.

Oysters are very seldom breaded and fried at home in a perfect manner. The mistake which most cooks make is to incase them in egg and bread crumbs. This is seldom a success. The coating comes off, giving to the oysters a piebald appearance, and they are usually overcooked in the attempt to brown them evenly.

For a dish of fried oysters, select sound oysters which have just been opened. It is more essential that the oysters shall be fine flavored than that they shall be large, although large oysters are desirable. Flatten each oyster slightly and lay them in fresh milk while you prepare a mixture of equal parts of sifted cracker crumbs and flour. Oyster crackers, or the richer butter crackers, are good for this purpose. Let the fat be very hot. Drain the oysters one by one out of the milk and dip them into the pulverized crackers and flour. Lay them in a wire basket and immerse them in hot fat for two or three minutes.

Drain them, lay them for a minute on coarse brown paper, and slip them on a folded napkin and place them on a hot platter. Garnish them with a little parsley and quarters of lemons. The folded napkins which are laid on platters for the reception of fried articles should be of some cheap quality kept for this purpose. They should be about half a yard square, and half a dozen will be enough for use in a family.

When fried articles have been properly cooked and drained the napkins tend to absorb any remnant of grease which may be left. A mere dash of cayenne is sometimes added to fried oysters before they are cooked. Serve with the fried oysters the thinnest, daintiest slices of Graham bread, lightly buttered. The whitest, crispest celery is also a delightful accompaniment.

ABOUT WHITEWASHING.

A correspondent asks for some information about the advisability of whitewashing about the house, in the cellar, etc. It cannot be too highly recommended. The wholesomeness of a dwelling is greatly increased by its being frequently whitewashed. Whitewash may be made easily by pouring water on cakes of whiting and stirring until the liquid is like a thin cream, when a small quantity of warmed size is added to prevent the color from rubbing off when dry. To apply the whitewash use a broad flat brush, working it in a uniform direction up and down the wall. It is requisite first to remove the dirt, and the old whitewash by washing it with a brush and plenty of clean, cold water.

FAVOURITE GERMAN RECIPES.

Red Cabbage Cooked With Apples.—Cover the bottom of an iron kettle with some thin slices of salt pork, and set it where the fat will fry out. Cut the cabbage into quarters, and shave it off very fine, wash well, then drop it into the kettle, on top of the salt pork. Set the kettle on the back of the stove, where it will cook slowly. Pare four or five nice apples, and cut into small pieces, then put them on top of the cabbage. Add a little water if necessary, and stir occasionally. A few minutes before serving, season to taste with vinegar, sugar and salt. A medium-sized cabbage will need about three tablespoons of sugar, 1 tablespoon vinegar and 2 teaspoons salt. It will take about three hours to cook this dish, but it is delicious.

Potato Dumplings.—One quart of grated cold-boiled potatoes, measured after they are grated; 2 eggs, 2 tablespoons flour (even full), and season to taste with salt and pepper. Have some butter very hot, in the frying pan, and putting in some small squares of bread, fry them crisp. Divide the potato mixture into twelve parts and roll each part into a round ball, each ball having three of the fried bits of bread in the inside. Drop them into a kettle of boiling water, into which a teaspoon of salt has been added, taking care not to crowd them. Let them boil ten minutes, then remove with a skimmer and serve at once, with roast beef gravy. Stewed prunes are also a nice accompaniment for potato dumplings. They should be stewed until tender, then put through a colander, sweetened to taste, and flavored with lemon.