

WHOLESALE WEDDINGS.

The notices which have appeared in the Paris newspapers of the annual wholesale wedding in Plougastel are attracting more than usual attention from the fact that this year thirty-eight couples, a larger number than common, were united in the same church by the same priest and at the same moment. In a country community a single marriage is enough to set the tongues of the gossips wagging and keeping them going for an indefinite time before and after such an event, so an adequate idea of the sensation caused can hardly be gained from the curt announcement made in the papers of the French capital of this interesting social event. All the people of Plougastel, however, and the inhabitants of the surrounding district, appreciate this occasion as its proper social value, for to them the annual marriage day is that for which all other days are made.

The little village of Plougastel is situated in Brittany and almost at the extreme tip of the peninsula of Finistere. It has only about 2000 inhabitants, but, for several circumstances, is one of the most singular communities of that strange country. The Bretons are a people to themselves; they are one family of the Celtic race, the same which is found in Wales, in Scotland and in Ireland. There is little doubt that in prehistoric ages the Celtic race covered with its people a great part of Western Europe, but as the Roman Empire expanded most of the Celts were subdued, the more active and insubordinate element retiring to the mountains of Brittany, the Pyrenees districts, and the great mountain chain which skirts the north of Spain. In the British isles the Celts were driven back into Wales and the mountains of Scotland, and in neither of these lands were the mountaineers ever effectually subdued. The Celts in Spain were finally induced to form an alliance with the Romans; in Brittany the policy of engaging them as mercenaries in the army proved effectual, while in Wales and Scotland they were so devoted to their liberty that they refused to serve even for pay in the legions, and consequently were left to themselves. Brittany was, in early times, called "Lesser Britain," to distinguish it from Greater Britain, beyond the channel. The language spoken by the Welsh and Scotch Highlanders is, except in differences of dialect, identical with that spoken in Brittany. During the invasion of France by the English troops in 1815 the men of the Welsh regiments in Wellington's army were astonished to find that they could converse without difficulty with the people of the Breton provinces. It was a revelation to them, but the fact is easily understood when it is remembered that Breton, Welshman, Highlander and Kerry-boy are all of the same family. It is a singular fact that as there are people in Wales and Scotland who speak no English, so there are people in Brittany who neither speak nor understand French. It is said that there are a million inhabitants of the peninsula to whom French is a strange language. The number, however, of persons ignorant of the language of the country in which they live is constantly decreasing, for the government is pursuing the policy of education to such an extent that it is believed in another generation French will be universally known and used as a medium of intercourse among the Bretons, although, as in Wales, their own language will be a medium of social and friendly intercourse.

The mountainous character of Brittany has its effect upon the population. Mountaineers have a singular attachment to their hills. The Swiss, the mountain Scotch, the Basques, the Afghans, the Berbers, the Albanians and the Montenegrins, are all alike in one particular, that they will die for their rocks and hills, and the Bretons are no exception to the general rule. The warlike character of the people is attested by their history. In every change of dynasty in France, they have ever shown a disinclination to submit to the new, not from any particular attachment to the old, but from a dislike to change and a general aptitude for rebellion whenever the opportunity offered. The sturdy independence of the Breton character has showed itself in the great number of famous natives; Abelard, Du Guesclin, the Connetable de Richemont, Jacques Cartier, Michel Leanne, Jules Dupres, Duguay-Trouin, Eratry Simon and Renan were all Bretons, and besides this distinguished list the fishing towns and villages along the coast have furnished France with innumerable captains and admirals.

Save in language, the people of Plougastel are quite different from the rest of the Bretons. They differ in appearance, in their customs, habits, and, apparently, in their entire character. Even in a thrifty nature like the French, the Bretons are conspicuous for their careful economy, but in the heart of this happy-go-lucky set of Plougastelians, always ready to take a holiday, careless of money, and in many respects quite dissimilar from their nearest neighbors. The people of Plougastel speak the Breton language like those of the surrounding communities, but the Breton, and even the French spoken among them, is so peculiar, so interlarded with Spanish, Portuguese and Italian expressions, as long ago to have excited the curiosity of philologists. Interest aroused, led to investigation of the history of this curious community, and it was discovered that the people of this village and its farms were the descendants of a body of Spanish soldiers who followed

Du Guesclin in one of his campaigns in the north of France. Du Guesclin is to popular tradition in Brittany what King Arthur is in British folklore or El Cid in the popular tales of the Iberian peninsula. He was always engaged in some wild-goose expedition of one kind or another, the main idea apparently being to keep things moving in the country where he happened to live, and about the middle of the fourteenth century he entered into a spirited contest with several other noblemen in the north of France. Finding himself unable to cope with them, he went to Spain, hired a number of Spanish mercenaries and brought them to Brittany. Whether the expedition proved a success or a failure is hard to say, the only certainty being that after Du Guesclin had no further need of the Spanish troops he abandoned the foreigners, leaving them to shift for themselves and get home as best they could. Fearing to attempt a march of several hundred miles through hostile country, the Spaniards determined to stay; so built a castle near the present site of Plougastel, fortified themselves, and made friends among the people of the surrounding country to such an extent that every Spaniard who wanted one managed to procure a wife and a portion of land, and thus was established the community which exists to the present day. Singular as is this illustration of a foreign community in the heart of France, it is paralleled by similar cases in other parts of the world. The "Armada" was dispersed by the winds and waves along the British coast, a number of ships were wrecked, some upon the rocks of Scotland, some on the coast of Ireland, and the people of several villages in Scotland, and of at least one town not far from Galway, claim as their ancestry the Spanish sailors who were wrecked and unable to return home. The appearance of the people of these localities is sufficient confirmation of the story of their descent. They have the appearance, not of Celts, but of Spaniards, black hair and eyes, swarthy complexions and a general south of Europe look, being the rule among them.

Where and how the people of Plougastel got their idea of a wholesale wedding, just before Lent, is a mystery, but, no matter how the practice arose, it is one of the unwritten laws of this strange community that whoever marries at all in Plougastel must marry on the appointed day, which may be called the village fete day. The service of the matchmaker are much in vogue in this odd village, and months beforehand the old ladies, who volunteer their services to undertake negotiations between the different eligible young people of the community, are called into service; there is much discussion between the parents of the parties and the go-between as to what the girl shall have, as it is considered a necessity that a married couple shall begin housekeeping at once. The success of the matchmaker in achieving a particular alliance is speedily indicated to the rest of the community by the fact that the young gentleman is permitted to carry the umbrella of the young lady. In Brittany it rains the year round, an umbrella being a necessary article of general utility, as a coat, and no young woman thinks for a moment of going out, even if no further than the end of the village, without her umbrella. When this useful adjunct is entrusted to a young gentleman, everybody instantly understands "Vois est engage; l'ois paraupia a Marie-Jeanne." "Vois est engage; he is carrying the umbrella for Marie-Jeanne," just as in Mexico they say: "Pedro is doing the bear to Senora Lavina." As the Plougastelians constituted a separate community in the beginning, they have remained so; a young man of the village always selects, or has selected for him, a girl of his own race for a bride, and the community has remained entirely separate and distinct from its neighbors.

Months ahead of the great marrying day preparation are made for the event. Every house in the town and neighborhood is put in order, the fences are whitewashed, the roads are cleaned, pavements mended, and on every clothed article which are being bleached and otherwise prepared for the new households soon to be established. About a month in advance of the marrying day, which is in the last week before Lent, young persons contemplating matrimony send out to their friends a "bidding paper." It is a queer document, for printed on a single sheet, it gives notice to all friends that "M" and "N" are about to marry, and that the young man and his parents will be pleased to accept a return for the wedding presents they formerly sent out, and also that any presents from friends will be appreciated, properly recorded and returned when occasion serves. The purpose of this custom is to secure a proper outfit, and the friends of the groom and bride expectant at once turn their attention to the purchase of such articles as they think will be useful to the happy couple. Every article thus bought is sent to the house of the groom or bride with a card bearing the name of the donor and the price of the article. A list is made by the recipients of all presents, their nature and value, and when the sender comes to marry, the same kind of present is possible, is returned in exchange for the favor. Pierre and Marie thus receive buckets and bedsteads, washboards, boxes of soap, bundles of candles, packages of dried fish, chairs and mattresses, tubs, frying pans and suits of clothes, hats, and, in short, everything that is necessary to establish them in comfortable circumstances, and their friends send these articles with the confident expectation that when they themselves start to house-keeping everything will be returned. Suppose, however, that the married people in Plougastel contribute for the benefit of a young couple, the money thus spent is not wasted, for if a man can transfer his right to a present from himself to his son or daughter, and when one of these comes to be married, can send notice to the persons whom he has aided in beginning the matrimonial business that he will be pleased to have the presents returned to his children to whom he has transferred his right to a gift. The old bachelors and old maids of Plougastel are the only people who are left, in this arrangement, for although they can transfer their right to presents they can not hope to receive for themselves a return for these matrimonial gifts. For a week before these wholesale marriages, the entire town is converted into one grand kitchen, large cauldrons of soup are prepared, huge roasts of beef and mutton are made ready, casks of wine are rolled

into position and placed on supports in the kitchens and dining rooms and Plougastel makes ready for good cheer, for a wedding without eating and drinking, and plenty of both, would be no wedding at all, and in Plougastel the wedding feast lasts from two days to a week.

On the great fete day the brides and grooms assemble and march to church, preceded by a rustic band, and Plougastel puts on its gayest attire; blue coats lined with white, black trousers, green vests, a black silk sash round the waist, a hat such as in the illustrations of "Don Quixote" is always represented on the heads of the Spanish peasant, a big stick and a pair of leather shoes, velvet polishes form the holly-hat attire of the gentlemen, while the ladies are arrayed in black stuff gowns, a head dress of white linen not greatly dissimilar from the peculiar bonnet worn by certain orders of nuns. With this head dress and a gayly colored handkerchief, fitted shawl fashion around the neck and shoulders, the Breton bride is ready for the church, and with the bagpipes and flageolets in front, and all the wooden-shoe boys and girls of the village bringing up the rear and trudging along the sides of the parade, the procession moves proudly to the house of worship. The service within is uniform, the brides and grooms all moving in harmony, kneeling and rising at the proper points with the precision of soldiers on parade, and at the same instant join hands, and all the couples, in a more formal manner, made man and wife. The march out of the church is scarcely less imposing than the entry, save that the procession is soon broken up by the congratulations of friends. Frequently after the service is over an impromptu gavotte is formed on the way back to the public square, the band marching before and playing a lively popular melody, while the newly married couples dance along in procession. The wedding feast is sometimes a common ceremony in the largest room of the house, but more frequently the couples separate, going to their respective homes, where they are entertained by their relatives. The viands, while profuse, are not of the most dainty quality; "pate de foie gras" and champagne do not figure on the table in Plougastel, but beef soup, boiled codfish, huge omelets, mutton and veal, potatoes in abundance, and what fruit can be obtained at the season, form the staples, and what is lacking in eating is made up in drinking, for in France wine is cheap, and is used everywhere as a substitute for water. The wedding feast is always enlivened by songs, the bridegroom being generally the leading attraction, though when his knowledge is deficient to the emergency some friend more highly gifted may take his place in the musical programme. The wedding feast, over when it has taken place in the town hall, the brides are taken home, formally presented to the families of which they are now a part, but as the whole matter has been understood for months, and the bride herself has been known to her husband's parents ever since she was a baby, the presentation is of course a mere formality, but even formalities have their value in a community where precedent is well established, so the embarrassment of the Plougastel groom who, with a half-ashamed grin on his face, brings his bride into the family home may be appreciated even by gentlemen in dress coats, who are going through a somewhat similar ceremony. The participative photographer has found his way even to Plougastel, and as soon after the wedding feast as the weather will permit the couples who have undergone the ordeal have their photographs taken. The wedding photograph is under any circumstances something wonderful to behold. We are all familiar with the picture of the young man, in all the awkwardness of his Sunday clothes, uncomfortably seated in a chair, his hands on his knees, and the bride standing, the better to show her dress, with her arm fondly encircling his neck. The Plougastel matrimonial photograph does not differ in any important respect, save that of costume, from the wedding photograph of other communities. The same degree of awkwardness is shown, the same sheepishness, the same desire to perpetuate the memory of so great an event by its reproduction in pictorial form.

A stranger in Plougastel this year commented upon the practice of wholesale weddings and wondered whether the reflection could prove happy. In the first place, the young people themselves have, in nearly every case, indicated their own preferences, while the matchmaker and the parents arranged the alliance after the choice has been made by the parties themselves, and, in the second place, experience has shown that, as a rule, young people in marrying do not themselves always know what they want, and that alliances contracted for them are about as likely to prove happy as those they make for themselves. There is a tradition in Plougastel that on one occasion, many years ago, by some odd mischance, the couples got mixed up and before the participants knew what was going on about half of them had been married to the wrong partners. For a few minutes consternation reigned in the church, and Monsieur la Cure was conjured to do the thing over again and marry the right man to the right woman, but he refused, and calmly assured the young women that it was all right; that they would get along just as well as if they were married to the man they had chosen. This may be a Plougastelian joke, but the danger of its repetition is now avoided by carefully attaching the right man to the right woman by a bit of white ribbon as they enter the church, so that they cannot possibly be separated at the critical moment.

ALUMINIUM VIOLINS.
Aluminium violins are said to have a richer tone than those made of wood, and the inventor states that he has found in aluminium a latent property, consisting of a tendency of the fundamental to outweigh the upper partial tones. For this reason means are employed to introduce and regulate the partial tones to suit the tastes of the individual player. Notwithstanding the strong popular feeling in favor of wooden instruments, aluminium instruments are steadily gaining their way in musical circles.

"Why are you staring at me like that?" irritably asked the young lord of the money lender. "Because you are an object of interest to me, my lord," replied the money lender.

ABOUT MINES AND MINERS.

THEY'RE AFRAID OF MINES AWAY OUT IN AUSTRALIA.

The fact that there is gold in them only makes them more dangerous—Thousands Ruined by Paying Properties—Mining News from British Columbia.

W. B. writes from Sydney, Australia, to the Monetary Times:

The Canadian gold excitement has attracted attention. Occasionally men announce their intention of going over, but not many have gone. Sydney is a very conservative city, and when the British Columbia gold boom is talked about the wise ones shake their heads and remark, "We know how that thing will end." If asked whether they doubt if gold is there, they reply, "Oh, no; that is the worst of it. If there were no gold, then the thing would be over, my friend," and then they will seize you by your buttonhole and continue, "The Mount Morgan mine is the most wonderful treasury of gold in the world, but it ruined thousands. You see, they stocked it at a big price, and then ran the shares to the heavens. People went in debt to buy the shares, and when they tumbled, as they had to tumble to the right price, there was nothing for it but bankruptcy. Worse than that, many of these people thought they were rich for a month or two, and tossed up their employment in the craze, and they were not fit for much after the craze was over. My word for it, we know how these things will end in British Columbia."

THOSE MINES WERE STOCKED

at one million pounds sterling. The £1 shares were run up to £17, they tumbled back to I know not what figure, but they are worth three pounds ten to-day. They yielded for years from one to four million dollars worth of gold per annum, and are yielding yet an enormous amount. Still they ruined thousands, most of whom have never recovered from the excitement.

Then there are the Broken Hill silver mines. One mine alone has paid to its stockholders thirty millions of dollars in dividends in ten years, besides little adjuncts in the shape of stocks in offshoots. Nevertheless, a city full of people have put money in Broken Hill stock that wish they hadn't. Each of these great mines produced nestfuls of wildcats, of whom it is needless to speak.

A few minutes ago I was conversing with a man who knows the street pretty well. He drew me down a little way, and pointing to a handsome business block he said, "You see that firm reads Elder & Jones (that is not the real name though), there is no Jones in it, but there used to be. Jones, a few years ago, got the gold fever, left the firm, went into Mount Morgan, and the things Elder stuck to the business and let gold mines alone. He has an income now of over twenty-five thousand pounds per annum—Jones hasn't. Look here, when you want to go into gold mining, my boy, take the advice of an old miner, go into it with a pick and shovel." I suppose they really do know something about these things in Australia.

Another mining strike was made in British Columbia last week, and already a large number of claims have been added to the list which will ere long make the name of Vernon famous as a mining centre, says the Vernon News. The new find is on the B. X. range, just east of the town, and several very promising ledges have been located. The first to stake a claim was R. Maunsell, who claims from which some very fine looking quartz has been taken. The rock resembles that from the Blue Jay, and an assay taken from the top of the ledge went \$36 in free gold. The ledge is about eight feet wide, and can be plainly traced over the whole length of the claim. Since the discovery was made a large number of prospectors have been at work on the hill, and several other ledges have been staked.

Grand Forks is no exception to the rule, says the Miner. It is the same old story, the supply of workmen here at present is more than sufficient for the local demand. Our advice to laboring men is to stay away, unless you have the necessary means to provide for yourself until work is secured, and pay your way out of the country unless you are successful. To capitalists it is different. At no time in the history of the country is there such opportunity to invest as at present.

Some interesting figures are deducible from the returns of ore shipments from Kaslo during the month of March, as recorded in the books of the custom house, says the Rossland Miner. The total shipments for the month amounted to 6,677,000 pounds, or 3,338 1-2 tons of a gross value of \$289,699. The lead amounted to 3,047,300 pounds and the silver to 376,751 ounces. The average value of the ore per ton was \$86.77—12.25 ounces of silver and 45.65 per cent. of lead for the entire shipment.

Independent of the cost of developing the mines, it may be fairly assumed that a ton of ore from the Slocan can be stopped and put down at any one of the smelters at an average cost of about \$35, while from many of the larger shippers it is done at very much less. There thus remains a handsome profit for the fortunate mine owners. When it is remembered that by far the larger portion of the shipments is crude ore, and only those from the Noble Fire concentrates, the significance of the figures will be appreciated. They certainly attest in a most convincing manner the remarkable richness of the Slocan of the Slocan country, if such testimony were needed.

Speaking to a Spokane Spokesman-Review reporter a gentleman versed in matters about Rossland said: "I will make this prophecy, that from July 1, 1898, ore to the value of \$10,000,000 will be taken from the mines about Rossland. The mines which will be important factors in producing this result are the Centre Star, Le Roi, War Eagle, Columbia and Kootenay, and Josie, while 20 other mines will be shippers of considerable quantities of

ore. I will further say that inside of two years there will be 5,000 men at work on Red Mountain, and not a smokstack will be seen on the mountain. How is this to be brought about? Electricity, sir; all the work of hoisting and drilling will be done by electricity."

In winding up the affairs of a gold mining company the other day in Edinburgh, the directors cracked a few bottles of special dry sparkling, and the chairman, with Tapleyian humor, in moving the toast, "Requiescat in pace," said: "Gentlemen, 'tis true, and pity 'tis true,' we are here met on this occasion for lack of gold, but paradoxical as it may seem, we have abundance of gold lac; therefore, charge your glasses gentlemen, to the shareholders, for while we leave it to them to pay the piper, we shall be just and pay the Piper-Heidsieck. (uproarious cheering, laughter and applause.) While we as a company have decidedly gone up on the rocks, recollect that a reef would have been our salvation. And although we here pour a melancholy libation in these sparkling pints, we would rather have had the glittering quartz. (Cheers.) We worked in vein but it is not ore with us; we have suffered all the miner'sills of life, the shaft has sped, the prospects are blue, the only buckets left to us that will repay the winding up are those before you. Drink, then, fellow stoneybrokes, to the eternal slumbers of the Busted-up Gold Mining Company."

BLIND CYCLIST.

With Two Sightless Orbs St. Louis Girl Takes Daily Rides.

In the latest accomplishment of Miss Kate Hempke, St. Louis can afford the world an illustration of the recreative possibilities of the wheel, says the St. Louis Republic. Miss Hempke has far surpassed any claims made by the most enthusiastic advocate of the safety bicycle. She has demonstrated its adaptability as a reliable means of locomotion in a way to silence adverse criticism. And she has set an example, which will, doubtless, be utilized to carry a gleam of interest and sunshine into many darkened lives, otherwise unable to share in ordinary outdoor pleasures and recreations.

Miss Hempke is an enthusiastic wheel-woman. This pleasure she shares with many thousands of women here and elsewhere, but it is doubtful if any of them get the same delight out of the pastime that she does. For Miss Hempke is blind; totally blind. From infancy she has not seen the beauties of nature or the faces of her relatives and friends. Yet she has managed to live a life of rare usefulness, and now she has, by almost incredible perseverance and remarkable intuition learned to ride a bicycle safely and well. Every fine day she may be seen with an attendant taking a spin on the boulevard or through Forest Park. Yet none of the thousands of wheelmen and spectators who thus daily see her imagine for an instant that all her faculties are not perfect. Attired in a natty costume,

SHE RIDES BOLDLY,

gracefully and without hesitation; wending her way fearlessly in and out among the hundreds of vehicles and wheels, rarely needing even the warning of her escort's voice.

Miss Hempke is an instructor at the Missouri Institute for the Blind at Nineteenth and Morgan streets. She entered that institution 18 years ago, as a pupil, and has been teaching her brother and sister unfortunates for the last eight years. Always healthy and fond of athletics, she has paid much attention to calisthenics, and her spare time was mostly spent in the gymnasium. Dr. John T. Sibley, Superintendent of the Institute, is an enthusiastic wheelman and is also President of the Century Club. Through him Miss Hempke became interested in the sport. After certain surreptitious attempts in the gymnasium she purchased a tandem and learned to ride with the guidance of her escort. For a while she was satisfied with this, but ambition to ride a single wheel seized her and she determined to do it. And she did. In the gymnasium she learned to mount and guide it. Her wonderful sense of touch, combined with highly developed intuition, enabled her to quickly master the elusive mount. When she could ride alone around the gymnasium she concluded to extend her trips. So, accompanied by Dr. Sibley, she ventured out to Forest Park. To his surprise she displayed no nervousness, while her skill in avoiding collisions was little short of miraculous. In a short time she had learned the most frequented paths and drives in the park, and scarcely needed the attention of an escort. At present she is confident that she can safely ride out to the park and return by herself, and is with difficulty dissuaded from attempting it.

Miss Hempke has many accomplishments, besides this, which render her noteworthy, but she is proudest of her mastery of the bicycle. Those who have experienced the difficulty of learning to ride a wheel can appreciate the accomplishment of this sightless young woman. She has ridden 1,500 miles since taking to the single wheel.

FOOLING THE BUTCHER.

Butcher—Dot Mr. Wiseman is von vool. He come to me and he give me dose handsome new steel-yards, vor dose rusty old von I use so many years. He say he collect bricky-brack.

Customer—How long had you used the old steelyards?
I sell meat mit dose steelyards twenty-five years.

Mr. Wiseman is a customer of yours, I suppose?

Yah.
Don't you know that the older steelyards get, the weaker the springs become and the less meat they give to the pound.
Mein Cracioun! Dot Mr. Wiseman is von scoundrell!

A FE

CHAPTER

Courthope had struck main road at right angle avenue. The popular right, more like a formation of feathering out of a dozen trees upon a plain. Grove of elm and birch not seen the evening were half-buried shad. So absolutely serene leaf was the of the trees and seemed to be some of this new sort of verdure remind him of verd beauty was absent, scene was strange, domain of the land whom he had turned the daylight, more chanted land which you. Drink, then, fellow stoneybrokes, to the eternal slumbers of the Busted-up Gold Mining Company.

Whether by this self honest or guilt nor felt that be d Gradually, as he his snow-shoes, he lateral swing which to his leg was un seemed, the large fore when he too Having made the he quickened spe whether the girl and had come into he knew that the branches of the t her from seeing In a moment he becoming incaut Both arms, part were embedded straight down in no bottom to his impulse was to he found that t shoes were dug to them, held t the same positio What cursed t confess to a crim allowed to come Fool, indeed, he that he could w without falling Courthope's rel By degrees h only by curling ing off his sho got the snow-s mounted out of made, with su garments and w neck and wrist he had spent walking not a this cheerless l he went dogge drifted main Having left forms of the across an open surface of the ersed yesterday at the side o hidden, more top of their p times he coul outlining field still walked t the lonely st still upon his tated upon his sweet beyond he thought deration, w which the dis plain. He w the fact that that here he hardly know hustled rove danger at ev two small i into a sea in very long show-shoes to flounde How long o it would se and east an to sit as lo endure the At leng H his eye h within; b him. At f horses bel established her roads were that so sl tended for as He ans seeking t was not d sheltered a fall to sc had very i crust of a found a within, an he had fr form of t wise of t was of som working sleigh wa the way i of sacks sleigh t upon the face of t treated w stupidity. Courtho a jerk. A frozen blanket