

from their mouths, and paw her to attract attention, tearing any lace upon it with their claws. If not a very large dog, it may jump on her lap, or elect to lie on the outspread skirt of her dress, if it mean to be friendly, which all dogs are not. In all such cases a guest is helpless, and it is the duty of her hostess to attend to her comfort. "Love me, love my dog," is a time-honoured axiom; and, to a certain point, it is certainly expressive of a great truth, of very wide application. But

in its literal sense, it is certainly an exaggeration of the truth. Kindliness and love are not synonymous terms.

And now, having given the young hostess a last and important item of advice, I add a parting word to the guest. Do not enter the breakfast-room in the morning before the lady of the house has appeared. It is always a subject of annoyance to her. Remain in your room, or go into the garden. It is not even expedient to go to the drawing-room before

breakfast, as the maids may still be occupied there. I had a lesson myself, in early youth, which caused me much distress. The breakfast was very late, and I ventured to enter the drawing-room. The housemaid was still there, and speaking with someone; and what was my dismay, when I looked back from the middle of the room, to see my elderly hostess in considerable *déshabillé* without wig or cap, hiding from my intrusive presence behind the door!

SOME OBJECTIONABLE WEDDING CUSTOMS.

By AN OLD LADY.

It does seem strange that neither civilisation, good sense, nor propriety have been able to banish several of the objectionable practices which are made to accompany our marriage ceremonials. It is true we have managed to get rid of some of the boisterous "horse-play" which our ancestors indulged in at such times, and the uproarious drinking-bouts, with which the festivity was too frequently disgraced, are no longer indulged in. There is however still room for improvement, and we trust that before long four of what seem to us to be most unpleasant customs will also be abandoned, and if possible forgotten, as they have nothing whatever to recommend them, possessing neither antiquity of origin, poetical import, nor pleasant results. They are the following: "Throwing the slipper," "throwing rice," the substitution of boy-pages in the place of bridesmaids and fancy costumes.

With regard to the first of these, "throwing the slipper," the practice, as now carried out, is not ancient, and seems to be a modern rendering of the curious old German custom of the bride's throwing away her left shoe as she drove off with her husband. There was of course a scramble for this remembrance of the lady. We do not know what was the exact meaning of the ceremony? Throwing a slipper at, or rather after, the carriage which bears away the bride and bridegroom is probably not more than a century and a half old. As practised at present, it is not only objectionable, but dangerous. We have frequently seen both the bride and bridegroom struck in the face by a badly, or possibly a well-aimed shot. Now surely for the wedding guests as a parting favour to send the bride on her "honeymoon" with a contused wound on her face, or the bridegroom with a black-eye, is a brutal proceeding and a disgrace to a civilised community! This is however not the worst that can result from the stupid practice, for we have heard it related that many years back upon a wedding party leaving Holland House, a slipper which was thrown struck one of the horses, which so frightened the animal that he "bolted," the carriage was upset and the bride killed! That such accidents should happen is not remarkable, but that such a senseless, unmeaning and dangerous custom should still survive is remarkable!

Throwing rice at weddings is quite a modern custom, and does not date back more than forty years. It is a silly, unmeaning, disagreeable and dirty practice. It is unmeaning, because in England, at any rate, we have no poetical associations connected with rice! It is disagreeable, because for a bride and bridegroom to drive away with their hair and eyes full of fine rice-dust, and the grain finding its way down the back and causing annoyance and discomfort can only be amusing to the silly vulgar people who throw the rice. There is no single argument to be advanced in favour of retaining this senseless custom. At

the weddings of the higher classes rice-throwing is seldom seen; and it is left chiefly for the vulgar and foolish to enjoy the nasty practice. In the East End of London the grocers' shops close to churches sell halfpenny and farthing packets of rice ready packed for emergencies, and these are bought up by 'Arry and 'Arriett directly they catch sight of a wedding-party. Indeed, viciousness and jealousy seem chiefly to occupy the mind of the purchaser—not well-wishing or the innocent indulgence in a poetically significant or ancient custom. We remember, on one occasion, in the East End some rice was thrown in the eye of the poor unfortunate bridegroom, with the result that he had to spend his honeymoon in a hospital. It is a well-known fact that there are in uncooked rice many animals so minute as only to be seen under the microscope; what a nasty trick then it is to throw such upon the persons, usually so carefully dressed, of a bride and bridegroom.

We deeply regret the introduction of "boy-pages" in wedding ceremonials. It is quite a new feature, and we cannot help thinking it an objectionable one. The bridesmaids are an ancient, a poetical, and a beautiful institution, and to replace them by boys dressed up in theatrical costumes is bad taste and a complete misunderstanding of the meaning of this portion of the ceremony.

The old-fashioned idea was, that the bridesmaids were the bride's youthful companions or relatives, who dressed her for the wedding; and the writer, when she was a girl, several times took part in such scenes. The selected bridesmaids met together at the house of the bride-elect some days beforehand, and formed a kind of committee of taste, offering suggestions and hints. As the writer was supposed to possess some skill in hair-dressing, to her was entrusted the coiffure of the bride, and fixing on the wreath. We should never have thought of allowing anyone to offer a hand in this, to us, most serious office, and the modern notion of the bride being assisted in her toilette by a servant would have seemed to us an insult to her dearest friends. Of course, we accompanied her to church as the representatives of her maidenhood, and her confidential friends or relatives. Sometimes a girl is very nervous when she is the principal upon such a solemn and serious occasion, and the presence of her most attached female friends are a support to her. Now to exchange all this for boys! boys dressed up too. Oh how unmeaning! Surely boys are quite out of place in such a scene!

We have an intense objection to any theatrical costumes introduced at weddings, yet, unfortunately, this practice is far too common now. We read of "pages" (those boy bridesmaids) dressed in the costume of "Charles II.!" Children dressed in "Kate Greenaways" costume, very pretty costumes no doubt, but a wedding is not a fancy-dress ball or a stage play, and all these things give

an air of unreality to it. Surely, if ever in their lives, a man and woman are in serious earnest, it is on their wedding-day. They are making the most solemn vows before God, and giving the most solemn pledge to one another; and any theatrical display, any "dressing up" in imitation of a past day, any "boy pages," got up in effeminate costumes must be singularly out of place. Even the bridesmaids should be modestly, though becomingly attired. Fortunately, the dress of the bride has not undergone much change, and we hope it never may; and we do sincerely trust that good taste and propriety may assert themselves, and that "boy-pages" and "fancy costumes" at weddings may be abolished; if people like to dress themselves up in a ridiculous manner and "make objects of themselves" they can do so, but let it not be in the House of God when two human beings are making most solemn vows upon which the blessing of the Almighty is being earnestly invoked.

Let it should be thought that we want to do away with all old and curious customs at weddings, we say at once that there are, on the contrary, many which we should like to see revived. The strewing flowers in the path of the bride and bridegroom, as they leave the church, is a charming old custom, now well-nigh given up. Another is the presentation of slips of rosemary; the meaning of this custom is that, as rosemary was also used for funerals, the pair were to live together until one deposited the rosemary on the bier of the other, an emblem of a union, only to end in the grave as the marriage service says, "until death us do part."

The presentation of white gloves is also a pretty custom and dates from very remote antiquity. The writer remembers the custom in Norfolk half a century back.

In some parts of England in the middle ages, the bride was crowned with a garland of wheat upon leaving church. We suggest the revival of this in place of the "rice-throwing," not of course as a substitute for the "bridal wreath."

Garlands were also presented at weddings, which were subsequently hung up in the church. In some parts of Germany this custom still obtains. We have seen some of these garlands which date a long way back.

Now as all of these customs are poetical and thoroughly unobjectionable, it is strange that they should have been abandoned for "slipper throwing," "rice throwing," "boy-bridesmaids," "fancy costumes," and other ostentatious displays of dress or jewellery at weddings. Let us never forget that solemn and beautiful passage introduced into the marriage service:

"Whose adorning—let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."