

COURTSHIP IN SWEDEN.

By PEVERIL, Author of "In The Good Old Days," "Glen Gordon," etc.

"COURTING is like dying; sure, a man must do it for himself!" So says Paddy out of the depths of a vast experience. Young Sweden is equally gallant, but not equally independent. However freely he may woo the girl of his heart, custom does not always permit him to "pop the fateful question" himself; or, if he does, as no doubt is usually the case, he must still make the proposal in due form, or the parents of his bride will feel slighted.

It must be remembered, however, that the custom alluded to is by no means universal; but in those parts of Sweden where old usages are retained, the "boneman" still flourishes, and is, at least in his own eyes, the most important person in the parish. His name indicates his office, the word "boneman" signifying one who entreats. To this august personage the love-sick swain confides his wishes, and from that time till after the betrothal he ceases to take an active part in the proceedings, simply doing what he is told by the "boneman," who is, *pro tem.*, master of the situation, and uses his brief authority after the manner of his kind.

First, unaccompanied by the lover, he calls at the house of the bride-elect, and addressing himself to her parents, unfolds his errand with much solemnity; expatiates upon the good qualities of the aspirant, his amiability, steadiness, and generosity, and the probability that he will make a good husband. Then he proceeds to more mundane matters, and enumerates the worldly goods of which the youth is possessed, his present income and future prospects; making out as good a case for his client as he can, and interlarding his discourse with appropriate texts of Scripture, not forgetting Eleazar's similar errand, by way of exalting his own office, and hinting that his host cannot do better than imitate the conduct of Laban upon that occasion.

When his eloquence is exhausted, the worthy "boneman" entreats permission to introduce his client to the lady, quite ignoring any informal interviews which may have taken place previously. If the lover is unwelcome to the parents, the proposed visit is courteously declined; but if the alliance suggested meets with their approval, the meeting is at once arranged, the girl herself taking no part in the discussion; it is, in fact, her cue to maintain an air of complete indifference throughout the interview.

At the time appointed, the "boneman" arrives, with the young man in charge, and presents him to the lady with an elaborate and eulogistic speech. At this stage of the proceedings it is not etiquette for the young people to talk to each other, or to show any mark of preference. The girl therefore busies herself with her knitting, and tries to look unconcerned, while the unfortunate youth twiddles his thumbs, and succeeds in looking ineffably foolish without trying at all! Throughout this trying ordeal, Phyllis has decidedly the best of it, for her hands and eyes are well employed, whereas poor Corydon does not know which way to look, and finds his hands and feet uncomfortably in his way.

Meanwhile, the "boneman" and his host are arranging the day of betrothal, a ceremony second only in importance to the wedding, the festivities being frequently kept up for several days.

If the farmer is in prosperous circumstances, he invites a large number of neighbours and relatives to grace his daughter's betrothal, the party being doubled by the friends and kinsfolk who arrive with the young man. The clergyman also accompanies him, and the

"boneman," who makes the most of this, his last day of power.

The host meets his guests at the door, offering to each a small glass of brandy, which is the universal token of welcome throughout both Norway and Sweden. The visitors "skäl" the happy pair, and then enter the house, preceded by the minister, who makes an address suitable to the occasion.

The "boneman" now bustles forward, places his charges in the centre of the room, and the ceremony begins. First, the lovers exchange "minde" rings, then they clasp hands in token of constancy, while the clergyman asks each in turn the solemn question, "Before God the Almighty and All-knowing, and in the presence of these witnesses, I ask thee if thou wilt have him (or her) for thy betrothed?" Then follows the Lord's Prayer, a solemn benediction closing the simple and beautiful little service.

Friends now gather round and lay their hands upon the clasped hands of the lovers, thus bearing witness to the oaths of fidelity. The minister delivers another address, and then everybody shakes hands with the young couple and wishes them joy.

The company now sit down to the banquet prepared; that over, dancing begins, and is kept up to a late hour. At length the lights are put out, and the guests dispose themselves to slumber as best they can under the circumstances. When a party numbers two hundred or more, it is reasonable to suppose that beds cannot be found for all. The hostess can do no more than provide an abundance of clean straw, which is heaped upon the floor of kitchen and barn. Happily, Swedes are not fastidious, and accommodate themselves to circumstances with great cheerfulness. They lie down promiscuously upon the sweet straw, sleep the sleep of the just, and awake in the morning ready for another day of feasting, dancing, and singing.

In many respects Norway and Sweden are said to be alike. The language, religion, and many of the customs are the same; but there are points of difference. The Norwegians, possibly owing to the stern character of their mountain scenery, are grave and deliberate, even the children lacking the gaiety natural to their age. Swedes, on the contrary, are lighthearted and pleasure-loving; they are also handsome, which cannot, as a rule, be said for the women of Norway.

The young girls of Sweden are often extremely beautiful, especially between the age of fifteen and eighteen. They are tall, well-formed, and graceful, with large blue eyes, an exquisite rose and lily complexion, and abundant golden hair, which they wear in two long plaits, tied at the end with ribbon, except on grand occasions, when they allow their hair to fall loose upon their shoulders. Unfortunately, this beauty is fleeting. The field work, which most of the women share with the men, robs them of their bloom; toil and exposure coarsening the features and roughening the delicate skin. Masculine beauty wears better. The blue-eyed, fair-haired lad who at twenty was a model of manly grace, is equally handsome at forty, with the added charm of dignity and conscious worth. Such men are not likely to be tardy wooers.

All over Sweden, Saturday evening is the recognised time for courting, or as it is there called, "bundling." Saturday is one of the busiest days of the week, for not only must the house be made spick and span in readiness for Sunday, but every member of the family under-

goes a similar "cleaning-up" process. The large barn is utilised as a bath-room, and by the time the evening meal is ready each lad and lass is spruce and tidy, with neatly-brushed and braided hair, and wearing clean Sunday garments. This being bundling night, we may be sure the girls are all as smart as can be, the boys showing quite as much anxiety to make themselves attractive. By-and-by they set off on bundling expeditions of their own, leaving their sisters to entertain the expected guests.

In Dalecarlia it is customary for young men to assemble on Saturday evening, and go round the parish serenading the maidens they especially desire to honour. They do not pay this compliment to any but the girls of their own "clan," and it is considered a great breach or decorum for a man to marry out of his own parish. Belgravia itself could not be more exclusive.

The people of Dalecarlia are the handsomest and most independent of the Swedish peasantry. They are also poor, and a "dahlkulla" often wears a "minde" ring many years before she dons the bridal crown. These girls show themselves worthy descendants of the men who rallied round Gustavus Vasa, and enabled him to free his country from the rule of a foreign despot. They have courage to do what few rustic maidens dare; and if fortune frowns, and the time for marriage seems far distant, they will put their own shoulders to the wheel and help to earn the money needful to make a fair start in life.

For this purpose they go to Stockholm, trudging barefooted all the way, carrying their shoes for economy's sake, and a bundle containing their simple outfit. How strange the city world must seem to the blue-eyed bonde-maiden, and how full of unsuspected temptations! The mothers of Dalecarlia must have stout hearts, or they could not trust their carefully-reared daughters alone in a town not remarkable for morality. Danger there is, doubtless, but the fair "dahlkulla" passes unscathed through the ordeal. In the city, but not of it, she keeps steadily before her eyes the object of her coming, and that object attained, ties up her bundle and sets her face homewards with a joyful heart.

Stockholm, the so-called Venice of the North, is built upon many small islands, around which flows the sea, thus forming a series of wide irregular channels running between the long rows of houses. These watery highways are alive with boats carrying passengers from one landing-place to another, plying backwards and forwards and up and down, like the omnibuses and cabs in other more prosaic towns.

Here we find our "dahlkulla," three to each boat—two rowing and one steering. Excellent sailors they are, too, and so cheery and kind-hearted that it does one good to see them. Their costume marks them out from the girls of Stockholm, and forms no small item in the picturesque *entourage* of the northern Venice. A "dahlkulla" wears a short green woollen skirt, a red, sleeveless bodice, turned back in front to exhibit a snowy chemise, the full sleeves of which cover the arms and draw round the wrist. They also wear scarlet stockings and heavy shoes, the heels of which are uncomfortably placed under the hollow of the foot. A gaily-striped apron completes the costume, which, with the exception of the shoes, we recommend to any young lady who wishes to create a sensation at an evening party.

It is by no means easy to give a satisfactory account of courtship in Sweden, customs

differing slightly in each parish, and more than slightly in each province, so that it is difficult to avoid confusing the usages of one district with another. For instance, in some parts the mere giving of a ring amounts to an offer of marriage. Du Chaillu gives an amusing account of a difficulty he got into through ignorance of this local peculiarity. Upon one occasion he went to a fair, accompanied by the "bonde" family with whom he was staying at the time. Wishing to make some return for hospitality, he presented the fair-haired daughter of his host with a gold ring, which she accepted with blushing smiles. The bystanders laughed and applauded; but "friend Paul" failed to see the point of the joke until some days afterwards, when he received a visit from his quondam host, who astonished him greatly by asking when "good friend Paul" intended to marry his daughter? The clever American extricated himself from the dilemma without hurting the worthy farmer's feeling, or diminishing his own popularity. The feelings of the young lady in question are discreetly left to the imagination! Taught by experience, Du Chaillu was henceforth careful, when he gave a ring to one, to bestow a similar gift upon two or three other girls living near, thus finding safety in numbers!

In the parish of Rouniby, the 1st of July is a favourite day for betrothals. From an early hour carts and waggons arrive, overarched with green boughs and drawn by flower-decked horses. These triumphal chariots are laden with holiday folk bent on "having a good time," an intention a Swedish "bonde" knows well how to carry into effect.

The clergyman holds a special service on the

occasion, the church being crowded with youths and maidens each carrying a bouquet, the object of which is seen later. On this day flowers are recognised love-tokens, a bouquet offered and accepted being tantamount to a promise of marriage. Thus, the important question may be asked and answered without a word spoken on either side—a great comfort to bashful swains, who have not yet reached the eloquent stage of love-fever. It is said that this pretty custom is dying out; young men modestly objecting to advertise their intentions by carrying flowers for all the world to see and laugh at. The love-making, no doubt, is carried on quite as successfully, if less openly, and the 1st of July is not likely to lose its popularity amongst the young folk of the district.

Betrothal gifts vary with locality, and also with the circumstances of the lovers. Usually the girl gives her sweetheart some article made by herself, receiving in exchange a Prayer Book, on the cover of which is engraved a golden heart and a text in letters of gold. Elsewhere, if the suitor is wealthy, he presents his true-love with a large silver goblet, in which are placed a few silver coins and spoons in token of future prosperity. A spoon appears to be universally considered a symbol of housewifely excellence, and in many parts of Sweden a matron habitually wears a long silver spoon suspended from her girdle.

In some districts betrothal gifts consist of a chain and girdle of silver, a Psalm Book, and a large silver spoon with a crown and leaves chased upon the handle. The girdle and chain betoken prosperity, the book, religion, and the spoon, thrift. A bride-elect is expected to appear at church wearing these

symbolic gifts a week before marriage. In return for all these handsome presents, the girl bestows upon her lover a fine linen shirt, spun, woven, and made by her own fair hands; also, a breast knot of gay ribbons, and a pair of red garters. These are six feet in length, and are worn criss-cross over the stockings, fastening in a bow below the knee. The bridegroom wears these articles of dress upon his wedding-day, and never afterwards, until his earthly pilgrimage is over, when his wedding shirt serves him for a shroud.

Swedish girls of the "bonde" class are wonderfully clever and industrious, learning thrifty and careful habits from their excellent mothers. As soon as she wears a "minde" ring, a girl begins to spin and weave linen for her future household. Often she must wait years before her lover can afford to buy or rent the farm which is the heart's desire of every "bonde"; but this long delay is no discouragement to the busy maiden; she has all the more time to do her work, and to do it well. Thus, it frequently happens that when a girl is married, the walls of the large room in which the banquet takes place are fairly covered with trophies of her skill—long webs of snowy linen, shawls spun, woven, and embroidered by her own clever fingers, and bales of thick woollen cloth also spun and woven by herself. Happy the man who secures such a domestic treasure, for verily "her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no fear of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. Her children shall arise up and call her blessed: her husband also, and he praiseth her."

FRUIT SALADS.

By LUCY HELEN YATES, Lecturer on The Cookery of Vegetables and Fruits to the Horticultural Exhibition Committee.

WITH the hot days before us, and the promise of a plentiful supply of fruits, we are generally on the look-out for new and dainty ways of serving these most acceptable gifts of our generous Mother Earth.

Fruit tarts, fruit puddings, stewed fruit, even fruit compôtes, we are all well acquainted with; but I wonder how many of our girls know how to make a fruit salad?

Perhaps the favoured few, who have had the good fortune to make acquaintance with Parisian and Viennese restaurants, may have tasted with wondering admiration the strange compound set before them; but I doubt whether they dared to attempt an imitation of it at home, although we may meet with occasional recipes for it in some few cookery books—none too reliable, I must confess.

Now, give me your attention, dear girls, while I tell you exactly how to make and serve this most delicious of delicacies.

First, I must tell you, you cannot make it of any fruit, or of fruit in any condition. It must be good and sound, perfectly ripe, and very dry. This last requisite, you will remember, is needful for the success of any salad, fruit or vegetable.

Gooseberries will not make a salad; nor will plums, apples, or pears.

Too much soft fruit, like ripe currants, may mar its success.

Now let us see what will do best.

Strawberries and raspberries, with a few stoned cherries, and a small proportion of very fine red or white currants, will make a splendid salad, as they accord well together.

Then pineapples, bananas, apricots, peaches, nectarines, all combine perfectly; while oranges, lemons, melons, with a small admixture of candied cherries, greengages, and chestnuts, make an excellent fruit salad about Christmas-time.

Take first the strawberries and other soft fruits, as these most nearly concern us at the present moment.

Let the fruit be very much "morning gathered," if you have not the good luck to be able to gather it yourself. Strawberries and raspberries must be very dry and free from dust. To ensure this, when you pick off the hulls, brush each one over lightly with a camel's-hair brush. The cherries should be stoned; you will easily do this with practice. Black cherries are preferable to "white hearts" for use in a salad. They are more tender.

Choose the finest bunches of currants, and pick them off the stems without bruising them.

A deep crystal dish, round or oval in shape, is to be preferred to the salad-bowl for a fruit salad, even though the latter may be a crystal one.

Arrange the fruit, not in layers of each kind, but in mixed layers, and keep it in pyramid shape. When you have sufficient fruit make your "dressing."

For this you will need a tumblerful of some sweet red wine—Rousillon or a sweet port. First take a tumblerful of water and about a dozen lumps of sugar. Set these over the fire in an enamelled saucepan. Let this boil for five minutes, then set aside to cool. Stir in the wine and a tablespoonful of some good liqueur, like Prunelle, which has the flavour of nuts. Let this mixture be quite cold before pouring it over the fruit; indeed, you had better make it early in the morning if intending to use the salad for lunch.

Pour it very gently over all, being careful to cover all the fruit, and let it slowly filter through.

If you want to make this dish very handsome, beat up the white of one egg with its equal in powdered sugar, till a stiff froth. Take small portions of this with a teaspoon, and place about the pyramid of fruit, like

snow. Arrange a bed of cool ivy leaves on another dish, and set your crystal dish on this. Serve with a silver spoon and fork, taking care to give a little of the "dressing" with each helping.

Pare the pineapple and the bananas, and slice them evenly, but not too thinly. The apricots and peaches must be skinned, and the stones cracked to get at the kernels. Pound these latter in a mortar with a little sugar, and sprinkle the powder amongst the other fruit. Arrange it also in pyramidal form. The dressing for this salad would be made in the same way, only as the colour of the fruit is yellow, so the wine must be the same—a sweet white wine, sherry, or Frontignan, and a glass of Maraschino. You may put "snow" about this salad too if you wish.

In making the winter salad, you will need to pare both oranges and lemons. One lemon to half a dozen oranges is about the right proportion. Grate a little of the rind of both fruits, as the flavour of the peel is very choice. The late melons have a very fine scent. Pare a quarter of one small melon, scrape away all the seedy part, and slice it very thinly. The candied fruit should be split in half, and arranged among the other with regard to its colouring. For this salad you would make the same syrup; but a raisin or ginger wine would be most suitable.

Perhaps some of my readers who are teetotalers will take objection to the wine. I am sorry to say you cannot produce the same effect without it. I have never tried whether the "champagne cider" and other teetotal beverages could be made to answer the purpose; but I am afraid they would not. Better far would it be to use cream and sugar, as do those good people who object to oil in a lettuce salad.