

FAMOUS WEDDINGS AND BRIDES.



IN most ages of the world's history, weddings have been celebrated with all the pomp and display that circumstances would admit of, and the bridal dress has even played an important part in the ceremonial.

The actual meaning of the word "bride" is one owned or

purchased, but whether the woman resigns her personal freedom willingly or unwillingly, she signals the relinquishment as a gala-day. Marriage by capture passed away with the Dark Ages, giving place to marriages by purchase, which yielded in time to marriages of inclination, though pre-nuptial settlements and intriguing mothers sometimes take the memory back to the former state of things.

We have learnt to consider white as essentially bridal costume, but it has not been always so; and even now the Bokhara bride wears a rose-coloured veil on her marriage-day, and in the modern Greek islands the bridal veil is of red silk—a custom which has descended, no doubt, from the "flamen," or red bridal veil of ancient Greece; the Romans in old days wearing yellow veils. The Armenian bride, on the most important day of her life, appears in what closely resembles a sack made of rich silk, completely enveloping the figure, feet, and head. The face is further hidden by a linen veil, over which falls another of gold tinsel, and a part of the ceremonial is for the priest's wife to dye the nails of the bride a deep red with henna. In Turkey, the bride appears in rich white satin brocade, shot with silver, and bedizened with pearls, a jewelled girdle round her waist, her face painted—a crimson patch the shape of a heart on her chin, the rest of the visage a mass of white, except the black-pencilled eyebrows.

Our marriage ceremonies are remarkable for their antiquity, and have varied but little. The wedding-ring, which the Puritans repudiated as a Satanic bauble, has been worn from time to time on the right or left hand, the reason for its present assignment to the latter being a tradition, whether authentic or not, that some vein in the third finger of the left hand has a special connection with the heart. Our bridal veil is no modern introduction, though it is said to have replaced the Anglo-Saxon custom of the bride wearing her hair floating on her shoulders. For many years nothing but the wreath was worn over loose tresses. Bridal favours are said to be of Danish origin, and at

one time these were made not white, but in the bride's own colours, whatever they might be.

History and tradition have handed down to us wonderful accounts of the magnificent ceremonials and the gorgeous raiment which have signalled the weddings of bygone days, though some of the high-born dames of old have stood at the altar simply apparelled. When Louis XIII. married Anne of Austria, her robe was white satin, and her hair was simply dressed, without crown or wreath; but Isabella of Portugal, as the bride of the Duke of Burgundy, wore a dress of splendid embroidery, a stomacher of ermine, tight sleeves, a cloak bordered with ermine falling from her shoulders to the ground; but she had no ornaments, and her head-dress was of white muslin. When Anne of France, finding the Archduke Maximilian tardy in his wooing, gave herself and her dominions to Charles VIII., she appeared at the imposing ceremonial of her marriage in a robe of cloth of gold, with designs in raised embroidery upon it, and bordered with priceless sable.

James I. nearly ruined himself in order to celebrate the marriage of his daughter, the Princess Elizabeth, and great and determined was the opposition shown by his subjects to the marriage-tax he raised to defray the £53,294 it cost. The ceremony took place at Whitehall with so much pomp, that it has formed the precedent for all other royal weddings in England which have followed. The train of the bride's dress, which was of silver cloth, cost £130. Her hair floated on her shoulder, intermixed with pearls and diamonds, and a crown of gold was on her head.

Perhaps, however, the marriage of Henry I. with Matilda of Scotland carries off the palm, as far as outward splendour is concerned. Bishop Anselm performed the ceremony in presence of all the beauty and chivalry of the realm. The marriage of Edward I. in Canterbury Cathedral was little less magnificent. Margaret Tudor, when married to James of Scotland, stood proudly at the altar as her noble lineage warranted, a crown on her head, her hair hanging beneath it, covered only by a cap of gold, and pearls about her neck.

The ill-fated union of Philip and Mary was solemnised at Winchester Cathedral, as befitted the sovereigns of two great countries; Charles I. was married by proxy at Notre Dame; and George III. signalled his marriage with Queen Charlotte, which took place at St. James's Chapel Royal, by abolishing many of the practices which then held good, but which were opposed to modern taste and feeling.

St. James's Chapel Royal has been the scene of more royal marriages in modern days than perhaps any other edifice, though it is cramped and small. Queen Anne and William IV. were wedded here, and here George IV. was married at ten o'clock at night, and Queen Victoria on the 10th of February, 1840. It is needless to say that this was an occasion of great splendour, but the unpretentious building was more

metamorphosed when, on January 25, 1858, the Princess Royal espoused the then Prince of Prussia, now Crown Prince of Germany. It was elaborately hung with crimson silk velvet and massive bullion fringe, the old pews were swept away, the aisle enlarged, four rows of seats rose on either side, crowded with ladies in full court dress—in fact, every nook and corner was occupied with uniforms and gorgeous toilettes. The programme of one royal wedding differs but little from another, but the Queen's eldest daughter having been married at seventeen, in the lifetime of her father, there was no drawback to the brilliancy of the pageant. I remember what a bright winter morning it was, and how early the streets were filled to see all there was to be seen! The Queen with her procession, the bridegroom with his, and the bride with hers, all passed severally into the chapel, moments of breathless expectation preceding each arrival. Lord Palmerston, in the full ministerial dress, was a notable figure in the brilliant throng, where royal pages and functionaries of every degree, high and low, contributed to the gay vista costumes of more or less brightness. The old Duchess of Kent was a witness of the ceremony, and the King of the Belgians. The bride's father escorted her and gave her away, and twelve daughters of dukes, marquises, and earls, held her train of silvered moiré, the dress being covered with Honiton lace, worked with the shamrock, rose, and thistle, as was the veil, which was worn off, not over, the face. The myrtle, the German wedding emblem, mingled with the orange-blossom of her wreath. The bridesmaids were arrayed alike, in white tulle and trimmings, and wreaths of roses. But though the Archbishop of Canterbury, assisted by many bishops and high church dignitaries, performed the ceremony, and no item of state magnificence was wanting, and the witnesses were among the highest in the land, both English and German, that one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin was in no way wanting. The ceremony over, amid smiles and tears, the bride was duly kissed by bridegroom, mother, father, and mother and father-in-law, while the elders exchanged congratulations, and as the bride and bridegroom passed down the colonnade to their carriage, the flushed face of the Princess had a smile of quiet happiness upon it, which augured well for the future.

The Prince and Princess of Wales were married amid much pomp at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, the Queen witnessing the ceremony from the Royal Closet, in a widow's deep mourning. Our beautiful Princess wore a richly embroidered white silk, and a train trimmed with white and silver, her eight bridesmaids being all in snowy white. The Princess Louise was married here, also, in white satin and Honiton lace; and only some two years ago the bride of our Queen's second son was warmly welcomed with regal fêtes at Windsor. The festivities which had signalised the marriage in Russia occupied many days. Two ceremonies, one according to the rites of the Greek, and another of the English Church, were necessary, and the heavy silver embroidery which adorned her

satin dress, and the velvet train bordered with ermine which had to be worn so long a time, seemed to tire the young, girlish bride, who looked pale and ill ere she took her place at the banquet. The ceremony which Monsignor Bashanoff performed according to the Greek ritual, in the Winter Palace, was peculiarly interesting. In the course of it the bride and bridegroom held lighted candles, drank from the same cup, and walked three times round the altar hand in hand, and for the greater portion of the service Prince Arthur held a gold filigree crown over his brother's head, the bride's brother, Prince Alexis, relieving him when he was tired, and Prince Vladimir held another one over his sister's head.

Most of the fashionable weddings in London at the present day are solemnised at St. George's, Hanover Square; St. James's, Piccadilly; or St. Peter's and St. Paul's, Belgravia. The *modus operandi* is much the same in all cases. The bride arrives at the church with her father, is followed to the altar by eight to twelve bridesmaids dressed alike, her mother bringing up the rear of the procession. The bridegroom is accompanied by his best men, but groomsmen are ignored in polite society. Their existence originated, no doubt, in the so-called "bride-knights," who, wearing the bride's colours, their silken sleeves tied with rosemary, in ancient times conducted the bride to church. The addresses to the newly-married which, as at Miss Edith Wynne's recent wedding, and on other occasions of late, have followed the service, are a revival of the wedding sermons, which in Elizabeth's and subsequent reigns were an indispensable part of marriage.

A white satin dress trimmed with lace, a tulle veil, and a wreath of orange-blossom, form now the most fashionable attire for brides. Wedding-breakfasts each year lose some item of splendour, the subsequent speeches diminish in number, and in fashionable life the guests rarely sit, but stand to partake of the feast.

Now and then Westminster Abbey has been the scene of some of the most brilliant weddings. Only a year or two since, two daughters of a duke were married there on the same day, the Prince and Princess of Wales and other members of the Royal Family being present; and Christine Nilsson was also married here amid a brilliant *entourage*. The bridal procession makes its way down the nave, the organ pealing the while some of the finest of our sacred music. The ceremony is partly performed in the body of the church, and concluded in front of the altar and new reredos.

The marriage of the Marquis of Bute and the Hon. Gwendoline Howard was solemnised at the Oratory at Brompton, with equal splendour, and amid exquisite music. Monsignor Capel officiated, and at the conclusion of the service delivered a most memorable address on marriage duties, which was listened to with breathless attention by a large congregation who had followed the incidents of the service with deep interest.