

AT A GERMAN WEDDING.

BY WILHELM F. BRAND.

MARRIAGE in Germany, in its two-fold consideration, as an event of joy, and as one of the greatest seriousness, generally occupies two days. The evening before the wedding, the "Polterabend," is devoted to rejoicings, whilst the wedding-day itself is of a more solemn character. This division of the matrimonial business has the advantage of let-

It is to them that numbers of little damsels, dressed as flower-girls, shepherdesses, peasant maids, &c., address their little pieces of poetry, especially composed for the occasion. Often a barrel-organ is brought in, to the tunes of which some gentlemen in suitable attire sing of the couple's past history, and particularly of their cooing. To this purpose also is devoted the Extra-



THE "POLTERABEND."

ting the principal couple participate in the gaieties instituted for their sake.

It has sometimes this disadvantage, that after a night of general jollity the guests are not quite up to the mark the next day. To prevent any shortcomings in this respect, the Polterabend at grand weddings takes place two days before the wedding, a day of rest—or supposed rest—intervening between the two festivities.

To the Polterabend the greater number of friends are invited. That evening the bridal couple still belong to the unmarried, though it cannot be wondered at if people in that period of blissful intoxication generally put on a demure dignity and look as if they had been married longer than any couple in the room. Naturally they are the centre of all that is going on.

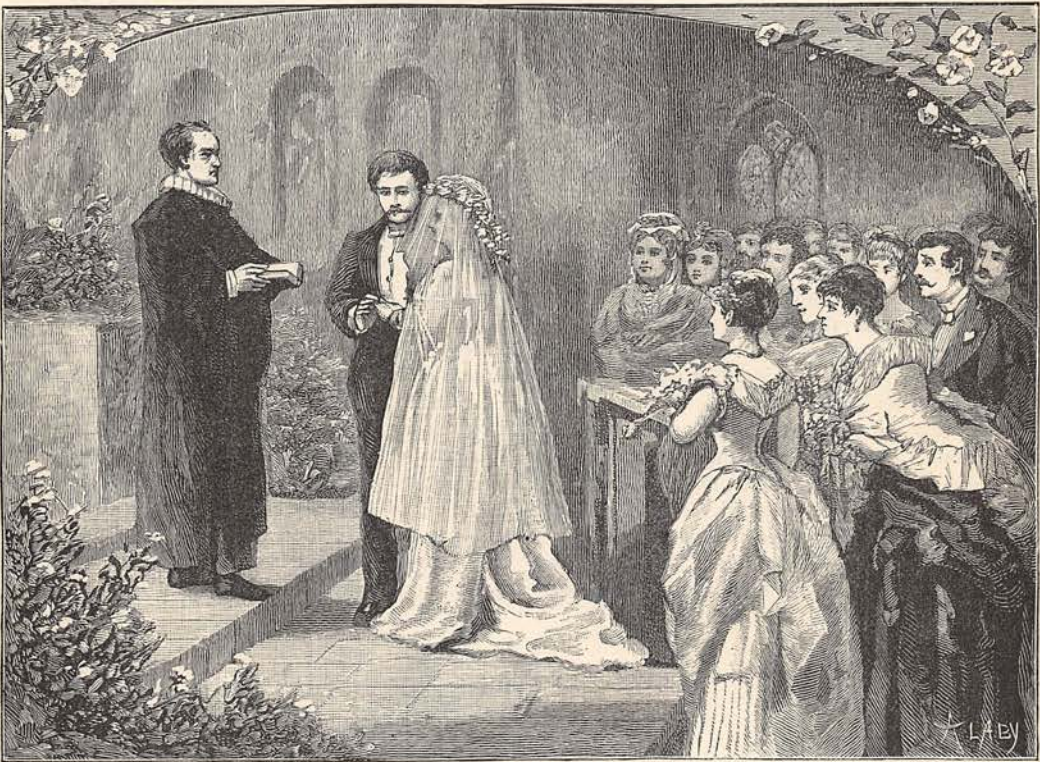
Blätt, a printed paper, something like a newspaper, in fact purporting to be the special edition of one, generally illustrated, in which the bridegroom especially is subjected to a good deal of chaff—if ever one may chaff a thin-skinned German. After these and other such-like "Polterabend Scherze," supper begins, also graced by the presence of the bridal couple.

The following day—if it be not the wedding-day itself—is a day of comparative quiet, on which those who have not the time for a three days' fêting may follow their usual occupation. This day is devoted to the "Kranzbinden," or making of the bridal wreath by the bride's female friends, a wreath which, however, is never worn, the proper one having been ordered at the Kunst-Gärtner's long ago. But that is studiously ignored, and does not interfere in the least with the

ceremony of making the other one. Though often the Polterabend (as well as the wedding festivities) takes place at an hotel, this cannot always be done, especially in the country. As, however, a three days' fêting and feasting would be rather a heavy tax on the nerves of the hosts, as well as on the culinary resources of the bridal home, the Kranzbinden invariably takes place at the house of the bride's best friend. Already at school girls who have become particularly intimate will often vow to each other that whoever marries first will have her Kranzbinden festivity given at the other's house, provided no local or other obstacles interfere.

prepared for them, not the least prepared being the young ladies themselves. Probably the merriment will begin again, and instead of being a day of rest, the Kranzbinden day sometimes is only a repetition of the Polterabend, only the bridal couple leave the young folks to-day at an early hour in dignified anticipation of their great morrow.

The wedding, as far as the really binding ceremony is concerned, takes place before noon in a very unostentatious manner, in the presence of a very few witnesses, at the office of the Registrar, or "Standes-Beamte." Marriage being considered a matter of an



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Only the bride's maiden friends are invited to the Kranzbinden, no man being admitted to the sacred ceremony. The bridal wreath in Germany is made, not of orange-blossoms, but of myrtle, the flower of love, sacred to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. The bride's friends having assembled in the afternoon, each of them binds a sprig or two to the wreath, adding at the same time silently some good wish for the wearer, or supposed wearer. Then the bridal couple are admitted, and with some formalities the wreath is placed on the bride's head. This ceremony being over, towards evening somehow or other the young men who were at the Polterabend find their way into the house where the Kranzbinden took place. Though uninvited they find everything

essentially civil character, its performance, some twelve or fourteen years ago, was, after the French fashion, handed over to the State authorities, who have previously had publicly to proclaim the intended marriage by advertising it in the principal places where the contracting parties may have lived during a few years previously. Thus if any one is residing in London, and about to be married in Germany, the "Standes-Amt" has to advertise in the *Times*, and many an Englishman may have been puzzled by the long, winding legal German appearing sometimes amongst the legal notices in this paper, and referring to an intended marriage. The object of all this is of course the same as in England, that of publishing the banns of marriage, these being also in Germany proclaimed

at church in those cases where a marriage in church follows the civil ceremony.

There is one other point in regard to which marriages in Germany are not such an easy matter as in England. Ladies may marry any one they like if they are of age. Not so men. They require their parents' permission until they are twenty-five. However, in case of refusal on their part, the sons may demand their reason, and place this before the authorities, who, if they do not see sufficient cause for the refusal, will declare it invalid, and the marriage will proceed. This formality may somewhat interfere with the freedom of men who might be supposed to know their own mind. But we daily see that they often do not in this matter; and this slight prohibitive power, which is exercised only in case of necessity, has saved many a young man—and woman, too—from life-long misery.

The church ceremony, though optional, and of no statutory importance, almost invariably follows the obligatory, and really legal one, before the Registrar. It takes place in the early part of the afternoon, mostly about three o'clock, thus giving the bride, who in the morning wore an ordinary walking-dress, sufficient time to put on her bridal apparel. This differs very little from those in vogue in England, except with regard to the flowers worn, whilst the rest of the bridal party looks very different from an English one. Far from wearing bonnets, the ladies in fact are in evening dress; and the gentlemen don their evening dress, which, however, it must be borne in mind, abroad is not generally in use for every little dinner party, much less on ordinary occasions at home, but are considered the garb for more festive occasions, greater parties, ceremonious assemblies, and even very formal visits, without regard to what time of the day any of them may take place.

Before the altar, not only the bride receives a wedding-ring from the bridegroom, but the latter is presented by the bride with this symbol of being chained in wedlock also; both wearing it, in the north of Germany on the right, in the south on the left hand. The guests on this occasion not being quite so numerous as on the Polterabend, the wedding party is more or less a great family gathering, with a number of the more intimate friends of the bridal couple intermingled. The wedding dinner takes place in the latter part of the afternoon, of course there being no lack of speechifying; but whilst these matters in England are so well—almost too well—regulated, so that one may almost foresee what this or that person is about to say, there prevails the greatest licence in this respect in Germany. We may carefully have prepared a subject, but just when on the point of making our glass resound—the usual sign of somebody wishing to make himself heard—somebody else may rise and give our very toast. This may happen a second and a third time, and ultimately perhaps the company may have to go without our toast altogether!

After a dinner often merrymaking goes cheerily on; but on the whole it is of a quieter character, and terminates earlier, than the festivities on the Polterabend, the bridal couple having slipped away as unobservedly as possible, without taking leave of anybody, except perhaps of the bride's mother.

It has to be observed, however, that in latter years, in the very best families, especially in large towns, this two or three days' fêting has sometimes been abolished in favour of having the whole festivity come off in one day, doing away with Polterabend as well as Kranzbinden. But this is a fashion by no means frequent yet, and, many hope, only a passing one.

THE BOSTON LAWYER.

BY AN AMERICAN.



TO speak of New England is usually to think of Boston, which represents to Massachusetts the centre of life and learning; in fact, as they call it, the "Hub." One is often reminded, while listening to a Bostonian, of the French saying, "Paris is France, and France is the world." Boston is certainly the most provincial, as New York is the most cosmopolitan, of American cities. By that I mean that the note of locality is most strongly marked in Bostonians, and whereas the New Yorker will adapt himself to any place and circumstances, the Bostonian thinks his home ways and circumstances are models for the imitation of others.

He sees no beauty in any city but his own, and wonders, nay, is even hurt, if travellers do not see a superiority in Boston over all other places which they

have visited. Central Park is beautiful. Yes; but, my friend, you should see the historic Boston Common. "Remember," he would say to you, "that bigness is not greatness." All of which may be perfectly true, and is only mentioned here to show that the state of feeling which inspires its utterance is essentially a Boston feeling, of which the Boston lawyer has more than his share.

Imagine him a tall, broad-shouldered, muscular figure, with high cheek-bones, bright keen eyes, and strongly marked features, which are not concealed by much whisker. He is pompous, dogmatic, and impatient of a weak argument, of puns, prolixity, or idle contradiction. He thinks his name gives prestige to a case, and crushes the young opposing counsel as often by his dignity as by his speech. At times he even thinks that he knows more law than the judge. The story is told of a famous Boston lawyer that one day,