

FRENCH MARRIAGE MARKETS

A story is going the rounds of the American press that the marriage market is being revived in certain parts of France, particularly in Poitou and Vendee. The war left France with many hundreds of thousands of odd women, who in the ordinary course of events could hardly be expected to become wives, their prospective husbands having been killed or maimed. Moreover, the burden of taxation which the French people have to shoulder has made the males more cautious in venturing into matrimony, for the idea that two can live as cheaply as one is not a French proverb. The marriage market idea is not designed to strike a balance between the sexes. A million eligible men cannot be summoned from their graves. The idea is to encourage every available man to take a wife, and this idea is said to be working out satisfactorily.

The marriage markets are becoming an established feature of the life of hundreds of villages and towns. Usually they are held on the regular weekly market day, but sometimes there are special markets with nothing on exhibition but the girls and their admirers. The idea was promoted, we suppose, partly for the purpose of attracting young men from a distance to the markets. It might be supposed that the young men in any particular neighborhood would have plenty of opportunity of meeting the young ladies in the same parish and forming their own opinions as to their value as wives. The marriage market gives the same opportunity to young men from other parishes. They have also the advantage of knowing that the girls who display themselves at the market are desirous of getting married and are not committed to some unknown rival. It must often happen that for many reasons a girl would not make such a strong appeal to the young men with whom she has grown up as to a stranger who sees her for the first time.

The girls are selected for the market by men who are supposed to be good judges of looks and who understand thoroughly the sort of wife a young Frenchman should have. These experts travel about the country—at whose instance is not explained—and make a list of all the marriageable girls in the neighborhood. These are classified according to age, and looks, and build, and their various qualifications are noted. These items are set down on a card, which is supplied to each girl, and she is invited to present herself at the next market, where a special place is reserved for the contestants. Each girl comes provided with a large red parasol, which advertises her quest, besides offering her protection against sun and rain. It also serves the purpose of a small tent when a prospective husband wishes to make an examination at close quarters, and even, as we are told, help himself to a sample embrace.

For a casual kiss the girl merely lowers her parasol to fend off the eyes of the curious, but when the investigator desires to refresh himself more copiously, she turns her back upon the spectators and holds the parasol in such a way that both are shut off from public view. This gesture with the parasol is usually a signal for applause, because it is supposed that the man and the girl are strongly attracted, and that a marriage is likely to result. At the close of the market there is a general jollification, and many of the girls walk off with their new friends to complete the plans for their marriage. It is usual, we are told, for a girl to receive at least one offer of marriage in the course of a single fair, and the more attractive, as a rule, receive several. When a girl attends several fairs without being appropriated, it is almost certain that she has unusually high standards, rather than that she is singularly barren of attractions.

Those who think that this rough-and-ready sort of courtship is not likely to lead to happy and permanent marriage ties are refuted by statistics collected in the districts where it is popular, which show that there are fewer divorces and fewer illegitimate children than elsewhere. It is also noted that the birth rates in these districts are greater than elsewhere, which is a matter of prime importance to the Government of France. On this account the Government is said to be watching the experiments with keen interest. It is also promoting beauty contests with the hope of increasing the marriage rate, although one would think that a girl pretty enough to win one of these contests, or even make a creditable showing in one of them, would not lack admirers in her own neighborhood. Still, as the philosopher remarked, the way of a man with a maid is past finding out, and ruses that might not seem likely to succeed do, as a matter of fact, succeed in a great number of cases.

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GOT HIS ANSWER

A bumptious young American farmer went to England to learn business, but where he went he pretended that it was far easier to teach the farmers than to learn anything from them. "I've got an idea," he said one day to a grizzled old Northumbrian agriculturist, "for a new kind of fertilizer which will be ten thousand times as effective as any that has ever been tried. Condensed fertilizer—that's what it is. Enough for an acre of ground would go in one of my waistcoat pockets." "I don't doubt it, young gentlemen," said the veteran of the soil. "What is more, you'll be able to put the crop into the other waistcoat pocket."

WOULD NOT BE WITHOUT BABY'S OWN TABLETS

Mrs. W. Beesley, Mille Roche, Ont. writes: "I have used Baby's Own Tablets for the past eight months and would not be without them. I used them for indigestion and teething and my baby is cutting his teeth without any trouble whatever. I can highly recommend the Tablets to other mothers." What Mrs. Beesley says thousands of other mothers say. The Tablets are a mild but thorough laxative which regulate the bowels and sweeten the stomach, thus driving out constipation and indigestion and making teething easy. They are sold by medicine dealers or by mail at 25 cents a box from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

THE HABIT OF READING

Mr. Sykes, Librarian of the Carnegie Library at Ottawa, advocates school libraries. The schools should be supplied with collections of their own and should be more closely linked with the public libraries. These are the people's universities, the only institution of the kind which are available to the great masses of the people. Only a small percentage of our boys and girls attend even the Collegiate Institutes, and a still smaller percentage have a university education. It is, therefore, of the highest importance that the habit of reading should be created in those who leave school in their teens.

The teaching of reading in the primary schools should go much farther than the mere deciphering of the printed page. It should mean guiding young people among books, showing them what to read and how to read, how to find their way among the classics and immortals. Besides this the habit of consulting encyclopedias and works of reference should be cultivated. Anyone who has conducted a department of information in a newspaper has had the experience of being asked questions which could be answered by looking in an encyclopedia, a year book, or one of the newspaper almanacs. Most of us have heard people wrangling and betting over points which could be settled in the same way. The librarians and their assistants are glad to assist in such researches.

In the Toronto Public Library there is a striking picture, or pair of pictures. One shows a line of people eager to grasp the hand of a celebrity and hear from his lips the golden message that he is pleased to meet them. The other shows the celebrities and immortals of the ages offering, not a formal greeting, but all the recorded results of their genius and toil. Men have been heard to express disappointment with an address delivered by someone whose books have made him famous. He has put his best thoughts into his books, which can be bought for the price of a night's entertainment or borrowed or read at leisure in a public library. Books are not valued as they should be, perhaps for the very reason that they are as open to all as the sky or the sea.—Globe.

HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED

The following which is clipped from the Genave Reapen, shows how railroads were regarded less than a hundred years ago. "Someone has dug up the records of the Lancaster, Ohio, school board back in 1828. In these records is an account of a proposed debate as to whether railroads were practical or not. Permission was asked to hold the debate in the school house and the minutes of the school board ran as follows: 'You are welcome to use the school room to debate all proper questions in, but such things as railroads and telegraphs are impossibilities, and rank infidelity. There is nothing in the Word of God about them. If God had designed that his intelligent creatures should travel at the frightful speed of 15 miles an hour by steam, He would have foretold it through His holy prophets. It is a device of Satan to lead immortal souls down to hell.'—Valdosta, Ga., Times.

SECOND EDITION OF THE QUEEN OF SHEBA

London, Nov. 10.—Mrs. Smith Wilkinson, hailed in Paris and on the Riviera as the world's greatest spender, transformed herself into the world's greatest spender tonight for the famous Victory Ball at Albert Hall.

Mrs. Wilkinson blazed her way into the Prince of Wales' box, a literal walking diamond mine. Attired as the "Queen of Sheba" she absolutely stopped the proceedings at London's most famous armistice celebration.

Members of Royal Family, peers and peeresses, and Europe's most famous fashionables stood aghast at the marvelous display of wealth on the gown of this stout Nottingham matron.

The gown was manufactured by Reville, the famous dress-maker, and was insured this afternoon for five million dollars. It contains more than 75,000 diamonds and pearls. She wore a corsage of fine diamonds over a skirt of silver lace embroidered in pearls.

Her shoes were of silver cloth with high Louis XV heels covered with tiny yellow diamonds.

The most startling feature of the bizarre costume was the headpiece, which was thirty-six inches high. It was a loose cap laced with diamonds with three ropes of wonderful pearls of graduated length draped from the ends of the cap at the ears and falling below the chin. From the top of the diamond cap stood three white peacock feathers studded with diamonds. These were guarded on either side by wonderful birds of paradise.

Mrs. Wilkinson also wore long diamond ear-rings and a magnificent chain of diamonds around her neck and dropping to the waist. Wonderful rings, each worth a king's ransom, with diamond, pearl and emerald bracelets and armlets, completed the astounding oriental costume, which, it is safe to assert, that the Queen of Sheba never saw the like in her palmy days.

"It is the world's most wonderful dress," declared Reville tonight. "The like of it was never seen before. In her presence the most magnificently gowned women were outshone like a queen's robes in a poor house."

Mrs. Wilkinson is staying at the Ritz for the season and wears a different gown every evening. She is planning to go to the United States soon, with her gold bathtub and other conveniences, as announced last summer.

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TIME TABLE

Trains leave Watford station as follows:

GOING WEST

Accommodation, 11.11 a.m. 8.44 a.m.

Chicago Express, 17.12.47 p.m.

Detroit Express, 8.3.48 p.m.

(a) Express, 5.9.11 p.m.

(c) Express, 15.10.10 p.m.

GOING EAST

Ontario Limited, 8.0.7.43 a.m.

Chicago Express, 6.11.16 a.m.

Accommodation, 11.0.2.28 p.m.

Accommodation, 12.5.38 p.m.

(a)—Stops to let off passengers from Toronto, Hamilton and east.

(c)—Stops to let off passengers at Kingston and east.

C. W. Vail, Agent, Watford.

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