

Some Phases of German Social Life.

By Mrs. J. F. McCurdy.

(Continued from 2nd page.)

The German woman, by the way, usually marries younger than her American sister. If she reaches the age of twenty and is not engaged, she begins to quake, and probably to scan the columns where "Marriage Requests" are wont to appear, with an eye to a possible emergency. The bride has usually six bridesmaids, and on the morning preceding the marriage day one or more of these come to assist in floral decorations, wreath making, arranging of presents and various other preparations for the great event. That evening quite a large company of friends assemble by invitation, simple refreshments are provided which the guests partake of in the leisurely and protracted way usual at social entertainments, so that during the entire time of their stay, two or three hours, they, or some at least, appear to be constantly eating and drinking. But the object of the evening is fun. It is known as "polterabend" which might be roughly translated, "Helter-skelter evening." Any among the guests who do or think they can, give an amusing recitation, sing a comic song, or, by acting in dumb show, contribute to the general entertainment, are expected and usually prompt to do so. An American lady who had accepted an invitation to attend one of these queer entertainments, without having understood its character, in describing it next day said, rather disgusted, "There was one of the gentlemen Dr. G. who went through the most absurd performance I thought I had ever seen. He called himself 'New Dr. G.' is a grave theologian, one of Germany's most learned men, a trifle too grave and unending however, for the situation he had put himself in, and hence its incongruity.

While this entertainment goes on in the house, the servants of the family in company with others from the neighborhood have a hilarious time about the grounds. They gather together old dices, etc., and break and strewn about, by way of adding to the general merriment.

The marriage day having come the bride and groom, with one or two members of their respective families, drive to the house of the magistrate whose duty it is to perform the civil marriage, which, with the ecclesiastical, is obligatory in Germany. As soon as this ceremony is over they return to the house of the bride's father, where "mid bridesmaids, brides and brothers and all," the ecclesiastical knot is tied. The rest of the festivities are similar to those with which Americans are familiar, including the liberal contribution of old shoes, from enthusiastic well wishers of the departing happy couple.

The habit, universal in Germany, of spending a great deal of time in the open air during the summer weather, is certainly admirable, being particularly pleasant to the family that has the use of a garden is sure to build one or more arbors in it, and there long afterwards are spent and meals are taken regularly by the family in fine weather. The German hostess entertains her lady friends there, particularly at four o'clock coffee parties, which are a great feature in social life in almost all circles. Gentlemen are occasionally invited to coffee by the head of the house, but the company is not often a mixed one. The guests sit from four until six or half past, chatting pleasantly, sipping their coffee, and eating cakes at intervals, filling up the times between with crocheting or other fancy work. Elaborate specimens of the confectioner's art in fancy dishes are sometimes served after coffee has been on for an hour or so. With the surroundings of beauty kept about and flower beds, rose trees, shrubbery or twelve feet high, laden with magnificent flowers, and the most ornate and polite of hostesses, whose attentions are sometimes almost oppressive, the foreign guest must indeed feel himself privileged in enjoying such informal and kindly hospitality.

But not only as families do the Germans enjoy out-door life. You walk through their parks and public gardens and you find them by the hundreds strolling along, whole families often together; or they are seated on the numerous benches, conveniently set in places of public resort, along the sides of the roads through the open country, and even in the woods, which are not the forest primeval, but have all been planted by hand, and through which roads have been carefully made gravelled or paved with small stones. This placing of seats (all having comfortable backs) is the work of a government whose paternal care for the public's comfort in this respect is surely to be admired.

Very often the destination of the promenaders is the garden concert. These in scores of places both in town and country, are given through the summer season almost daily, beginning at four o'clock in the afternoon, and between seven and eight in the evening. Wherever you find a restaurant of any note in a German village or city, you find also a garden, and this is invariably fitted up for the concert, with small tables placed neatly under shady trees at regular distances from each other. From three to eight or twelve chairs surround the tables and here the people seat themselves, choosing a table to suit the size of their party. At one side of the garden, a covered band stand, and in the best gardens, a hall for use in case of bad weather. You can attend one of these concerts for a very trifling sum. For instance, in Bonnora's famous garden, just outside the city of Leipzig, classical music is regularly rendered; sometimes by an orchestra which, during the winter, furnishes the instrumental music in the course of the Gewandhaus concerts, (these being accord to none, perhaps, in the world) or one of the military bands whose members are also skilled artists, furnishes the performance, their music being sometimes interspersed with singing from a philharmonic society. The regular charge for admission is twelve cents, and only when the usual concert makes way for imported artists of special note and fame, is the price of tickets raised. For this sum you buy your ticket, get a very full printed

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