

Marriage in the States

By

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The American attitude toward marriage has been consistent from the beginning of our history, and differs completely from the European. The main characteristic springs from the common opinion that marriage is chiefly the concern of the young people and should be left to their taste and discretion. The parents and relatives have little or nothing to do with it. They may advise and criticize and oppose, but the less the better. The formalities of European custom have been laid aside deliberately. There is no formal betrothal, no binding engagements, no legal ceremonial; and the marriage ceremony is simpler and easier than getting a job on a railroad. The religious features have all been laid aside. The romantic love idea of the popular novel has had its influence on the situation. The entire American world, with few exceptions of any importance, has surrendered to the new method. The Catholic body has become so infected with the general indifference as to show many signs of decay. It is difficult to prevent hasty and foolish marriages; difficult to persuade the young people to a public marriage; many of them prefer the swift civil ceremony in an office, without sanctification or ceremony; the banns have become odious instead of honorable; the general effort is to sneak into wedlock as if nothing of moment had taken place. It is an artificial condition for the young peo-