

and form a procession that advances to offer congratulations. The ushers proffer their escort to present any strangers to the bridal couple, who also introduce their friends to one another. The bride's parents stand near the entrance and all should speak to them, who are the hosts. The parents of the bridegroom, who are the guests of honor, or associate hosts, may receive in another part of the room, or better, the bride's mother with the bridegroom's father and the bride's father with the mother of the bridegroom stand together and present their friends to each other.

A wedding reception is conducted like any other. There is usually music from a small stringed orchestra, a mandolin quartette, or a single performer—screened from view by plants and palms.

At an afternoon wedding, the refreshments are served from a prettily decorated table in the dining room. After a noon wedding, the "breakfast" is sometimes served "en buffet," but it is usually a friendly little feast where the few guests are served in courses at a single table. Or a choice but simple menu is served to a numerous company at small tables, gay with flowers and dainties. In nearly all cases bride and bridegroom sit together at a table apart prepared for them and the bridal party.

Dame Fashion no longer advocates evening weddings, but some flout her dicta and the occasions are none the less enjoyable. They are conducted in the manner of those taking place in the afternoon.

In the spring and summer, if the bride's home is in the country, set in the midst of pretty lawns, the reception may take the attractive form of a garden party. This is often done at house weddings.

There are many who feel that a girl's home is the most fitting place for her marriage—its shelter about her until she steps forth to take her new place in the world.

In preparation for the event, the drawing-room is made attractive with flowers and plants, simply or with profusion, according to the taste or means of the hosts. Often a flowery bower is arranged at the place in the room set apart for the ceremony, a bow window is made to resemble a miniature chancel, or the place is marked by palms and flowers in greater profusion. The bride's mother usually welcomes the guests at the drawing-room entrance, or two ushers or girl friends show them all necessary attention. The bride's father is not in evidence until he enters the room with his daughter.

Sometimes, only near relatives and intimate friends are asked to witness the ceremony, and invitations issued for a general reception half an hour later. Occasionally at a noon wedding, only the beloved few are bidden and a "sit down" breakfast is served, unhampered by the presence of strangers. The wider circle of friends is welcomed at two or half after two o'clock. They offer congratulations, and light refreshments are served.

When the happy day has come the house wears a festive air. A room is set apart for the clergyman, the bridegroom, best man, and ushers, and one for the bridesmaids. As the appointed hour strikes, the clergyman enters the drawing-room through the door nearest the place reserved for the ceremony, and faces the assembled guests. The bridegroom follows, attended by his best man, and stands at the clergyman's left, awaiting the bride.

Two ushers mark off an aisle with broad white ribbons, bunches of flowers concealing weights at their ends to facilitate their being held in place.

The ushers then return to meet the bridal party, and precede the bridesmaids, entering the room at the end farthest from the place of the ceremony. At their appearance, the opening notes of a wedding march from the concealed orchestra are heard, or

the music is furnished by a piano alone or with violin accompaniment. The maid of honor follows the bridesmaids, and the bride comes last, taking her father's arm.

The attendants step to right and left, permitting the bride to pass between them, the bridegroom advances to meet her, and they stand together while the rest group themselves, as before described in the church ceremonial. The solemn rite then begins. At its conclusion, the clergyman offers his felicitations to the bride and bridegroom and yields his place to them, who turn to be greeted first by their parents, families, and relatives, and then by all others present. The bridesmaids having ranged themselves at the side of the bride, or at either side of the couple, the best man and ushers make themselves useful by presenting the guests to them. All are cordially greeted, with extended hand and hearty thanks for the kind wishes expressed. If the bride shows marked attention to any, it were well bestowed upon the relatives and friends of her husband, and a cordial manner on his part predisposes the friends of the bride in his favor.

The guests, after offering congratulations, seek their friends and acquaintances and pass on to the dining room as at any ordinary reception. After a half hour or so the bridesmaids are free to leave their places, though the bridal pair remain half an hour or longer, chatting with the friends who seek them, and then go arm in arm to the dining room where they are, of course, the center of much friendly attention.

The general company usually takes leave before the bride and bridegroom go to the dining room, or immediately afterwards—only the more intimate friends remaining. To each departing guest a servant hands a box of wedding cake from a pile on a hall table, or the guests help themselves.

In the dining room, meantime, the best man proposes the health of the bridal pair, and all rise to pledge them to long life and happiness. Bride and bridegroom then withdraw to prepare for their journey. At a breakfast, the bride and bridegroom are the first to enter the dining room, and are followed by the maid of honor with the best man, and the bridesmaids with the ushers. The bride's father takes in the bridegroom's mother. The bride's mother requests the escort of the officiating clergyman or the father of the bridegroom. Bride and bridegroom sit side by side at the table reserved for the bridal party, or at one to which their immediate families and the clergyman are also made welcome.

When the bridegroom is dressed for the journey, he awaits the bride at the foot of the staircase, and the bridesmaids and all the company through the hallway. Each friendly enemy has a handful of rice or of loose flowers. The bride's appearance is greeted with enthusiasm. She holds aloft her bridal bouquet and, with the merry injunction, "Catch, who can!" throws it among the bridesmaids. The fortunate maiden to seize it is supposed to be the next bride.

The bride takes leave of her family and friends, reserving the final embraces for the nearest and dearest, and they make a hurried exit, amid showers of rice.

If they are subjects of the friendly persecution of finding their carriage beribboned and bedecked so as to advertise their new condition to the passers-by, another carriage may await them around the corner into which they quickly enter and pursue their way unhindered.

The best man alone is privileged to meet them at the station. He will have attended to sending their baggage in advance of their departure from the house, and has ready the checks, tickets, and perhaps some little gift of fruit or bonbons.

His is the last voice to bid them "Godspeed!"



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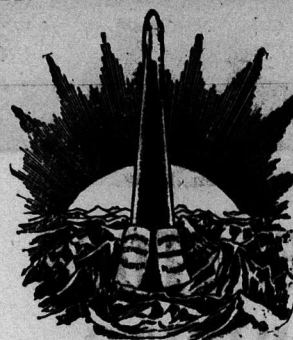
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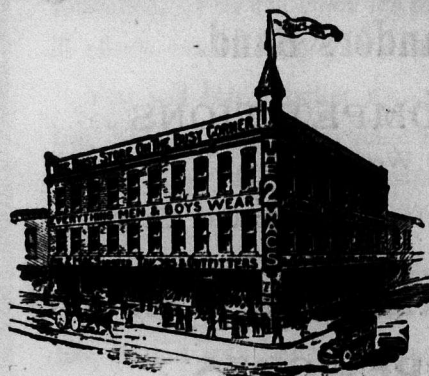
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