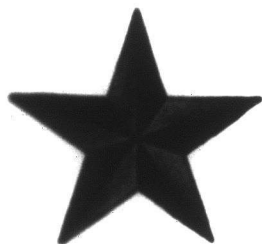


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## How English Workmen Accept Marriage.

By IAN MACLAREN.

As it seemed my happy fortune to be much engaged in marrying, especially at the holiday season of the working people, the registrar of the district felt it was his duty to give me a word in season. Recognizing me as a general practitioner with an increasing circle, he warned me of a certain danger into which I might fall together with my patients, and the consequences of which were serious. He informed me that among a certain class of working people bigamy was by no means uncommon, and that sometimes both men and women, but especially the men, put a broad and generous interpretation on the marriage contract, and he even hinted that within a time little exceeding a year the same man would get married twice. It was suggested that a minister had better keep a watchful eye, and in the event of a bridegroom appearing twice before him within a short period inquire into the circumstances. And the registrar reinforced my conscience by reminding me that the penalty for a minister lending himself to the violation of law was transportation or something equivalent to that ancient punishment. Greatly quickened, partly by my zeal for morality, partly by reasonable

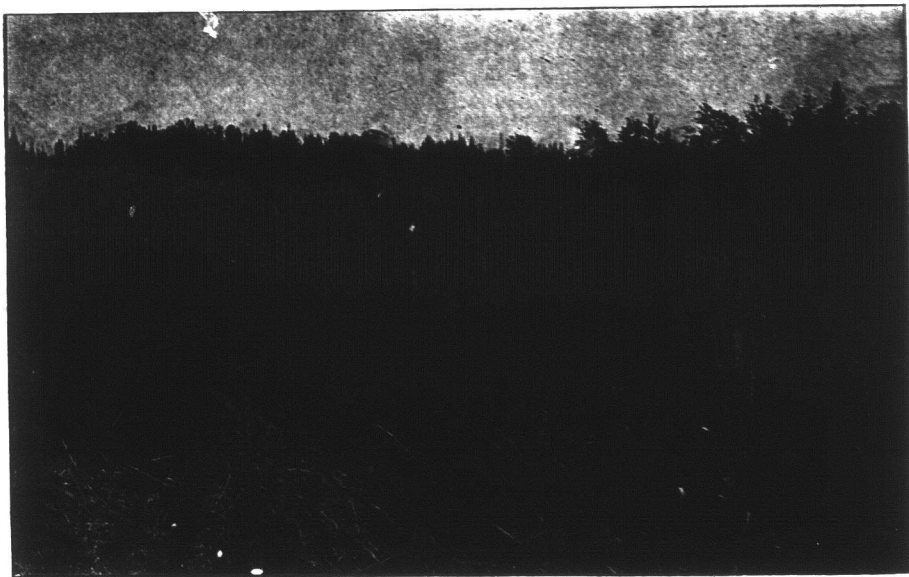
air of good humor, his general suggestion of gay recklessness corresponded with some photograph of the past that I was carrying in my memory. Could it be that this was one of those Don Juans in humble life against whom I had been warned?

"James McKittrick," I said slowly, "do you know," and I leaned back in my chair and looked steadily at him, "that I have a notion that we have met before? More than that, McKittrick, unless I am much mistaken, you were in this room not more than a year ago—in this room, and with a marriage party."

"It's a fact," he blurted out, and then a roguish expression came over his face. His figure filled again, and he thrust forward his head, and was himself once more. "In this room, as ye said," repeating my words with humorous intonation, "but as sure as death, the last time I was here, just eleven months ago, I was the best man."

"Quite so, McKittrick," and I covered my retreat with what dignity I could. "I was certain we had met before. Yours is not a face one can forget."

It was evident that the best thing to do was to hurry on with the ser-



A field of wheat on C. S. Akey's farm, north-west of Lacombe, Alta.

fear of consequences, I determined to watch with the eye of a detective every couple that came into my room bent on marriage, and to deal firmly with any miscreant I should discover.

For some time no suspicious character appeared, and then, carried away by honest zeal, I narrowly escaped one of the most dangerous encounters of my life.

They came into the room with emphasis—four people, as usual, the two lovers and the two witnesses, and the manner of the men and their strength suggested workers in iron. After a salutation, guarded on my part, for that registrar had saturated my mind with suspicion, and aggressive on their part, which was a shield wherewith to protect an unusual situation, they sat down in a row near the door, while I sat down at the table, with the light behind me and falling on their faces. Which is the proper arrangement in a study where you have to size people up and come to conclusions suddenly.

"Those are your papers? Well, let me see that they are all right. You are James McKittrick?"

The bridegroom indicated that he was, with some spirit and with the air of one who was entering a comedy. While already it appeared that he was regarded as a facetious, as well as a determined, person by the group.

For some time I had been haunted with the idea that I had seen the bridegroom before, for his face was one you did not forget readily, and with every minute this idea was deepening into conviction. His broad chest, his strong legs and arms, his bold looks, his forward manner, his

vice, and I directed the four to stand up and take their places, a movement which Mr. McKittrick, who was now in great spirit, did his best to turn into a comedy, desiring to stand with the bride on one hand and the bride-maid on the other, and declaring his willingness to marry them both, which he said was the habit of Mohammedans. It was with great difficulty that I could get the company reduced to a fitting state of mind, and even after they were in their places, Mr. McKittrick was offering genial invitations to the bridesmaid to seize the opportunity, which caused both ladies much amusement.

When it came to the vows, Mr. McKittrick acquitted himself with dignity, affirming everything with a voice that might have been heard in the street, and adding the gratuitous promise that he would keep his bride in order. Then, having done his own duty, he felt himself at liberty to assist me in mine when I put the question to Euphemia.

"Obey, Phemie, ye hear that, and mind ye keep it. It's a wiselike promise," and he demanded to know whether it had been used in the garden of Eden, and without waiting for an answer, which he was not likely to get, he explained to his friend that if the woman had minded that word "obey" they might have been in the garden of Eden yet.

Which showed that Mr. McKittrick had some knowledge of his bible, and also was a gentleman of considerable common sense, though too much carried away by light moods.

During the signing of the papers the bridegroom wandered around the room examining the books