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Here Comes the Bride

Dorothy Anderson

"Here comes the bride
All dressed in white."

plays the orchestra from a sheltered corner of the palatial garden, while June's bride, blushing and sweet as a June rose itself, slowly advances along the rose-strewn path. The bridesmaids, garbed in filmy, pastel creations precede her to the arbor of nature's design.

The bride is charming in a shell white gown of satin, lace and pearls. Why wear white, you ask? This is probably the survival of the old Japanese custom that a bride should dress in white, which is indicative of the sorrow she experiences when she is about to leave her parental home forever. The veil which the observing Mrs. Butt remarked to her husband must be worth a fortune, formerly typified exclusive possession by one man.

Hidden under her bouquet, each bridesmaid wears a jeweled bracelet presented by the bridegroom. Today we think of the bridegroom's presentation of a gift to the bridesmaids as a delightful custom. However this may be a survival of the old marriage by capture, when the girl friends of the bride would not allow her to be approached by the bridegroom unless he had given them presents, or in reality bribed them.

But we must not, in our discussion of the bridal party, forget the bridegroom. With the best man at his side, he stands at love's altar eagerly awaiting the approach of his chosen. The best man little realizes that if he had lived in ancient Bulgaria, he would, instead of standing calmly at the altar, have started upon the warpath to assist the bridegroom in seizing and capturing a woman.

In ancient times when a young man brought home, together with his friends, the most attractive woman he could find, he was duly congratulated. He had won a prize.

And now the service begins. The bishop solemnly intones; the orchestra softly accompanies; the birds and the breezes subside their joyous songs; society stills her comments and criticisms. Soon the father of the bride, somewhat eagerly, somewhat reluctantly, gives his daughter away. This is a practice of many countries.

Arabian fathers sometimes present their daughters with a sword, signifying freedom. For one blessed moment she belongs to no man—then she presents it to her husband and henceforth is in his power.

After the bride's faint "I do" and the deeper, earnest one of the bridegroom, a dainty band of gold is slid on the left third finger. This ring is a relic of the fetter by which the prehistoric bride was bound. However, F. C. Edes in discussing the contract forms in the marriage service, says that apart from the mysticism and beautiful symbolism which endears the wedding ring to the hearts of nearly all Christians, the chief significance of the ring and coins given to the woman is really that of bestowing upon her a free dowry which remains her property.

And now the nuptial knot is tied. The ancient expression, "to tie the nuptial knot," takes its origin from the Babylonians. The priest, who conducted the wedding, took a thread from the garment of the bride and of the groom and tied them together, presenting them to the bride as a symbol of the binding nature of the union between her and her husband.

Then come congratulations followed shortly by a wedding dinner. "If you will be kind enough to pass this way, sir," says the butler who is the flower and pattern of all butlers. Of course there is no small amount of gaiety and feasting. The wedding cake is a climax of artistic triumph. The dream cake is daintily cut and boxed, a souvenir of the wedding to be dreamed upon.

Upstairs there are long tables, catalogued like a museum, on which are placed gifts—and more gifts. Since nothing so purely expresses taste as a wedding present, you will see the best of everything while for your own embossed teapot, you can always remark 'it is ugly, but so useful.' So on the table there are gold pier glasses, heirlooms from grand relations, oriental rugs, Italian chairs an solid, respectable things from the middle generation.

If you care to dance, there is an orchestra. The bridesmaids are already there, dancing with the young male guests, while from their position on the walls, peering down thru focused eyeglasses, members of the past generations wonder what the youth of today is coming to.

In Cardeganshire, Wales, the bride is snatched by her relatives at the church and the bridegroom's party pursues on horseback. At last she is tossed back and whoever receives her will be wed within a year. This is similar to the American bride's throwing of her bouquet.

Whereupon the newly-married couple start on a honeymoon. This is a symbol of the interval elapsing before the victor brought his bride from hiding and sought peace with her wrathful relatives.

The old shoes hurled after them are tokens of good-will and good-luck. Many ancient people believed that the human spirits often remained for a time in their shoes, so the shoes of loved ones and happy friends were thrown.

And so they start out, actually engaged in living, and they'll become just, one more young couple with just enough breadth to thank heaven that that's over.

Alice Freeman Palmer's three rules for happiness were:
1. Commit something good to memory every day.
2. Look for something beautiful every day.
3. Do something for someone every day.

Life is not a comedy nor a tragedy but a wonderful opportunity. Use it.