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## Marrying in America



Very few persons have any conception of how many different forms of marriage ceremony are in use in America or what widely divergent legal requirements hedge about Cupid's contracts in the various states of the Union. More marriages are solemnized in the republic than in any other country inhabited by English-speaking people, and yet Uncle Sam is woefully behind some of the other powers, both with regard to the restrictions thrown around the most important ceremony of life and the precautions taken to properly record each sealing of the bands of wedlock.

As a result of the liberal governmental policy there are now in use in the United States fully three dozen different forms of the marriage ceremony. However, there is one grave flaw in Miss Columbia's marriage system in the total inadequacy of the marriage records. This lack has urged most forcefully the need of uniform marriage laws, to secure which Congress has recently taken the initial step. Strange

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as it may appear, very few of the states of the Union have any registration system by which marriages are recorded. Licenses are granted on various bases and under various conditions, and as a result it is found that in some states the number of licenses issued greatly exceeds the number of marriages celebrated, whereas in other states the records would indicate that the number of marriages celebrated had greatly exceeded the number of licenses issued. Indeed, in some states, such as Maryland, these opposite conditions will be found to prevail in different counties of the same commonwealth. Two of the states—Pennsylvania and Georgia—seek to act as aids to Cupid and formally encourage marriage. According to the laws of the Keystone State, "all marriages not forbidden by the law of God shall be encouraged." Thirteen of the states most of them in the West, have done their best to give aid to the love that laughs at locksmiths by providing for the validity of marriages contracted beyond their borders, provided the runaway marriage has been performed in accordance with the laws of the state or county in which it takes place.

In many sections of the country the law fixes the ages at which young people may enter into the blissful state, and here again we find a wide range. In Idaho, Dakota and North Carolina the loveborn youth may marry at the age of 18 without the consent of his parents, but in every other state in the Union he must wait until he has passed his twenty-fifth birthday anniversary. On this point, as on many another in matrimonial matters, the girls have the best of it. A Dakota girl who has reached the age of 15 may marry without her parents' consent, and young ladies in Idaho and Maryland have only to wait the magic age of 16. In other states the age of freedom for members of the fair sex ranges from 18 to 21 years, but in most instances is fixed at the former.

Of course the who's aspect of affairs is changed if the parents stand ready to give their blessing. In Kentucky, Louisiana, Utah, Virginia and West Virginia boys of 14 and girls of 12 may marry if they have the verbal or written consent of their parents. In New Hampshire girls of thirteen may assume wifely duties if they but have the sanction of their parents, and in a large number of states girls of 14 and 15 are accounted fitted to become mistresses of homes if they choose. Most of the states have laws prohibiting the marriage of persons nearer of kin than second cousins, and in many instances the restriction holds good even though the relationship is founded on marriage.

Yet other evidence of how marriage is made easy in the United States is found in the fact that any minister, priest or preacher of the gospel may solemnize marriages, and in many of the states judges for one or more classes of courts may officiate. In all save half a dozen states, too, justices of the peace have the privilege of officiating at such a function. In some places the person performing a marriage ceremony is required to have personal knowledge of the identity, names and

residence of the parties, and this stipulation has, perhaps, been responsible for more muddles than any other requirement of the oddly assorted American marriage laws.

In most of the states of the Union two witnesses are required to be present at the solemnization of a marriage, but in some states a single witness is sufficient. There is still in force in Pennsylvania an old law which prescribes that 12 witnesses shall be present, but this stipulation is seldom, if ever, enforced. Perhaps the strangest of all marriage laws however, is that in force in Tennessee, and which shall not be affected by the omission of the baptismal name of either party in the license, and the use of a nickname instead, provided the parties can be identified. This proviso is essential, owing to the conditions prevailing in the mountain districts of Tennessee, where nicknames are in almost universal use among the young people.



Weary—As I live, Mike, do theatrical season is on! Dere goes our favorite Hamlet again.

There are a dozen states and territories where no provision has been made for the joining of persons in wedlock by the Quaker ceremony or the rites of other religious societies having peculiar modes of celebrating marriage. Members of such sects, if residents of these states, must therefore be married by a regular minister or a civil officer. On the other hand, the laws in New York, Dakota and some other states are so liberal that even marriages contracted by Indians according to Indian customs are entirely valid. No reference would be complete without mention of marriages among the Mormons. The Mormon Church recognizes two kinds of marriages, temporal and spiritual. Under the former the parties are united for this world only, while under the latter the union is eternal.

In our up-to-date nation the business of marrying is now taking place with the other specialized activities of this strenuous age. In many of the larger cities there are now clergymen who are not for-

mally connected with any church, but devote all their time to marrying and christening. One such marrying parson in New York city has united more than 20,000 couples. Another specialty in marrying is that of the ministers who are to be found at the country's most famous Gretna Greens for eloping couples, and who often indulge in spirited rivalry to secure the privilege of uniting runaway couples.

## THE STORY OF A SUCCESSFUL MAN

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**German Pass.**  
The Germans are given to punning after a ponderous sort, and their language is well adapted to it. The eastern war gives them plenty of opportunities. At Berlin the newest name for the commander of the Russian armies in Manchuria is General "Kuroki-pakten," meaning thereby that he has been "collared" (gepackt) by Kuroki.

At the time of the Dreyfus "affaire," too, the Berlin wits asked, "Wie tief ist Frankreich gesunken?" ("How far has France sunk?") "Dreyfus," was the answer—"three feet."



HIS IDEA.  
Mr. Sub—I wonder what I can do to make baby stop sucking his thumb! Better Lott (a bookmaker)—Muzzle him.



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