

# WHY THIS DEARTH OF BRIDES?

## Remarkable Falling Off in the Number of Marriage Licenses the Country Over

EXCEPT for a handful of localities, chiefly in the South, marriages in the large cities everywhere this summer have fallen off in numbers to such an extent that where, normally, the marriage month of June, for instance, ought to show at least some increase this year over last, recency to the altar has ranged from 5 per cent. in Minneapolis to 33 per cent. in New York city.

By the time summer flirtations were scheduled to begin it looked as though the real, reliable brand of love, as registered in the census returns, was not available in quantities sufficient for fall delivery, much less for the elopements the country ought to be reading about.

Reports from marriage license clerks show a similarity not often in evidence. "Yes," the chorus goes up from those officials, "the marriage month of June made a markedly less demand for orange blossoms."

Why this dearth of summer brides? We do not know, but venture the shrewd guess that a new line might be incorporated into the "Waiting at the Church" song—"I cannot get away to marry you today; my salary won't let me."



### HOW JUNE'S DEMAND FOR MARRIAGE LICENSES TOOK A DROP.

City	1907	1908
New York	6,754	4,503
Boston	1,876	1,427
Philadelphia	1,876	1,427
Chicago	2,238	2,063
Indianapolis	661	520
St. Louis	1,080	844
Baltimore	624	524
Buffalo	637	481
Minneapolis	482	432
Louisville	427	373
Washington	474	469

Reports under new license law probably not all in yet. All lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform; vowing more than the perfection of ten and discharging less than the tenth part of one—Shakespeare.

THE beach, dotted with bathers, looked particularly lonely under the shelter of the pier, where a stark-naked little stunner against all the rules and regulations dabbled pink toes in a pool forgotten by the sea, and cried as though he had lost everything in the world.

"Why, of all things!" exclaimed one of three entrancing girls, in the sweetly soft drawl that fills the South with the caress of romance, "if it isn't Cupid, crying!"

"Yessum," rejoined Cupid, with a blinking gulp at sight of their loveliness.

"What are you crying about, Cupid, dear?" asked another of them. "Tell us, honey, do I'm from Washington; and Lou, here, is from Atlanta—and Adele's from New Orleans. We all love you."

"Me to get busy!" shouted Cupid, his tear-brimmed eyes flashing all his habitual, mischievous impudence, while he ran for his bow and quiver beside the pier. "You're the only ones, outside of Kansas City and Milwaukee, that seem to care whether I'm still on the earth or simply a classic has-been."

The trio tried to flee, but their feminine curiosity intruded them, despite the danger.

"Cupid, boy, what is the matter?" called Adele, her dark Creole eyes following his rosy form.

"Why, nobody's getting married, all over the whole United States, except you peaches in the South and some I recently captured out West. But"—and he adjusted the fateful shaft—"I'll get you, anyway."

With that, the little wharf let fly.

It was at the beginning of July that Cupid became downhearted, disgusted and so miserable that he lost even the spunk to attend to his usual rushing business of vacuola engagements.

Of course, like any other boy of his imaginative type, he did exaggerate a little. But in the main, and by the light of those statistics which are as disconcerting to him as they are appalling to humanity—he told the truth.

The month of June, ordinarily the month that crowns with the joy of wedding, betrothals which have been in warm storage all winter, showed such a slump all over the country—except in some few spots where Love found peculiarly happy hunting—that marriage license clerks began to worry whether their jobs would hold over until fall.

### NEW YORK'S POOR SHOWING

For all the backslidings of humanity, Cupid's clerks were as loyal to him as any servants he has had since poor, faithful Psyche followed him to the very throne of Venus. It is almost pitiful to listen to the evasions, condonements and excuses they manage to find for the poorness of his aim this year, and for the failure of his bars to rankle the normal number into marriage and heartache.

Take the most conspicuous among them, loyal Dr. William H. Guilfoyle, registrar of records for New York city. He writes, in response to inquiries:

"The number of marriages reported in June, 1908, was 4,503; in June, 1907, 6,754, and in June, 1906, 5,902. As the new marriage license law went into effect upon the first of January, 1908, comparative figures as to licenses are not obtainable for other years.

"In June, 1908, the number of marriages reported to this department presents a falling off due to two causes. One, the severe financial twist of last November; secondly, there was the putting into effect of the new marriage license law of New York, so that persons who perform the ceremony are compelled to report not only to the marriage license clerk, but also to the Department of Health.

"There have been some violations of the law compelling the filing of reports with the Department of Health. The matter will probably be straightened out by the fall, so that the decrease of marriages reported will not be so extensive as shown in the figures I have quoted.

"Up to June 30, 1908, 15,500 marriage licenses were issued in the county of New York. This department has received reports of 12,976 marriages for the first six months of 1908. During the first six months of 1907, the number of marriages reported to this department was 18,108, a falling off of almost 3,000 certificates; so that, in round numbers, there were 2,500 fewer marriages solemnized during the first six months of this year than there were during the same period in 1907.

In Boston the registrar will submit the following: Marriage licenses issued during June, 1904, 243; during June, 1905, 176; during June, 1906, 166; during

June, 1907, 1022; during June, 1908, 943. Total number of licenses issued from January 1, 1907, to June 30, 1907, inclusive, 4175; total number from January 1, 1908, to June 30, inclusive, 3709, a decrease of 466.

Philadelphia also experienced the slump. "Hard times," says Chief Goebel, of the marriage license bureau, "seems to have put June wedding bells on the dumb. June last year started 1826 couples enjoying heaven and their honeymoons. June this year furnished bliss for only 1427. And"—mournfully—"we'd been counting 80 on June."

"April dropped \$50 behind the record, and flowery May quit 400 to the bad. They're afraid to get married until business has picked up and the money saved. Sirloin steak at 25 and 80 cents lets love down to bread and cheese and kisses."

### 240 FEWER IN CHICAGO

Chicago's county clerk observes, more in sorrow than resentment:

"Since this office was established the number of licenses issued during the month of June has steadily increased from year to year until 1908, when 240 fewer were issued than in 1907. We attribute the change to unsettled business conditions and lack of employment generally."

The figures make this statement clear: June, 1908, 3055 weddings; June, 1907, 3298; June, 1906, 3102; June, 1905, 2907.

It is pretty nearly the same celibate story everywhere. "Too many men out of work," remarked Jacob Feik, the license clerk of good, old, warm-hearted Cincinnati. "We had 661 marriages in June of last year and only 530 during June of this."

In St. Louis, where they selected a recorder of deeds to register the marriages, they were careful to get one named Joy; and it is the special privilege of St. Louis bridegrooms to call on him and rub in grateful jokes on his name that belong in London's Funch. The very deputies of Joy, from the chief down, are still trying to believe Cupid is only fool-

ing, for they swear they can't perceive anything very disarming in the discrepancy of 12 1/2 per cent. apparent between the 948 marriages of last June and the 1080 of the June of 1907.

"I cannot attribute the slight falling off," Joy's chief deputy in St. Louis hastens to observe, "to anything in particular except financial stringency or 'hard times'; but I do not like to believe this, because June, 1908, exceeded June, 1907, by far as to real estate transfers by recorded deeds."

Adam Deupert, the clerk of Common Pleas in

Baltimore, Md., had the same kind of a hunch, only better. Baltimore—it's hard to believe, but figures don't lie, outside of government reports—Baltimore hit the toboggan nearly as hard as St. Louis, falling from 708 licenses in June last year to only 624 for this year. It took true Southern civility to explain it on the score of shyness all around, but Deupert did it:

"It is pretty hot for a fellow to dress himself up in a boiled shirt and high collar to face critical ones who are always on hand at the ceremony. Perhaps

with the approach of so early and hot a summer the boys balked and decided to wait for another time, especially as some of the girls are afraid of being called leap-year brides. Of course, you can't keep them all away, no matter whether it is hot or cool, and I know a few who were not afraid of even the financial stringency."

In 1906, the Buffalo record was 417 for June; in 1907, it was 457; but this year it was down to 411. City Clerk Balliett has it all figured out, so that nobody's to blame and everybody's happy.

"Canadians who formerly came to Buffalo because we had no license system no longer come over. Many of our people go to Canada to avoid the publicity of licenses under the new law. Some go to Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvanians do not come here as they did formerly. Then the financial depression probably has something to do with it; and, further, we find that while couples obtaining licenses at Niagara Falls and some other places are married here, the record is made in the city or town where they obtain the license. But the new law is working well, and we think it is a good thing."

In Minneapolis the merry marriage month of June drops from 462 to 436, down in fond old Louisville it drops from 329 to 337, and the officials of neither city will risk trying to understand it.

But in Kansas City, with great sums of hard cash in the bank vaults throughout Missouri, the June weddings have gone up from 402 to 435. In Milwaukee, where the Wisconsin grain money kept the population busy getting along at the root of the country last winter, the increase was from 525 to 539, a gain of 17 for this June. And in Washington, where the government keeps most everybody working at good wages year in and year out, this June scored 409 against 474 for 1907's June, a fair average showing.

Farther south one goes, the more desperately determined Cupid seems to have been upon maintaining his record. In Atlanta, there were only two fewer in 1908 than in 1907. And as for New Orleans, for all the hard times and business depression and the rest, there were 282 brides this June, eighteen more than June saw last year.

Even in Washington, where so many persons are happily entrenched behind Uncle Sam's payroll, where it is "sure money" in good times or poor, there was a falling off in the number of weddings. A small decrease, to be sure—only five—yet a decrease none the less.

In June, 1907, there were demands for 474 marriage licenses, but only 469 were called for last June. Clerk John H. Young thinks Cupid has been as diligent as usual in that vicinity. Perhaps he has, but—

## Curious Facts

IT is not a hundred years ago since stays for women were composed not of whalebone or hardened leather, but of bars of iron and steel from 3 inches to 4 inches broad and 18 inches long. Again, during the reign of George III the top of the steel stay busk had a long stoking needle attached to it to prevent girls from spoiling their shape by stooping too much over their work. In the days of Catherine de Medici 12 inches was the fashionable size for the waist, and to achieve this an over-corset of very thin steel plate was worn. It was made in two pieces opened longitudinally by hinges, and was secured when closed by a sort of hump and pin, much like an ordinary box fastening. The best corsets today are made on a foundation of Greenland whalebone, which has steadily risen in price during the last twenty-five years from \$350 to \$15,000 a ton. Cheap whalebone can be bought for \$10 and \$20 a ton, but it soon dries and becomes brittle, thus spoiling the corset as well as the figure.

To keep a racehorse in even moderate condition in England, with proper attendants, costs \$1575 a year.

Signor Koeltlecker, an Italian zoologist, states that by means of a microphone his hypothesis that fish have a language of their own has been fully confirmed. He has heard them carry on a sort of murmuring conversation, which he does not, however, claim to have understood.

Many old houses in Holland have a special door which is never opened save on two occasions—when there is a marriage or a death in the family. The bride and bridegroom enter by this door; and it is then nailed or barred up until a death occurs, when it is opened and the body is removed by this exit.

The inscription on a large white marble tombstone in Hampstead Cemetery, London, is written in Pittman's reporting style of phonography. It appears that a young wife, who lies buried there, had taken up the study of shorthand, while ill from consumption, to pass away the long days, and had also taught her husband the system. She died soon after he gained a speed certificate.

"The American woman is the most awkward of walkers," said a man who recently arrived in New York after a trip around the world. "I was struck with this fact as soon as I landed in New York. It is the exception that one sees a graceful woman on the street, as they are exceedingly awkward. I have seen women with pretty faces and neat figures who spoil their looks, in my eyes, by strutting along as though pursued by a demon."

Out of every 10,000 girls and boys in England and Wales, only one is called a "tommy" or "tommy boy." Germany's colonies are five times as big as herself, those of France eighteen times, and Britain's ninety-seven times bigger than herself.

## The Gambling Fever of the Ocean Voyage



THE turbines of the great ocean liner were racing her screws as they had not raced before; the leviathan was reaching through the heave of the sea like an arrow toward the port of New York. The passengers were betting, with joyous enthusiasm, on her day's run, for that was the day when she was creating a

new record for herself. On the deck a very pretty woman sat, sweetly indifferent to the pulsing of the ship, aroused to interest only when some one emerged from the smokeroom. Below, three expert American gamblers were fleeing at poker a couple of sordid Englishmen. The fleeing was said to be thorough,

up to the extent of I. O. U.'s from the victims.

Then the innocents grew wise, and one flung a whole brandy and soda into the face of a slick opponent. The Englishmen emerged from the fracas with faces badly battered, and the pretty lady of the deck, who had helped acquaint them and some others with the experts, continued to be sweetly indifferent.

She went away demurely when New York was reached, and the gambling coterie, after being accused of all sorts of villainous things before a police judge, followed with equal nonchalance, for the Englishmen, ready enough, to fight, refused to testify.

And so, in the usual fizzle of justice, the latest little sensation in ocean gambling passed into the long record of the game.

THERE was a sequel, although a trivial one. A very old gentleman, whose capacity for entertaining others had aroused during the voyage as much admiration as was accorded his snow-white moustache and imperial, observed, with the faintest suspicion of a drawl:

"I used to play kyards a little myself on the old Mississippi, when a real gentleman didn't condescend to anything meaner than a Bertiniger. Seems to me 'Fm kind of glad I became a common stock broker."

These he degenerated days, indeed, by comparison with those golden days of the wide sidewheeler, when the most dashing gamblers the South and West could boast pitted their skill against the profits of the planters, and risked their lives as coolly as they flipped their aces.

Not even a black eye, nowadays, figures as the usual penalty for "bringing in the cold deck" on the ocean liners. The fished ones are so chary of notoriety that they prefer to pocket their losses rather than attempt to recover their cash, and the police court fills them with greater terror than the court of bankruptcy.

No gentleman gambler—the genuine gentleman gambler of that older day—who depended on his audience for his living, and made a rich living at that, has wholly vanished from our ken.

His successor, the primitive card sharp, whose reputation was jaggedly of the pastebords and the appearance of a "gent" has gone the way of flesh, accented by alcohol, and sometimes a rope. In their stead we have the gang of crooks, who may be no better than burglars, reforming themselves from crime by easy, but very easy, stages.

The true inheritors of the Mississippi gambling are the lake steamers, scores of floating palaces on the Great Lakes, that carry their thousands of "flush" passengers during nine months of the year, and furnish the happiest of hunting grounds for the gambler of the present generation.

Games, for some fairly large stakes, are nearly always in progress on many of these steamers, for

Americans from the West, and Canadians who have done well in the North, are sure to be on board, eager to taste the thrill of the fast life, whose delights they have been working for during years of poverty or abnegation.

No fare layout is permitted—the lake captains see to that. But it is practically impossible to prevent any group of acquaintances from indulging in a friendly game in a stateroom, and the groups form themselves by natural gravitation early in the 1900-mile voyage.

Poker is the game—but a poker so facile for fraud that any veteran of the Mississippi would be ashamed to take the money. From the West has been adopted the use of two decks in the game, with the joker as a fifth ace for filling of flushes and straights.

A pair of coal heavers could skin a "sucker" in a game like that. It has so smoothed the tortuous path of the gambler that, with the police of a waxing civilization relieving him of the necessity for carrying a gun, the double deck has emancipated him from the now obsolete "hold out" contrivance, that had a gooseneck running down the sleeve and was operated by the knees.

He even disdain taking the bottom card, using a cold deck, dealing seconds and various other antiquated tricks, which are as needless as they are well known. The double deck and the joker cover the whole multitude of poker's sin.

### PLAYING FOR LARGE STAKES

On the ocean liners the large stakes are, as a rule, played for only among men who know one another perfectly well, and begin their game purely as a pastime, but become so absorbed that they throw off the limit and stick to the table during the entire run.

Such was the famous game played by five financiers on a well-known vessel three years ago, when \$100,000 was said to have changed hands by the end of the voyage.

A gentleman gambler of the modern type is stupidly a gentleman of means, who plays for stakes as high as his means will allow—and sometimes higher. Such men regard the steamship professional as a pitiful "piker," which, by the way, he is. To him, a couple of thousand, which the gentleman player wins or loses with equal sang froid, means a killing fit for jubilation.

Even then, he is afraid of his riches, for the "suckers" may get squeal, and even though there be no riot, a notorious enigma that makes the gambler's face to well known for swindling among ocean travelers. So the transatlantic card crook is gradually learning to mark down his prey on shipboard and then skin him in London.

Somewhat the gambling fever seems to get into the blood as soon as the transatlantic passenger begins the long voyage. Men have been known to spend almost the entire time of a voyage in the smoking room, playing cards and sticking to the seaward side. It is this propensity for "getting into the game" that makes the average steamship a promising field for the professional, and many of them spend the greatest part of the year crossing and recrossing.