

The Bridal Finery of By-Gone Days

Pictures from old volumes of Godey's Ladies' Book



Preparing for the Altar in 1872

How Fair Maids of the Past Arrayed Themselves for the Altar

TENDERLY grandmother lifted the shimmering mass of watered silk from the old cedar chest, and there was a far-away look in her eyes as she ran her fingers gently along the soft folds of the gown. Can anything in all the world hold so much of sweet reminiscence as an old wedding dress?

It would seem a strange bridal gown, perhaps, to maidens of today, and yet those of the forties were not so far removed from the bridal costumes of the present as have been some of those coming later. Not so strange to modern vision as would be, for instance, the bridal finery of 1872.

It is an entertaining occupation to wander back through the years of the past and, by means of picture and printed page, catch glimpses of the customs and the cos-



When Soldiers Took Brides in 1865

Bridal finery of the 1872 period furnishes an interesting study. The fair maid on this page who paused long enough on her way to the altar to have her picture taken—and to examine a pretty gift of gems at the same time—wore a dress of white taffeta, trimmed with a ruffle to form a court train. Two pleated silk pieces finished by bows trimmed the front; there was an illusion veil falling from the half wreath of orange blossoms.

White silk formed the dress of the bride of 1877. It was cut in the princess style, buttoned across slantwise, small bouquets of orange blossoms, ever popular then, as later, arranged about the gown.

The lady who is shown standing in front of the bride was in the correct evening dress of the period—such gowns as were seen at the bridal reception. It was a September wedding in 1877.

Perhaps, as grandmother lovingly fingered the folds of the old wedding dress that she drew from its quiet resting place of years, memory pictured again the stalwart form of the happy man who stood beside her on that memorable day so long ago. But who is so interested in a man's apparel at such a time as to preserve it for curious eyes of later generations?

Some of the bridal traditions to which our grandmothers bequeathed, and which have been handed down religiously from mother to daughter through many generations, have their origin in the dim and distant past. What bride first thought of

Something old and something new,
Something borrowed and something blue;—
and yet how few fail to observe this gentle re-

There is something about a wedding gown prettier than in any other gown in the world.—Douglas Jerrold.

IT IS a pity that, with the rather brief description given of the bridal finery of 1846, there was no record left of the wedding at which this dainty bride and her handsome bridesmaid were such prominent and attractive figures.

The artist who preserved the costumes for the benefit of maidens during ensuing years merely attached to the engraved page the statement that the costumes were Americanized copies of Paris fashions. For a more detailed description one is referred to the sprightly letter of a sprightly miss who attended the ceremony and wrote of it to her home folk.

"We received," she wrote, "printed invitations to go to church to witness the ceremony. There were a large number of friends present."

"The bride was dressed in a rich white watered silk, with a satin stripe. Like all bridal dresses now, it was made high with long sleeves. A tulle veil crossed over the top of the head and was confined with a wreath of roses and orange blossoms. She looked very handsome."

"After the ceremony they insisted on my accompanying them home and dining with them en famille. I went. We had a beautiful dinner. Mr. G— seemed more than happy, and during dinner called J—y, his wife, as if he were used to it. Mrs. H— and I helped the bride change her gown and arrayed her in a rich plaid woolen dress for traveling."

There were a great many weddings in the summer and fall of 1865, when brave soldier boys of Blue and Gray went home from camp and closing campaigns. It was a graceful tribute to their gallantry, perhaps, that so many brides wore a kind of shoulder knot resembling an officer's epaulet.

The particular bride of 1865, whose picture is shown above, was attired in the height of the prevailing fashion. Her dress was of white satin, trimmed with folds of satin, edged with rich chenille ball fringe. These folds were caught up in festoons by loops of chenille cord. The corsage was trimmed with chenille cord and fringe and fastened with very rich pearl buttons.

The bride wore her hair curled in what was called the empire style; it was dressed with fillets of white velvet and a tuft of green leaves over the forehead. To complete the attire was a tulle veil, falling in a train at the back.

There was a background of sadness to many of the ceremonies which started lovers on life's journey together during this last year of the great American conflict.

Not a few of the bridegrooms were partial wrecks of the sturdy manhood that had responded to the thrilling call to arms; some had empty sleeves and others moved on crutches. At no other time, perhaps, were there more conspic-

uous or more numerous evidences of the undying loyalty of woman's love.

Still, many of the marriage ceremonies of this period were splendid affairs, for the military wedding has always been dear to a woman's heart. There were brilliant spectacles when the gay uniforms of the men complemented the daintiness and beauty of feminine costumes as bridal groups stood about the altar.

minder when preparing for the great event of their lives!

From very early times young women have chosen white raiment for their wedding day. Fashion has given diversity to its length, fullness and details, but simplicity and purity have been the dominant note. The ring on her finger, the brooch on her breast and the garland on her head have also marked the bride for centuries.



Bridal Costumes of 1846

umes of the people of different times. And nothing can be a more interesting study than the brides of the days when our own mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers were brides.

Here are pictures of some August and September brides of those bygone days, arrayed in the accepted nuptial finery of the times. A feature to be remembered is their entire accuracy, as they have been taken from old volumes of a magazine now discontinued, but which for many years was the leading authority on woman's dress in all the land.

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In the Wedding Finery of 1877