

voured by the fortune of the sea, than anywhere else in the kingdom at this time.

Another favourable item is that these particular young ladies are extremely pretty, and that they take back to the North over £50,000 among them. At this period from eight to a dozen special trains are put on the line for them. They go back in their brightest costumes, carrying Highland choruses, and in the highest spirits. In the meantime, the men, who generally are toiling at the risk of their lives for a bare living, suddenly find the silver fish in myriads, that enable them to bring their betrothals to a happy close at the altar.

A good season means a "crop" of about 400 marriages above the average, and a bad season hardly a wedding at all; but

the present has been one of the very best. The highest amount earned by any one boat for the season was that of the "Laverock," reaching the sum of £2200. To illustrate the chances of this gamble for love with the deep waters, out of three boats that shot their nets side by side off Yarmouth a little while ago, the first boat netted ten herrings and a mackerel, the second boat over 10,000 herrings, and the third fifteen herrings.

One of the principal things that brings the course of true love to the longed-for state of marriage, though those who benefit or are hindered by it do not even know it, is the fluctuation of the money market and shipping prices. This affects everybody alike—yourself included—and by watching the pulse of the daily "prices" you can easily foretell the

chances for a boom or a slump in weddings.

Last year the increase in the value of exports was 11/11 per head of the population, and in the price of imports 16/7. This alone made an increase of all-round prosperity that, while it lasted, added nearly 2000 marriages to the average all over the United Kingdom. The increase of value per head is calculated as covering every man, woman, and child of the population; of course, to the proportion of marriageable couples it is much more. The reason is that the increase of prosperity to the majority causes an increase of prosperity to everybody—especially to wage-earners in large cities. In proportion, it affects the younger and poorer wage-earners most.

Youth, in marriage-making, counts for a great deal, for 410 bachelors and 436 spinsters per 1000 marry at the age of 21, compared with 110 and 75 per 1000 at the age of 30. It is the sudden—rise of values that reflects soonest on the smaller rates of earnings, bringing the incomes of the younger couples just within marrying possibility, that "booms" young people's marriages, a good deal also depending on the districts where very young people earn more money than in others.

The youngest husbands come from Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Nottingham. The youngest wives—which fact, however, affects the question less—from Staffordshire, Yorkshire (East Riding), and Derby. Fifty-one per 1000 bridegrooms and 163 per 1000 brides are minors; but the marrying age increases every year.

Quite a different cause, but one that sends the marriage thermometer up to boiling-point or down to zero, is the drop or rise in the prices of every-day food and necessities. For instance, when the price of bread fell a farthing per loaf a little while ago, the increase of weddings in East London, Liverpool and Birmingham was just upon 100 per week, which increase dropped like a rocket when, six weeks later, the farthing was put on again. Flour having "dropped," all breadstuffs were cheaper, and living easier all round; and, though it is not the actual knowledge of the lower price to be paid that encourages fond hearts it is the general sense of easier times, and less trouble to make ends meet, that brings extra work upon the ministers and the registrars' offices.

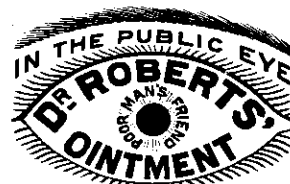
The trouble is that prices may leap up again when the happy pairs are made one; but that does not matter so much—they find ways to manage. It is the easier time of low prices that gives them the courage to take the plunge, and a little study of the weekly market-lists will give anybody a good idea as to how the ledgers of Cupid will stand a little later on.

Taxes, too, have a powerful effect on the wedding crop, and the last tax on

sugar brought, a few weeks after its start, a heavy slump in matrimonial ventures. Tobacco, on the other hand, if taxed, has no effect one way or the other, nor has a duty on any kind of liquor; but a penny per pound extra on tea, odd as it seems, has a perceptible effect. A rise in soap, sad to say, makes no difference. But the biggest factor of all in this direction, as far as the effect on certain classes goes, is income tax. A drop of a penny in the pound will always give an immediate increase of 25 per cent. among the large portion of the "middle class" who just—or a little more than just—come within the law. It takes a rise of threepence, however, to bring about a reduction of marriages to the same extent, showing that young affection is three times harder to discourage than to encourage.

The queerest item of all that affects the coming together of two hearts, however, is the way the weather helps or hinders the marriage-market. It is a fact—especially as concerns working people, whose engagements are generally short—that most weddings have the ill luck to be held in bad weather.

In the "anti-cyclones" that occur at this time of year, when several days of clear skies and sunshine suddenly start and suddenly disappear again, wedding dates are very often, indeed, fixed a few days ahead, under the encouragement of the fine weather. In our climate—and especially at this time of year—the favourite marrying period—the weather is almost certain to give way to a "depression" by the time the date arrives, and a bridal party in a threatening downpour is the result. If people fixed their dates ahead during bad weather, they would stand a better chance.



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