

PICTURE BRIDES AND LONG DISTANCE MATING

By FREDERICK B. EDWARDS

Illustration by JEFFERSON MACHAMER

The Calendar Is by No Means Cleared Up Just Because Cupid's Court, Jersey Term, Went Out of Business. There Never Were So Many Cases

HOW Sears-Roebuck came to overlook this one, goodness only knows! At a moderate estimate more than a thousand picture brides met more than a thousand picture husbands on New York piers last summer. This year there will be twice as many.

That Editor Thomas Bancroft Delker's scheme failed to promote marriage by mail through a mock trial procedure at Hammon-ton, N. J., was due to no lack of candidates for the game of matrimonial postoffice. Editor Delker and Law Conley, the Babe Ruth of Southern New Jersey, who was his partner in the plan, had nearly three thousand applicants for life partners when Cupid's Court blew up because Cupid resigned and the jury refused to serve.

There seems to be an epidemic of marriage. The country is chock full of lonely swains. Greek picture brides are arriving on every ship from the Mediterranean ports, and there are Spanish, Italian, Armenian, English, Irish and Scottish lovers among those present, though in smaller proportion than the Greek. Through the Hammon-ton clearing house, before it quit, Kentucky girls were being introduced to Ocean City coast guards; Philadelphia widows were learning the addresses of Texas widowers; the woman in Canada with \$10,000 and a farm was being told to write to the brilliant young doctor in New York who had ambitions but no money; a saleslady in Denver who makes \$12,000 a year had been placed in communication with the Brooklyn salesman who makes \$15,000 a year and wants to live in Chicago. More than 2,000 letters were sent to Editor Delker and his fellow heart-throb experts in two weeks. We saw them. They cluttered up Editor Delker's office until the walls bulged.

Mail Order Matrimony Boomed This Summer

There have been matrimonial bureaus before, of course, and the picture bride is not exactly a new institution, but there has never been, so far as any existing record indicates, so tremendous a desire for matrimony on the part of so many people of diversified habits and tastes as this summer brought forth. There must be a reason. What is it?

There seems to be an overwhelming weight of opinion on the part of people who do not get married by mail that people who do get married by mail are nuts. A certain percentage of morons must be admitted, including the morons who write fervid tales of entirely fictitious longings "for fun;" but there is a larger percentage of genuinely lonely folk who are sincerely seeking ideals in life partnership which their present environment does not provide. Also there is a still larger percentage of widows who are up against it—women who have been left, after a short matrimonial experience, with no income and a small family. To such women as these matrimony is the only profession open; their entreaties for the address of a suitable husband are just requests for a job; and almost any decent man will do who can provide a living and doesn't object to supporting a dead man's children. There are a pitifully large number of these bewildered widows abroad in the land.

The case of the foreigner who seeks a wife among the people of his home land is on an entirely different plane. This, among the Greeks, almost attains the dignity of a tribal rite. The Greeks, available statistics indicate, lead all other European nations in the earnestness and diligence with which they seek for wives among their own people in their native land. They possess a strong national consciousness; they do not readily intermarry with other races. On the other hand, Greek women emigrate in smaller proportion than those of any other European nation. When the men strike out for the new life across the ocean they play a lone hand and leave their women folk behind. Most of them emigrate young. A few years and they achieve a measure of prosperity; at times, a very considerable measure; and then, when their thoughts find leisure to turn to matrimonial affairs, they seek Greek girls for wives. There are few Greek girls in America, and fewer still unmarried. The matrimonial urge sets their faces inevitably toward the homeland, and already the thing is as good as done.

The Hypothetical Case of Demetrius Papalexis

Consider the hypothetical case of Demetrius Papalexis. Demetrius Papalexis is an entirely imaginary name with which by way of helping the argument along, we will endow an entirely imaginary individual. Having gone thus far, complete the picture by imagining that our Demetrius Papalexis resides in a small town in the Middle West, or the East, or the South, for that matter; and it need not be such a small town either. Demetrius is a type; and his name is legion. He is the present symbol of an ancient human urge which began far back beyond Aristotle; began, in fact, in the second chapter of Genesis when God said: "It is not good that man should be alone."

Developing the theory a little further, suppose that Demetrius came to the United States ten years ago. He has worked and saved his money, as he well knows how. Now, in 1922, he is the sole and very proud owner of a flourishing fruit store and ice cream saloon in his adopted city, a white, shining place, all paint and gilt and mirrors, and marble-topped tables with twisted wire chairs.



Demetrius Papalexis visualizes the advantages of a bride in the business

There are panels on the walls, whereon are painted landscapes and seascapes more gorgeous than anything nature in her conservatism ever dreamed of. These were done by Demetrius's first cousin, who has a natural taste for this sort of art, as well as a diploma from a corresponding school of sign painting and showcard writing.

In the front of Demetrius's store is the onyx and nickel soda fountain, a masterpiece more splendid than the filigaments of any Hellenic palace. In Demetrius's windows are polished apples and shining oranges, alluring grapefruit, and equally alluring exhibits of every other product of the vineyard and the orchard

each in its season. There is a Demetrius shop handy to where you live.

After ten years, Demetrius finds himself debt free and possessing a bank account which entitles him to be received with a cordial smile by the paying teller. No business man could ask more.

"And now," thinks Demetrius Papalexis, "if I but had a wife I would be a tappy man indeed. A wife is necessary to a man, especially to a successful man such as I am. A wife would be of great assistance to me in my fine store. She could carefully polish the red apples, and quickly I could teach her how to turn toward the customers the yellow side of

the oranges which are sometimes on one side of a slight green color; also how to place between the big grapefruit in their pyramids the green leaves to make them look attractive, as the Americans like. She could help me as well at the soda fountain. Undoubtedly she would be most useful. Also, it is a good thing to have a wife, particularly a pretty wife.

"Also, she should be a Greek. Greek wives are the best wives, or so I think, and since I think so what other opinion matters? It is my wife, the wife of Demetrius Papalexis of whom I speak, and of no other man's."

"Therefore, for these reasons, I will get me a wife. But how?

"It is true there are no nice Greek girls in this town save those who are already bespoken, nor any Greek women at all who might be available, save that one who is an old maid and forty and has a tongue as sharp as the sword of Perseus; and her I would not marry for a dowry of a million dollars; or at least not for any dowry which she might bring me. From where, then, does my wife, whom I need so greatly, come?"

"From Greece, certainly; from the motherland; from Athens perhaps, where there are so many clever and beautiful girls, or from the hills beyond Corinth, where I was myself born. There was a girl there, as I now recall,

Rates of Exchange Have No Blighting Effect Upon One Form of European Industry, and That Is Picture Brides for the American Export Trade

who had beyond all question the most beautiful eyes in all Hellas, although but a child when I left. If I could but remember her name . . . but it is gone. Small matter. If not she, then some other. All the girls in my village are beautiful.

"A dowry would be nice, but people are now poor, as who knows better than I? With my store and \$15,000 of good American money in the bank, I can dispense with that. Really, in this case, money is not an object; none whatever. Only must she be a pretty girl, and a strong, healthy girl. The Greeks do not admire a woman who is sick all the time.

"I will write therefore to the Mayor, who will surely know of such a one, if there is such a one to be had, who will come to America and become the wife of Demetrius Papalexis, the successful fruit merchant, also ice cream parlor, in Kansas, U. S. A.

Demetrius Decides to Take His Pen in Hand

"I will send my picture to the Mayor; the picture which I had taken last Christmas a year in the American evening dress suit of clothes in which I visited the christening of my brother's son. That picture does not show the mole on my chin, and it makes me look really quite handsome. I will then ask the Mayor to send me a picture of such a one as I describe, and if it pleases me, then I will write to her father, and it will be arranged that she shall come to America in the second cabin, like a great lady, and she shall become my wife, and we will have a wedding feast, and she shall help me make more money and we shall be most happy.

"I will write at once to the Mayor. Where, now, did I last place my pen? . . ."

This is the custom, broadly outlined. Sometimes the procedure is a little different. Sometimes a compatriot, returning to Greece, is commissioned to bring back with his own bride one or more brides for his friends. There have been cases where as many as a dozen brides have landed with such a party, to be met by prospective husbands of whom they know nothing save that they have been highly recommended by their friends.

We asked Miss Virginia Murray about this. Miss Murray is general secretary of the Travelers' Aid Society of New York, which unofficially, but with great efficiency, keeps tab on these imported wives when they land, and makes sure that they get at least the beginnings of a square deal. More than a dozen such parties have been cleared by the Travelers' Aid Society in New York this summer. They range in numbers from a dozen to more than a hundred. One of the largest shipments of the current season numbered 125 Greek maidens.

Miss Murray said that she used to think it was a terrible thing, but that now she is not so sure. Much experience has softened her viewpoint.

"It is a problem," she said, "and it occasionally leads to some delicate situations, but I am not prepared to condemn it as downright as I would have done a year ago. Our experience here has shown us that in most cases the impulses which direct the men are entirely worthy, even altruistic; and they spring from traditions and customs which are deep rooted, and entirely different from American conceptions.

"In the southern European countries, especially in Italy, the life of the individual, particularly the individual woman, is so bound up with the life of the community that this procedure of betrothal by photograph is really only one step from the national custom which is universally practiced. A girl is promised in marriage by her parents when she is hardly more than a child; in some instances while she is still in her cradle. She has no say in the matter. After all, if one's husband is to be chosen by somebody else, it makes very little difference—does it?—if one has seen him or seen only his picture."

Travelers' Aid Society Keeps Watch Over "Picture Brides"

Occasionally, Miss Murray told us, some tricky individual attempts to comm. bigamy, or even polygamy, by means of the mail order bride scheme; but these are rare and are getting rarer, as the Travelers' Aid Society's investigations expose such cases and make it clear to the schemer that seduction through these channels is not so simple a process as it appears to be the casual eye. The society is in a delicate relationship to these people. It has no official status, and no really legal right to say that this man and this woman shall not start together for some little town a few thousand miles away, but a gentleman's agreement with the immigration officials discharges the brides from Ellis Island to the care of the society, and where there is real reason why the marriage should not take place, it is easily prevented. A threat of police action tames the most righteously indignant abductor.

There exists then some reasonable degree of protection for picture brides arriving from abroad; but how about the possibilities of tragedy which are contained in the situation at home?

Editor Delker's scheme had its points. Trimmed of the flubby mummery of a Cupid's Court, which made the thing ridiculous and succeeded only in giving a score of newspaper reporters from New York and Philadelphia

IN THE SUBURBS, UNABLE TO GET OUT

By JAMES J. MONTAGUE

Illustrations by MERLE JOHNSON

IT was not without qualms that we built the house in a new part of town, where there were no pavements and the telephone wire had to be strung along poles—at our expense—to reach the place.

Our friends all told us that we might as well go fifty miles away where we could be in the real country. They said it wasn't half so bad to have your car mired down on a country road, where the birds were singing nearby and the flowers blooming along the wayside as on what purported to be a city street.

But it was summer time when the house was ready, and there was little trouble in getting the car into the yard, where it temporarily occupied a tent until such time as we could save enough money to buy one of those tin garages.

And very soon after we were established we were able to jeer back at the friends who jeered at us, for men and teams came along and began to build a brand new beautiful pavement right on our street.

Of course we couldn't get the car out while they were putting down the pavement, but we were sure that would be only a matter of a week or two—and then how wonderful it would be to bowl out on a smooth road, and coast down the hill till we came to the main thoroughfare.

The pavement required a little more time in the making than we expected—ten weeks,

in point of fact. It was two miles to the village, but in pleasant weather the walk wasn't bad. We told each other that our very richest and most influential citizens thought nothing of walking five or six miles over a golf course every day, so why should we mind a trifling walk of two miles? One could always wear rubbers when it was muddy.

It was a great day for us when the pavement was down. We started the car and drove fifty miles out in the country to celebrate. Life from now forth seemed a lovely dream, with the town within ten minutes instead of three-quarters of an hour, and that smooth, broad stretch of asphalt right in front of us!

There were a couple of men with some kind of surveying instruments on the street when we got back that afternoon, making everything right, as we supposed.

The next morning, intending to go down to the town and sneer at the friends who had formerly sneered at us, we joyfully started the car and headed for the street.

But we didn't get out. Men with picks had dug a trench directly in front of the drive, and if we had gone any further our car would have remained where it dropped till somebody got it out with a derrick.

We supposed there must be some mistake, but there wasn't. They were tearing up the street to put a sewer down.

Well, sewers are necessities, of course, and we were assured that the obstruction would only remain for three or four days. It remained for three or four weeks, however, and when the ditch was dug and filled the street didn't look the same. It kept sagging over the place where the sewer pipe was laid, and it was three more weeks before they had it all tamped down so they could repave it.

Again we happily sallied forth for another

ride, but the next morning the street was torn up again.

This time they were laying a telephone conduit.

We asked the man in charge of this job why they hadn't laid all these conduits and pipes and things before the street was paved. He said he didn't know.

The telephone job needed three weeks more of doing, and we supposed that was 'be all, but it wasn't.

We crossed the ragged ridge left by filling in the new ditch one morning, only to return that afternoon to discover that we couldn't get the car into the garage.

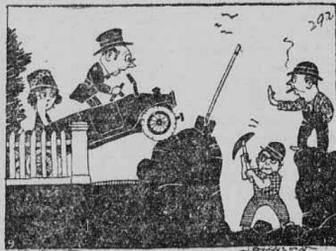
Men were digging another ditch, parallel with the other two. This one was for a gas pipe. They very kindly laid planks down for us to cross it, so we got the car in and kept it there for a month longer.

Then we prepared for a grand celebration. The street wasn't what it was when it was first paved. It was billowy and rough, and there were places in the ditches where you bogged down and stayed till dry weather if you were careless enough to get into them, as you often were after dark.

But anyway, we could come and go, which was something. That night we repitched the tent, put our car into it and invited a friend who had a big fine one out for the week-end. The new tin garage had just arrived, and his car was to occupy it for the night.

The friend was a late sleeper, as became the owner of so grand a car. He got up at 10 the next morning, took a leisurely breakfast, and after thanking us profusely for our hospitality, announced that he had an important business engagement in another town that noon and that he would have to hurry.

We went outside to see him off. The first thing that met our eyes was a ragged chasm



Men with picks had dug a trench directly in front of the drive

in the street, which made it impossible to get any kind of car out. The water people had discovered that their main, which was put down when the street was a country road, was inadequate, and they were digging it up to put in a new and bigger one.

We had done the best we could to entertain our friend, and it seemed to us that he was unnecessarily disagreeable about having his car marooned with us for the eight weeks that it would take to get the new water main laid.

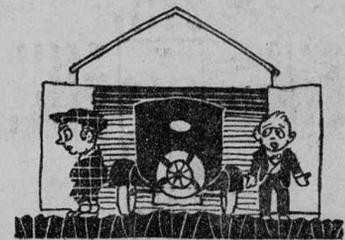
He said he would never have come if he thought we lived where people came along without warning and shut you up like rats in a trap in your own home.

We tried to appeal to the authorities, but it was useless. They had given the water company the right to make the improvement, and we as citizens ought to be glad that the company was public-spirited enough to make them.

That was seven weeks ago. Our friend comes out now and then to see if his car is all right, and he always measures the gas, which seems to us, somehow or other, to reflect on our honesty.

Some day we may learn why they lay pavements only to dig them up again, but judging from the results of our quests for this knowledge hitherto we shall be very old before we find out.

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Shut like rats in your own home



The pavement required a little time

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