

⇒ M. Le Maire Officiates ⇐

By EDWARD ANGLY

IN URBÈS, an Alsatian village lying along a road that Caesar's legions built, the chief of the fire department took unto himself a wife not long ago. His father, the mayor, performed the civil ceremony. It was, therefore, a wedding of more than ordinary importance in the eyes of the seven hundred inhabitants of the ancient commune set at the end of a slender green valley from which the wooded Vosges rise sharply and high on three sides.

The village baths, on the eve of the ceremony, were crowded with peasants, textile workers, shop keepers and their womenfolk, scrubbing and soaping and showering themselves in anticipation of a three-day fête. From Mulhouse, the nearest large city, arrived a truck freighted with champagnes and burgundies, a stuffed pig and unaccustomed delicacies.

The bridegroom was not only *chef des pompiers*, and consequently the most important personage in the neighborhood whenever the fire bell rang; he was also president of the local gymnastic club, a post of leadership among the younger generation, and *sous-chef* in a department of the textile factory at Wesseling, four kilometers down the valley. Thus he was the workaday boss of many of his elders in the village.

On the morning of the marriage, the bridegroom's father strode in solitary state to the council chamber, there to await the wedding party. Once the robe and chain of office were draped over his broad frock-coated shoulders, and a tricolored sash had been tied around his expansive waist, he ceased to be Papa and became *Monsieur le Maire*.

"Bonjour, Monsieur le maire," said his son and his aged father and all the rest of us as the small group invited to attend the civil ceremony walked into the town-hall. The mayor greeted his

own kin with all the dignity of address due to tax payers and voters.

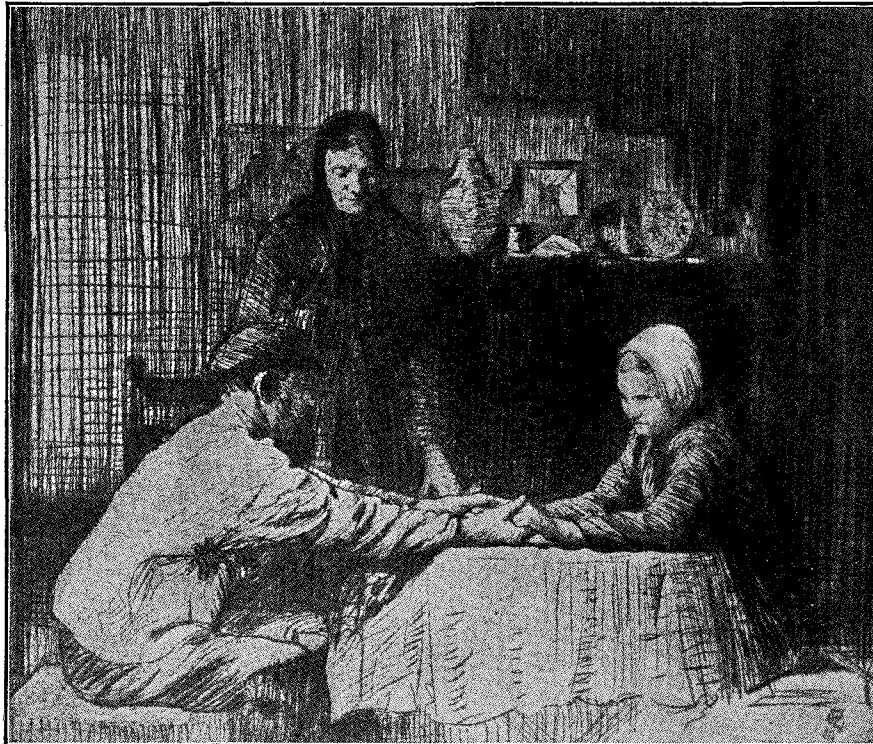
The mothers of the bride and the bridegroom did not trouble to attend the civil ceremony, nor did the maid-of-honor. The real marriage, for them, would be performed later on in the church by *Monsieur le curé*. They left it to the menfolk to dispose of the several necessary legal formalities

with a face and brow and solid stooped body so like Clemenceau's that the neighbors spoke of him as *Le Tigre*.

"Mais non," the old grandfather repeated until the mayor stammered back to cancel half a line and change his *quarante* to *quatre*. Not every citizen would dare correct the mayor of a village with a blunt "Mais, non." Le Tigre could do so, for in addition to his age and his position as father of the mayor, he had the distinction of being one of the few living men in the valley

who had worn the red pantaloons of France in the war of 1870.

After pronouncing the young couple man and wife, the mayor continued to speak ex officio rather than ex paterno until he had delivered the customary address of advice and admonition to citizens founding a new *foyer*. The home was the keystone of the social structure, an integral part of the foundation of the state, he said. In the name of the village, of the department, and of France, he felicitated the young couple and explained the husband's duty to protect and the wife's duty to cherish and obey. He hoped that their union would be



BETROTHAL

Dry-point by W. Lee-Hankey, R. E.

which were demanded by the Republic.

"Do you take this woman for your lawful wife?" Monsieur le maire demanded of Monsieur le chef des pompiers.

"Oui," said the son.

"Oui, monsieur!" the father suggested.

"Oh pardon . . . Oui, Monsieur," said the chef des pompiers.

The dual rôle of being a dignified Monsieur le maire and a sentimental Monsieur le papa so flustered the mayor that in reading from the scroll before him he proclaimed 1940 as the year of the bridegroom's birth, instead of 1904.

"Mais, non," objected the mayor's father, a fine old *farceur* of eighty-seven

blessed with happiness, prosperity and children.

That accomplished and the register signed, the mayor took off his robe, chain and sash. With these he put aside his official dignity. A tear or two dropped into his bushy black beard as he murmured "ma fille" and "mon fils" and embraced his new daughter and his son. Le Tigre, too, gave them the accolade, and so did we all. When the round of double-barreled Gallic embraces had been completed, the mayor brought back the atmosphere of formality by putting on his robe again. He must see the wedding party to the door no less formally than he had greeted them on their arrival. Five minutes later he was Papa again as he hurried

home to give a final twirl to his luxuriant but somewhat unsymmetrical moustaches, and take his place in the procession which the bride and bridegroom led up the street to the church, where the bell was ringing merrily and the whole populace had gathered to witness the sacramental rites.

As the Church was tightening the knot tied by the State, a furious storm of hail and lightning and torrential rain burst over the mountains. In a few moments the street was a streaming sheet of water. There

was no longer any possibility of the wedding party, with its satin slippers and brand-new patent leather shoes, walking to the village *salle des fêtes*, where a dozen housewives, whose husbands worked for Monsieur le maire at the textile plant, had prepared a bridal feast fit for the appetites of the hungriest mountaineers.

The immediate and unforeseen problem was to transport fifty persons dressed in their best clothes from the church to the banquet hall in the only two automobiles owned in Urbès. One was a five horse-power 1920 contraption which belonged to the bridegroom; the other, a newer and more impressive machine of seven horse-power, belonged to the owner of the *estaminet* who bought it a few months after the price of a *flûte* of beer had been raised from fifty centimes to sixty. The rôle of Sir Walter Raleigh fell to the bridegroom's *garçon d'honneur*, whose full dress coat became so drenched in the many trips back and forth with car and umbrella that he was obliged to eat in his shirt-sleeves, their whiteness relieved by a pair of green suspenders.

When all the *cavaliers* and their *cavaliers*, and all the uncles and aunts and cousins and close friends had assembled for this first of several feasts that were



Courtesy Knoedler Gallery

LA NOCE DE VILLAGE

Engraved by Francois Janinet, after Wille fils

to precede the honeymoon trip in the five horse-power car, the *salle des fêtes* sheltered a gathering of such international flavor as mere villages seldom experience.

Among the friends who had come to Urbès were Swiss who spoke only German, and Frenchmen who knew no other tongue than French. Some of the Alsations were linguistically lost beyond the patois of their valley, while others of the Alsations could converse in French and German as well as in the provincial dialect. The bride knew French and Alsatian; her sister knew English, but little French. Added to the task of seating the wedding party with some regard to age and consanguinary rank, the bride's mother thus had the added burden of foreseeing whether each guest would be able to understand his nearest neighbor. Happily for her, village weddings in Alsace are rich in the tongue-loosening influence of both wine and music.

At this banquet (no sane man would call such a repast a wedding breakfast), the bridal couple presided. The table was first laden with an infinite variety of hors d'oeuvres. This foundation was reinforced by *consommé*, after which each separate course had its accompanying wine, beginning with a *vin du pays*

and going on from glory to glory until a great Burgundy arrived with the stuffed pig.

As the champagne was poured, each guest carried a glass to the head of the long table and clinked it against the glasses of the bridegroom and his bride. A symphony of tinkles followed as the guests saluted one another. It was then time for the pages and the flower girls, who had been content at their table with well-watered claret, to give songs and recitations. After that the grown-ups made their separate contributions to the entertainment. *Hallelujah* was demanded of the solitary American, who was compelled to improvise and invent the lyrics, if not the tune. Alone of all the auditors, the English-speaking sister of the bride probably realized that "Hallelujah, Boola, Boola," had never emanated from Broadway.

Late in the afternoon there was a pause in the music. The doors of the hall were opened and in walked the ten dignitaries of the municipal council. Again the bridegroom's father ceased to be merely Papa and became Monsieur le maire.

Le Tigre, when he saw the councillors go to a table set apart for them, leaned to a sympathetic ear and whispered:

(Please Turn to Page 157)

►► Eighteen Hole Lottery ◄◄

By GEORGE TREVOR

YOUR BRITISHER has a soft spot in his heart for lotteries. Religiously he buys his tickets for the London Stock Exchange or Calcutta sweepstakes on the Derby, euphemistically calling these gambling ventures "investments."

He carries this passion for chance taking into his sports. The British amateur golf championship illustrates this point very aptly. It is decided under conditions which, to a considerable extent, discount skill and smack of a glorified lottery.

For some days, Bobby Jones has been practicing at old St. Andrews, brushing up his shots for the one major golf title which still eludes him. Atlanta's golfing robot has captured four American amateur titles, three American open events, and two British open championships, but he has still to wear his first British Amateur crown. Jess Sweetser, and Australian born Walter Travis, are the only "outlanders" ever to storm Britain's amateur golf citadel.

Lloyds of London, which will bet you on anything from rain to famine, lays odds of fifty to one against Jones' chances of winning golf's four major championships during the 1930 campaign.

Those who bite at this enticing parley, should realize that Bobby's first hurdle—the British Amateur which starts May 26—is apt to prove his most difficult obstacle.

Theoretically, the British amateur title should be the easiest of the four championships to win, since it is within reach of a second-flight, but actually it is the hardest as far as Bobby is concerned.

Let me explain this paradox. Although a calibre of golf insufficient to lead a great medal field is frequently good enough to win the British amateur title, the leveling conditions under which it is staged tend to offset superlative talent such as Jones'.

If, for instance, the British amateur were decided at seventy-two hole medal play, Bobby Jones would be an odds-on favorite against the field. With every mistake penalized in terms of strokes, his superior shot-making ability would have a fair chance to tell over that long route. Unhappily for Bobby, the British amateur championship is a luck-ridden free-for-all, a helter-skelter scramble wherein the fair to middling golfer has a bet-

ter chance of surviving than his degree of skill warrants.

To begin with, there is no qualifying round to weed out the sheep from the goats. The entire, unwieldy field, nearly a hundred strong, starts cutting each other's throats at match play on the 26th, the elimination by "sudden death" continuing throughout the week. Each contestant is required to play two eighteen hole matches daily, one in the morning and the other after lunch. All matches are decided at the fluky single round route except the finals, which, incongruously enough, is at thirty-six holes.

The controversial eighteen hole match, golf experts agree, does not provide a fair or conclusive test of relative skill. Luck, a tremendous factor in a game that has all out of doors as its theatre, does not even up over so short a route.

To survive the sequence of eighteen hole matches that lead to the British Amateur title, a golfer must be lucky as well as skillful. Jones' normal scoring range varies from seventy to seventy-six. Occasionally he bags a sixty-eight; once in a while he so far forgets himself as to take a seventy-nine. Now, there are at least thirty men in the British Amateur field who can score a seventy-two or seventy-three at intervals. In an eighteen hole orgy, Bobby is apt to bump into a second rater (I use that term in its relative sense) who is on a scoring spree. If Jones happens to be a bit off form that particular day he is eliminated by a player he could trim nine times out of ten.

At eighteen holes, a fast start is vital. A premium is placed on getting the jump. The slow starter is apt to be beaten before he strikes his stride. As Bobby Jones says—"you run out of holes too soon."

To be three down at the ninth green of a thirty-six hole match is nothing to worry a Bobby Jones. Reassured by the conviction that his high-flying adversary will come back to him, Jones goes along serenely, playing his game. To be three down at the turn of an eighteen hole match is quite a different affair. Such a deficit looms like Mt. Everest; is enough to unsettle the most cocksure competitor, and distort his tactics. Straightway he begins to press, attempts

neck-or-nothing gambles, convinced that only desperate measures can pull him out of so deep a slough.

Bear this in mind. One soggy patch of golf, a few fozzled shots or unlucky breaks, may spell disaster in an eighteen hole sprint. Let Jones get off on the wrong foot and some unknown, catching the vagrant spark of inspiration, may play above his head and keep Bobby in chancery.

CYRIL TOLLEY, the holding champion, defends the eighteen hole match in this vigorous vein: "A golf links has eighteen holes. Why isn't it logical therefore, to limit a match to one round of the links? If you're going to increase the distance arbitrarily, why stop at thirty-six holes?"

"An eighteen hole match fosters concentration, stresses the importance of each shot, penalizes slip shod, slovenly habits. You've got to bear down hard on every stroke. Every hole is crucial. There is no chance to let down or relax. This adds spice to the contest, an exciting flavor which stimulates competitors and holds the gallery's interest. A thirty-six hole match tends to drag. It is monotonous to watch and tiresome to play. The man who wins at eighteen holes is usually good enough to win at the longer route, but even if luck doesn't balance up as often at eighteen holes, I favor a sporty, mettlesome test which gives the under dog a fighting chance. Luck and golf are inseparable."

Tolley's arguments sound convincing, but if the eighteen hole match is so satisfying, why are the finalists in the British Amateur required to play off at thirty-six holes? Here is an anomalous inconsistency that seems typically British. It is as though the solemn Royal and Ancient governors said: "Come now, this lottery business has gone far enough. Let's make a real effort to discover which of these two survivors is the better golfer."

In a nutshell, the British make it as hard as possible for the superior golfer to demonstrate his class. "Let the best man win—if he can" is their motto.

Americans, conversely, make every effort so to arrange conditions that the best golfer will have every chance to prove his mastery.

That is why the "easiest" of the four major golf titles is the hardest for Bobby Jones to win.