

York, Byers

240

WPA

900

Louisville, Kentucky

Folklore & Customs: Superstition Concerning Love

No superstitions persist more strongly than those which concern the emotion of love.

Many people who in general understand the absurdity of folk signs are yet somewhat influenced by those which have to do with the affections. Some of the typical Kentucky superstitions of love and prospective marriage are concerning sweethearts.

If a boy pulls a hair from a girl's head she will always love him.

If a girl buries a boy's hair and her own together under a stone he will love her always.

The wearing of a wasp's nest in a girl's clothes will cause her lover's affection for her to increase.

If someone takes the combings from your hair, she will also take your sweetheart. Similarly, if a girl steps on your heel she is trying to supplant you in your sweetheart's affections.

A boy should not give his sweetheart a pair of shoes, for, if he does she will walk away from him.

If a bramble catches in your skirt a widower is in love with you.

The sight of a blue-eyed dog is a sign that your next lover will be white-headed.

As many times as you can pop your knuckles, so many lovers have you.

The finding of a one-leaf clover indicates that you are about to get a letter from your sweetheart.

If you find a two-leaf clover you will receive a kiss from your sweetheart.

If your upper lip itches you will soon be kissed by a tall man.

When you hear a hawk or a red-bird you may know that your sweetheart is near.

If you stump your toe, kiss your thumb and you will see your beau.

A sneeze at breakfast is a prophecy that you will see your love before Saturday night.

Wedding Prophecies:

If the first corn silk of the season that you see is red you will attend a wedding soon, the same result follows if the first butterfly is white.

To see two snakes at one time is a sign of a wedding.

A dream of death or of money or of crying will be followed by news of a wedding.

Matrimonial Chances:

If in one exhalation you can blow away the covering of a dandelion ball or thistle ball, or can blow out all the candles on a birthday cake, you will be married.

The accidental placing of two knives before a man, or two forks before a woman instead of a knife and a fork is a sign of that persons marriage.

If you find twin peaches, cucumbers, apples, or the like, you will marry soon.

If you accidentally swallow a "bug" you will marry within a year.

If two people sleeping together tie their shoes together with a yarn string the one that gets the shorter piece of the broken string will marry first.

This superstition, will be recognized as similar to the better known one of the broken wishbone.

The sister of a bride should wear the bride's garter after the wedding as she will then be the next in the family to marry.

Ability to eat a crab-apple without frowning insures you of marrying anyone you wish.

If you can walk seven (or some say, eleven, or twenty-one) railroad ties without falling off or speaking, you can marry whom you will.

If a cat is thrown upon a quilt held by several girls, the one toward whom the cat goes will be an old maid.

If you wear a wedding-veil in a play you will never marry.

To begin eating a piece of pie at the point is to run the risk of never marrying.

If you spit on yourself, you will never marry.

If there is an old maid in the family, there will be one in the next generation.

Future Mate:

After you have counted one hundred gray horses (or ninety-nine gray horses and one gray mule) the next person that you meet will be your future mate.

Eat nine redbuds on nine successive days, the ninth person that you meet thereafter will be your fated husband or wife.

Give a black cat a piece of pickle; if it eats it, the first man it goes toward will be your future husband.

If you see a hen with a red tail flying, you will marry the next man that sees the hen.

Put a four-leaf clover into your shoe; the next person that you shake hands with will be your fate. If you can make your first and fourth fingers meet behind your hand, you will marry and will boss your wedded mate.

4.

When you hear the first dove in the spring, look into the heel of your stocking, and find a hair the color of your fated helpmate.

On Mayday if you place a snail in a plate of flour or meal, it will write the name of your future husband or wife.

At midnight on Hallow^e'en, you may see your intended's face by walking in a graveyard.

Boil an egg; take out the yolk; put salt in its place; eat it; go to bed; the boy that brings you a drink of water in your dream will be your intended. The same plan may be followed by a piece of wedding cake.

To identify your future husband, you may also place your right shoe and stocking under your pillow and say:

"My right shoe and stocking, I put under my head,

To dream to-night of him I am to wed.

The color of his eyes, the color of his hair,

And his every-day clothes I wish, him to wear."

Superstitions (Cures);

The ignorant are naturally more largely guided by superstitions than are the educated, children more than adults, the dwellers in remote communities more than the inhabitants of cities and towns. Among even the self-conscious and well educated, however, some superstitions survive. Of these no class shows greater vitality than that of superstitions of cures. Here are mentioned some of the most typical ones that prevail in Kentucky.

Asthma or consumption to a child may, according to popular belief, be cured if a lock of its hair is placed in a hole in a tree higher than the child's head. When it grows to that height the disease will have disappeared. Cold may be prevented by the wearing of a "sour bug" around the neck. Both

neuralgia and quinsy may be averted by a nutmeg worn on a silk cord about the neck.

Any flow of blood may be stopped by the touch of a seventh son or a seventh daughter. It may also be stopped by anyone's repetition of Ezekiel 16:6.

To prevent nose bleeding, one should bear a yarn string around the left little finger or a piece of lead that has never touched the ground around the neck.

Burns can be cured by persons who have the miraculous power of "Blowing the fire out of" the wound. The operation is usually accompanied by some spoken rite.

It is popularly believed that the hair of a dog is good for its bite. In this connection the superstitious belief in the efficacy of the "mad-stone" may be mentioned.

Earache is sometimes treated by putting a lock of a negro's hair into the ear.

The wearing of ear-rings is a means of averting soreness of the eyes.

The feminine sufferer from headache should wear a snake rattle in her hair, or plait her front hair in four plaits, or carry one of her teeth on a string around her neck.

Freckles are supposed to be cured by bathing the face in buttermilk, melon juice, the first rain that falls in May, or dew off the grass the first nine morning's in May.

Nightmares will not trouble those who on retirement turn their shoes upside down with the toes toward the bed.

The common ailment of rheumatism has called into being many folk cures and preventives.

An acorn, a buckeye, a piece of Irish potatoe, an elder leaf, a piece

of carbon from an electric light, or a horse shoe nail, is often carried in the pocket as a preventive.

A yarn string, an eel skin, or an amber necklace is sometimes worn around the neck. A silver, lead, or brass ring on the finger has equal virtues. Finally, the placing of a bumble-bee sting between the fingers, the application of skunk grease, or the binding of a live toad frog to the back is considered efficacious.

A folk preventive for both smallpox and tuberculosis is the presence of an onion in the pocket.

For warts the cures are extremely numerous. Huckleberry Finn cites three approved remedies.

His three and more than fifty others are found in Kentucky. A wart may be rubbed, according to various versions, with a piece of bacon, a chicken gizzard, a dishrag, a goose quilt, an old bone, an Irish potatoe, a bean, or a grain of corn; if the object used is then buried secretly, the wart will disappear.

If you tie a knot in a string for each wart and bury the string, the warts will depart. You may cut a notch for each wart in a peach limb, or a sassafras root; when the notches fill up, the warts will be gone. There are many others.

York, Byers

240

Louisville, Kentucky

Folklore & Customs: Bibliography

Kentucky Folklore, D.L. Thomas, secretary, Kentucky Folk-Lore Society,
Centre College, Danville, Kentucky.

Louisville Courier-Journal, Feb. 11, 1917. Concerning Love Superstitions.

Louisville Courier-Journal, Oct. 15, 1916, Superstition Cures.

Louisville Free Public Library, Civic Room.

Jefferson Co.

Buck, George W.

240

WPA

Louisville, Kentucky

Folklore & Customs: The Evil Eye

This story consist of a popular superstition and living habits among the people on High Street in the year 1876.

Along this street from Eighteenth to Twenty-Eighth there live many of those old Irish people who came to Louisville in the year 1829 to contribute by their efforts to the building of the Louisville and Portland Canal. The writer living on this street in the year 1876 had among playmates some of the sons of those old people. The character of their habitations was a small building generally of one room and including a shed or Canto at the rear where goats were kept. Those were the source of their milk supply. The house being small and as the children came along it was necessary to provide sleeping space for them. This was accomplished by the use of truckle-beds which having Castars made it easy to roll them under the bed and out of the way in the day-time.

A thing talked of much among the children was something of sinister import and it was "Beware of the Evil Eye." Just what was meant was uncertain and what was to be our conduct to avoid some catastrophe was not mentioned, but we must beware of the Evil Eye. Among the boys it was said that the "Eye" was something that would effect one to such a degree that there was no hope for any that came under its influence. This warning moved me so that one night when I was under the covers I could see eyes, a number of them staring at me. Moved by curiosity I put my finger in one of them and they all went out. This caused much alarm and it did effect the peace of my childhood.

A Professional Grier (1876)

The scene was the rear end of a vacant plot of ground on the southwest corner of Nineteenth and High Streets, Louisville, Ky. It should be mentioned that High Street has been changed in recent years to Northwestern Parkway. Paralleling this vacant space was the property of one, Falser, a clock-maker. Abutting from Portland Avenue on the south was the property of Jacob Reisch who kept a grocery and a saloon.

One morning when I was looking for some of the boys to go to the river I met a playmate, Thomas Nast by name, who lived on Portland Avenue. Together we went through Nineteenth Street towards High. Coming close to the little cottage on the rear of the lot of the vacant ground mentioned we could hear cries, loud lamentations which caused us to pause and listen. Proceeding on we came to the house whose door was open and we beheld, in the larger room of the two, a board covered with a sheet and saw the exposed face of a child about three years old. Beside the corpse was an old woman (a professional crier) who was crying while moving her body up and down. "Oh My Pretty Little Boy, Oh My Pretty Little Boy", she repeated over and over again. The crying continued in the same monotonous tone and could be heard for quite a distance after we had moved away. Time has effaced from memory the name of the parents. They were of the old Irish stock, the builders or decendants of those who built the Louisville and Portland Canal.

At the Sign of the Carpet: (1878)

Many travelers in Europe know that the quaint old swinging signs before public and tradesmen's establishments meant to convey the character of the food or the merchandise that could be obtained therein. Many signs of the same character have been noted in the New England States. These signs of the same character have, but should not, be confused with the

display that has been made in recent years.

I am calling attention to an original one of the Old Character but with this difference. There is no word to convey its meaning but depends upon the plain facts of its composition to advertise to all what maybe had at this particular store. This sign was in Carpet Alley, so named because an old couple who lived in it made carpets. The location was between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets and between Walnut and Grayson Streets; the name of Grayson St. having changed in recent years to Cedar St. Carpet Alley intercepted Clean Alley, which made a T in the Block.

At this point the old couple lived in a three room house, where they also carried on their business. Nailed to a side of the house and extending over part of the Walk was a pole with a section of carpet attached. This piece of carpet of their own manufacture in the year 1878 had seen the frosts of many winters, and was faded from the sun of many summers. It moved with the wind but did not creak as the signs of Old England did. It was the Sign of the Carpet and served its day to convey its meaning to all.

Buck, Geo. W.

240

Louisville, Kentucky

Folklore & Customs: Evil Eye -- A Professional Crier -- The Sign of
the Carpet.

Bibliography: George W. Buck (from memory)

Munson, Elmer B.

600

Tefferson Co.

Louisville, Kentucky

Points of Interest: The Burning of the Old Galt House (2nd and Main Sts.)

January 12, 1865, Today's Journal has the following on the burning of Galt House:

"The Galt House is in ruins. The beautiful structure has succumbed to the ravages of the destroying element. The fire has done its work. The stately edifice so long the pride and fame of our City, is now a huge unshapely mass. Nothing but the naked, blackened, crumbling walls of the building remain to mark the spot, and tower, sepulchral like, over the piles of rubbish and waste of ruin.

For years the Galt House has been associated with the name of Louisville, and one was not more widely known than the other. We can gaze upon the heap of ruins only with the feeling of sadness. Many fond associations were connected with the building, but nearly all have been swept away by the fire. Around each room clustered memories dear to the heart, and the corridors and parlors long so familiar to the public, seemed like old friends. Famous men of the land had mingled in the parlors, and trod the halls with stately steps.

The news of the destruction of the Galt House as it spreads throughout the land will awaken feelings of regret and sadness in the hearts of many of the illustrious sons of America now ⁱⁿ the enjoyment of life. In the halls of Congress the news will receive more than a passing thought. General Grant in his camp on the James River, surrounded by his soldiers, will remember how he moved through the grand old halls. General Sherman as he gazes out on the placid bosom of the sea, for a few moments will forget the present and hold communion with the past and around the Galt House will center many a thought.

Thousands will read the news with feelings of regret. It will awaken old

memories and strongly blend the past with the present.

The origin of the fire is a mystery. The public is inclined to believe it was willfully and maliciously set on fire. The approximate loss is \$800,000, of which there is insurance of about \$250,000. The building adjoining the Hotel, the property of the Ballard heirs, was occupied by D. Buchanan, grocer, and O.W. Thomas, a pork merchant; 400 bbls. of whiskey was in store belonging to Thomas, who estimates his loss at \$18,000, insured; 900 bbls. of flour owned by Smith & Ferguson, no insurance. Wheat, the amount of \$5,000 belonging to Brandeis and Crawford, insured. Buchanan estimates his loss at \$17,000, insured.

Munson, Elmer B.

600

Louisville., Kentucky.

Bibliography: Burning of the Old Galt House.

From Diary of ^Y Cca Owens Hume, a former Louisville girl, still living.

This excerpt appeared in the Courier-Journal, Sunday, Nov. 8th, 1936.



✓ Southern Exposition held in Louisville 1883. Other fairs and expositions in Ky. before this. The first Ky. fair with statewide representation and significance was held for 5 days in 1853 in a section of what's now the Crescent Hill area of Louisville. Sponsored by the Southwestern Agricultural and Mechanical Assn. A "Grand Cavalcade" at the Galt House on the last night ended the exposition.

In 1857 was held on the same grounds as *ibid.* the "Fifth Exhibition of the United States Agricultural Society".

"The first truly 'Kentucky State Fair' was held at Churchill Downs in 1902." Between 1857 and 1902, "there were several expositions in Louisville...beginning with the Louisville Industrial Exposition of 1872. These industrial expositions were held annually starting Sept. 3, 1872" until (thru) 1882. None in 1876 "in deference to the Centennial Exposition held in Phil. that year."

The Ind. Expos. Bldg. was at 4th and Chestnut Sts. Frame bldg. 2 stories high. "These annual expositions were essentially 'local' in scope and intended to show the development of industries and businesses of Louisville, along with their wares and services."

Pres. Hayes attended the 1877 expos. on 9/27. With his cabinet. "Many of the 1876 'Centennial Exhibits' were forwarded to Louisville and these annual expositions acquired greater stature each succeeding year." (P. 131)

"Very little detail on (the) Southern Exposition (1883) has been ~~establish~~ published and preserved." (sic). On a 40 acre site "bordered on the west side of 4th St. and the south side of Weissinger Ave. and including Central Park." It was not held on the site of the Louisville Ind. Expos. "The main exp. bldg. was 920x620 ft. and 75 ft. in height. Of frame construction, it afforded a space of 677,400 sq. feet...." Opened 8/1/1883 by Pres. Arthur. "Displayed were 1500 exhibits including paintings, mostly from private galleries of eastern connoisseurs, over \$1 m. worth of horses, world famous bands and countless 'native' ind. exhibits...." (.....) (P. 132)

(Alan T. Atkins, POSTMARKED KENTUCKY, 1975, Pp. 131-2.)