A Highland wedding early in the present century was generally conducted as follows. When a couple of young people had agreed to get married, the nearest relations of both parties met to ratify the contract, which was generally done by the consumption of a quart or two of whiskey, as in Ireland. This proceeding was called the booking. Some Tuesday or Thursday in the growth of the moon was appointed for the celebration of the nuptials. Meanwhile, two trustworthy persons were selected, one being a man, to protect the bride from being stolen, which in olden times most likely she would have been; and the other being a woman, who acted as the bed-chamber custodian on the wedding day. A few days before the wedding the parties, attended by their friends, perambulated the country to invite the guests. On the bridal morning some lady friend was appointed mistress of the ceremonies for the day, and she decked the bride in her best clothes. The bridegroom also was made as smart as possible, and adorned with wedding favours. Volleys of musketry welcomed the guests to a substantial breakfast, after which the company had a dance.

At the proper hour the bride was mounted on horseback behind an experienced rider, and with musketry and bagpipes she proceeded with her friends to the appointed place. The bridegroom and his party followed, and allowed the bride and her friends to enter the meeting-house first. After the nuptial ceremony all the company adjourned to the nearest inn or the house of some relation of the bride, it being considered unlucky for her new home to be the first which she entered after her marriage. All parties then returned to the bridegroom’s house, where they were received with gun-shots. At the door the bride was welcomed with a basket of bridal bread and cheese. The couple were then seated at the upper end of a banquet, after which followed dancing and deep drinking. Late at night came the “bedding of the bride,” who was put to bed in the presence of all the company. Her left stocking was then flung over the shoulder of some person, and the
one upon whom it fell was reckoned to be the individual who would next get married. The bridegroom was then led in and put to bed, and while there he drank the company's health. The festivities lasted all the next day; and this continued mirthful celebration of the affair was called "backing the wedding."

A pennie brydal, or penny wedding, was a common event in Scotland in the last century. The expense of the marriage entertainment was defrayed, not by the couple or their friends, but by the guests, all of whom paid something. Sometimes as many as two hundred guests assembled, usually at a tavern, and their contributions often amounted to a good sum, which greatly assisted the couple upon their outset in life. In Aberdeenshire this kind of wedding was called the siller marriage. The penny weddings were in olden times reproved by respectable people as leading to disorder and licentiousness; but it was found to be impossible to suppress them. All that could be done was to place restrictions upon the amount allowed to be given, and five shillings was the limit. An act of the General Assembly, in 1645, endeavoured to abolish pennie brydals, without success.

The records of the parish which includes the most northern burgh on the mainland of Scotland, show that in the last century those persons who had been fined by the Kirk Session were not entitled to "get the benefit of marriage" until the fines were paid. These fines had been imposed principally for "Sabbath-daye enormities." In 1709 the Session, "considering the great abuses committed by the confluence of people who frequent contracts" (betrothals), appointed "that none contract till they come to the minister, and find caution that there be no dancing or music at the contracts." In 1711 it was enacted that, for the better preservation of the sanctity of the Sabbath, "there be no marriages hereafter upon Monday." Persons "contracted" or publicly betrothed were fined 10l. Scots by the Session if they afterwards refused to "imple-
ment the contract;” and persons intending marriage were, after the change of currency, obliged to “consign” 10s. in the clerk’s hands before publication of the banns. It is recorded that the Session “sat upon an elder for going and courting here and there several women,” for which he was “sharplie reproved.”

At Caithness, early in the present century, when a man wished to be married and could not repeat the shorter catechism, the Session required him to produce two “cautioners” to the amount of 12l. Scots, that he would acquire it within six months after his marriage.

The custom of assembling many persons together, and spending several days in drinking, feasting, and dancing, at weddings, was very common in all parts of Scotland; and usually the greater part of the provisions was provided by the many guests who assembled on the occasions. Douglas’s “Virgil” tells us, “There was a custom in the Highlands and north of Scotland, where newly-married persons had no great stock,

or others low in their fortune, brought carts and horses with them to the houses of their relations and friends, and received from them corn, meal, wool, or whatever else they could get.” Ramsay’s “Poems,” in 1721, tell us that it was the custom in Scotland for the friends to assemble at a newly-married couple’s house, before they had risen from bed, and to throw presents upon the bedclothes:

“As fou’s the house cou’d pangs,
To see the young fouk or they raise,
Gossips came in ding dace,
And wi’ a soss aboon the claiths
Ilk ane their gifts down flang.”

At a village near Glasgow was a little round isolated mount called a Mote, and in recent times it was the custom, after the celebration of a marriage in the neighbourhood, for the wedded pair, with their friends, to assemble and dance on the flat top of the Mote. The penalty for a neglect of this usage was sterility in the couple.

In early times the Scottish lairds and barons regulated the marriages of their vassals, and had
the right to sleep with the wife of any of them on the first night after marriage. This privilege was in later days waived upon the payment of a sum of money by the husband. “It was said that Eugenius III., king of Scotland, did wickedly ordain that the lord or master should have the first night’s lodging with every woman married to his tenant or bondman, which ordinance was afterwards abrogated by King Malcolm III., who ordained that the bridegroom should have the sole use of his own wife, and therefore should pay to the lord a piece of money called Marca.”

In early times there were few churches on the borders of Scotland, hence a priest used to visit the forlorn regions once a year for the purpose of solemnising marriages and baptisms. This, says Scott, gave rise to a custom called hand-fasting, by which a couple, who were too impatient to wait the arrival of the priest, consented to live as husband and wife in the interim. Each had the privilege, without loss of character, to draw back from the engagement if he or she were not disposed to legitimise the cohabitation by the rites of the church. But the party retiring was obliged to maintain the issue of the union, if any.

This custom of hand-fasting, or hand-fisting, was in use in the last century, when, at an annual fair, the unmarried persons of both sexes chose companions for the ensuing year, with whom they lived until the next fair. If they mutually suited at the end of the twelve months they got married, and if otherwise, they separated. Sinclair, writing at the end of the last century, suggested that as this custom obtained at a place situated near a Roman encampment, possibly it was based upon the Roman marriage by use, by which, if a woman lived with a man for a year without being absent three nights, she became his wife. The hand-fasting kind of marriage contract is said to have been in use among the ancient Danes, who called it hand-festing, and upon which followed the freedom, without the actual ceremony, of marriage.

A writer in 1543 says: “Every man lyke-