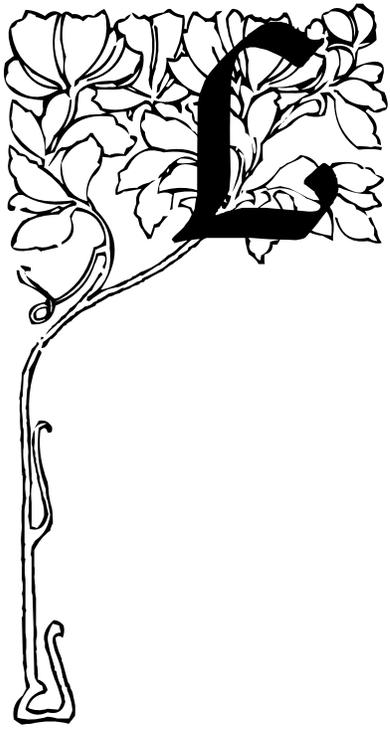


LITTLE
PROBLEMS
OF
MARRIED LIFE



WILLIAM GEORGE JORDAN

~ 1910 ~



Little Problems of Married Life:

the Baedeker to Matrimony

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I

The Spring-Time of Married Life

HE air is balmy and glowing and inspiring in the spring-time of married life. There is the joy of a new beginning when two face a new world together, like Adam and Eve in that Eden of old. Life seems pulsing with infinite possibilities and new habits, determining a harvest of good or ill for both, put forth their first tender buds of promise and prophecy.

Dual living means the harmonizing of two lives in unity. It requires conscious consecrated effort towards attainment. In this period of becoming used to each other, of learning, experiment, compromise, and adjustment mistakes are inevitable. This spring-time should be taken seriously—but not too seriously. Little inharmonies are dangerous not in themselves but in the bitter memories and misunderstanding they may leave in their trails.

Those married people who tell you, ten or fifteen years after the wedding, that there never has been one cross word spoken between them, never a moment of even irritation, never a single shadowing cloud of disagreement, belong to one of three classes: They have been mercifully endowed with a talent for forgetting, they handle truth with a certain shyness, or one of them is the silent overawed victim of the other's personality.

Have you ever heard an old sea-captain boast that in all his experience he had never seen a squally sea, never a dull, heavy, storm laden sky, never heard the tempest shriek through the rigging and threaten to tear away the masts? His pride is in his skill, not in his luck. The matrimonial sea never remains absolutely serene and calm, with no ruffling waves, for years at a time. The vital point is that the storms have all been weathered in safety and the love and trust, purified by time, remain undaunted.

In the days of courtship two may feel that they thoroughly understand each other, and that no matter how many marriages may fail *their* happiness together is absolutely assured. Yet courtship is only the kindergarten class of matrimony. Courtship is the preliminary canter, not the real race. It is the matrimonial shopping; marriage is the acceptance of the unreturnable delivered goods. Courtship is the joyous, sunshine launching of the craft of hope; marriage is the long cruise across uncharted seas. The two now pass under the test of new conditions; they face new problems and enter a life of finer attunement, of constant call on patience, tolerance, forbearance, concession, kindness, sympathy and wise understanding.

Happiness in married life means the happiness of two, made by two; neither can do all. No individual can sing a duet. They should feel glad to bear anything and everything that fate may bring them *for* each other, but not *from* each other. With union towards opposing conditions and unity between themselves they can *command* happiness. Their attitude is of

supreme importance; everything else is secondary. It is not what comes to them but the spirit in which they meet it that really counts.

In love, loyalty, comradeship and mutual dependence, even trial, sorrow, sickness and poverty may bring them only nearer and dearer, soul-serene and heart-glad that they still have each other. This condition never comes through drifting, by letting things take their course, by just hoping that somehow it will all turn out right. Merely *wishing* it and *wanting* it will neither create nor keep this harmony; they must *will* to make it, determine, by living individually at their best, to unite in the finest unity. The responsibility rests on both; the failure may be due to either.

There will come a time in this spring-tide when they awaken to the consciousness of unpleasant traits in each other. The wife may find that what she deemed his fine firmness of character is simple, unadulterated obstinacy. His reverence for money in small denominations is not the prudence and wise economy she once believed it, but a chronic tender-heartedness that makes it hard for him to say good-bye to a dollar. In the old days she was the gentle referee of all his thinking; now he seems as autocratic and domineering as a slave-driver in the Congo.

He too may suddenly find himself conscious of unnoted imperfections in her and they loom large before him. There is, at times, a sharpness and shrillness in the upper register of her speaking voice that almost suggests irritability. She would never win a gold medal as a housekeeper and one has to be fiercely hungry to enjoy her cooking. Her conversational charm seems to have become rather commonplace when subjected to the test of continuous performance. Her hair is not always rigorously brushed into orthodoxy, and she does not seem to worry much about the immaculateness of her attire around the house.

The items in the catalogue of progressive revelation vary; their importance depends largely on the spirit of the interpretation. They are a bit disillusioning, it is true, but they are not fatal. If wisely taken in their early stages they may be cured; if incurable they may be silently accepted with joy that they are not worse. Fine tact may accomplish much in rendering them unobtrusive as people living along the line of a railroad learn not to hear the noise of the trains. We all are human and have faults, failings and foibles. We have no right to expect perfection unless we can give it in return. Perfect people, too, would be awfully tiresome to live with; their stained-glass view of things would seem a constant sermon without intermission, a continuous moral snub of superiority to our self-respect.

Let us not consign the Venus de Milo to the rubbish heap because she has no arms; she is greater without them than any other marble lady, fully armed, in all the world's history. Let us accept the little failings of those we love as we do a mortgage on a valuable property; if we cannot remove it or decrease it, pay the interest cheerfully and then forget it. Concentrating on the positives, the virtues of each other, in married life may reveal some trait—a fine sense of honour, a sterling honesty, a courage that recognizes no Waterloo, a sweetness of sympathy and tenderness that never fails, or some other characteristic—a trait

so priceless that it sweeps away criticism on petty failings as a rushing mountain stream carries to the sea the dead wood that threatens its serenity.

When the young wife asks her husband to point out all her little faults so that she can correct them, any little thing that does not come quite up to his ideal, for she “loves him so much that she wants to be absolutely perfect in his eyes,” let him realize the sacred sweetness, the instinctive fineness, the tender wistful longing of its consecration and show himself worthy of it. This cry of the emotions, this high-tide of a mood of genuineness is a crucial moment. Conscious that he is nearing the thin ice of heart diplomacy, let him tenderly assure her with a caress that she is flawless as the Kohinoor¹ and gently smile away the possibility of even perfection itself being as perfect as she.

The real work of mending little flaws can be considered later quietly without furnishing a detailed estimate of the needed repairs. He has given her an ideal to live up to, not a feeling of restless protest to be overcome. Mutual confession of each other's faults is the shortest cut to a misunderstanding, though the talk begin in the balmiest atmosphere of flowers and perfume, sweetness and seemingly storm-proof confidence.

The first difference of opinion that belongs to the “quarrel” class is important for the manner in which it is met. When the romance of the new companionship loses the charm of its initial novelty, the warning click of trifles, a sudden jolt or jar of the home machinery, may threaten the possibility of any hope for the future.

The first storm usually arises from a trifle and in a few moments a gentle zephyr of misunderstanding becomes a whirlwind. There are only three or four moves on each side and in surveying the emotional wreckage, both may be dazed and unable to say how it started. Each may say more than is meant; each may take the other's words too seriously; each oversensitive and hugging a petty pride, may feel aggrieved and too hurt to think of instant attempt at restoring peace and sunshine. There may be sobs, protests and wounded dignity on the part of one, while the other may become coldly, stolidly calm, as if carved in mahogany.

It matters not who spoke the first word it is the fault of both if the inharmony continues. It may have been a difference of opinion in which each was right but neither had the right to force that opinion on the other. The larger nature will ever be first to make overtures of reconciliation.

A slight misunderstanding may be invaluable to both as a warning, as a revelation of tendencies, of a characteristic of one that the other must recognize, as a small blaze may inspire a realizing sense of needed precautions in a home that may make a conflagration later hardly possible. The two should mark the trait that caused the trouble as a rock in the channel, a dangerous reef that should be removed if possible; if not removable it should have a bell and a light so that it may be recognized and avoided in later matrimonial seamanship.

¹ A 105 carat diamond that was once the largest known diamond in the world.

When the air of a discussion suddenly grows sultry, and the temptation comes to cap one sarcasm with another more sarcastic there should be a pause. Orators facing an audience and feeling a twinge of stage fright take a moment to get their bearings, to pull themselves together and conquer the invading nervousness; then they speak their first few words in a low voice, slowly, gently and deliberately. The orator's pause taken in the early stages of a breakfast table discussion often guarantees peace. When a first misunderstanding is permitted to degenerate into harsh and bitter words of contempt, they leave a stain. They soil the ermine of delicacy and fineness in the relation of two that only the bigness of a great love can ever quite restore; they make repetition easier and reparation harder.

When it is all past and the sun shines bright again, talking it over and holding rehearsals and post-mortems is unwise. It should be buried from memory forever as a body is committed to the depths of the ocean in a funeral at sea. Let us forgive and forget; if we hold a hurt feeling and adopt a martyr pose we show we forget that we have forgiven.

It is what follows misunderstanding that really counts. Does it leave a train of bitter words and recrimination that becomes tattooed into memory, a fit of sulks, tears and indifferences that no sunshine of loving words can banish, closed Bluebeard chambers of remembrance whose doors we shut with a slam if in later years memory opens them inadvertently? Is the pettiness of either or both to permit this to eclipse the sun of life's happiness? Is it thus that the discords of a moment affect us, or do they bring sweeter music in the days after, because they are now understood and vanquished, or, unconquered, do they recur more frequently and with greater intensity? Little misunderstandings may be summer thunder-showers that clear the air of the home, leaving it sweet, pure and balmy; or cold, drizzly November rains that depress and deaden.

There may be none of this little discord when the individuality of either is suppressed; when one personality absolutely dominates the other; when one always meekly echoes what the other says; when one meekly walks the matrimonial chalkline; when the husband or wife has been "trained." There may be quiet here, but it is not really peace; it is the torpor of pale, colorless lives, of submerged individuality; it is the unruffled, stagnant smoothness of a mere pond as compared with the tonic, fresh, free motion of the living sea.

Where love has faded into cold indifference, where a tacit truce of tolerance is established between two to whom marriage has become but a mirage fading away into the perspective of memory, there may be no moments of misunderstanding or inharmony because they are in the dangerous mood of "don't care" when emotion seems paralyzed.

Where there is deep, genuine, absorbing love in the spring-tide of married life there may still be inharmony because the exalted ideals, the heart-hunger, the sensitive fineness, is satisfied only with supreme recognition and fullest response. Love itself may grow unduly arrogant and demanding. A misunderstanding may be but the heart's confession of a subtle hurt, the expression of the perfect dependence of one on the other in the smallest trifles; every word, look or tone has an exaggerated value. It may be antidoted instantly by a word of explanation, or, unexpressed, it may be borne in silence and nursed by wounded pride. By the

strange power that trifles have to prove the fixed idea, it may grow into a grievance that, feeding upon itself, will weaken the very foundations of faith and trust.

Where love is fine, there is, in misunderstanding and conflict of view, an instinct that keeps the inharmony within bounds of refinement and courtesy. Unselfish love has, too, a recuperative power that restores faith and confidence quickly to the normal if the disturbing element has been but a semblance of wrong rather than a reality.

Sometimes the spring-tide of married life brings more serious problems. Sometimes in the very honeymoon there may come revelations that kill happiness in its soul and one, stricken, like a wounded animal, longs only to be alone, to suffer in silence this appalling grief. There is no hope; no words can explain, no acts can atone.

If not so absolutely fatal as this there may be quarrels more portentous than mere inharmonies, repetitions of doubts and jealousies, spectres that do not down, the discovery of chasms of indifference that cannot be bridged, the pang of wounds that do not heal, the constant dominant insistence of one note of pain or of loss, the chill of incompatibility when any trifle may precipitate an earthquake. This is not one of the "little problems"; it is too much like living on the suburbs of Vesuvius to lead to happiness without a radical revolution, and a new start with new wisdom on the part of both.

Points of difference in the individualities that seem antagonistic and destructive of harmony may by blending become a dual virtue. The extravagance of one of the partners in matrimony, held in check by the tendency to penuriousness on the part of the other, may have a neutralizing effect on both.

The sturdy independence of the man should give tone and strength to the gentleness of the wife. Marriage requires balance. If both learn to live in the proper spirit towards each other, faults become softened, fuller understanding takes the sting from seeming pain, kindness displaces unkindness as sunshine banishes darkness, and the two come into a closer harmony, mutually completing and complementing each other.

Marriage is what the two personalities involved make it. For art, music, oratory, authorship and other phases of power, it is conceded that success presupposes ability, desire, determination and training, but many seem to think that mere entrance into matrimony should of itself bring success, prosperity and happiness, that it should accomplish all these things as if it were a birthright to be demanded instead of a fortune to be earned by their united effort.

II

Respect for Each Other's Individuality



TRUE marriage is the consecrated comradeship of husband and wife, made permanent by love and mutual respect. It is the harmonizing of two individualities in a common interest, not the sacrifice of one to the other. The suppression of the individuality of either endangers the real happiness of both. With the insistence of either to be first, matrimony ceases to be a team and becomes a tandem.

When the husband constantly plays barometer to his wife's weather, when she is the voice and he the echo, when she is the substance and he the shadow, it is not a true co-partnership. He is merely the junior member of the firm, having his name on the sign, and holding the post of cashier, but with no voice in the management. He is really suffering from anemia of the individuality. He needs to develop a few red corpuscles of self-respect and protest; he should cease to be merely a minority stockholder in *her* thinking; he should rebel against the phonographic instinct of speaking only what has been talked into him.

They tell us that husband and wife are one; but it is a parody on unity if either wants to be that one. It would be as foolish as if the hour-hand or the minute-hand were to claim supreme importance in the matter of telling the time. Their united action is based on perfected individuality in unison; it means harmony, not competition.

If the wife be afraid to give expression to her thoughts, her views, or her opinions merely because she never quite knows how he will take them, there is something wrong with both. If she automatically looks up at her husband, reading his emotions in his face, like an engineer with his eye on the steam gauge, to see if her tentative words meet a nod of approval or a storm-cloud of protest, she has not the courage of her individuality, nor the self-respect that compels its recognition. Her attitude reveals a cowardly fear that is beneath the dignity of wifehood. It is unjust to one, therefore unjust to both.

If she has to meet him ever with conscious tact; if she has to look out ever for storm signals of a change in his mood, if she lives in constant terror of offending him at any moment by touching inadvertently the sore thumb of a prejudice, and has to go round ever with an oil-can to lubricate the bearings of his self-approval she should heed the warning of the alarm clock of her injured self-respect and waken to the realization that she is desecratingly unjust to her own individuality. Love may survive this disrespect but it is not fed by it; love may persist for a time in spite of it but never because of it. It is a mortgage on love that must be removed or that love will finally be wiped out on foreclosure proceedings in the name of the outworn patience of the heart.

Our real life is the expression of our individuality, our inalienable right to live our own full free life at its highest and best. It means the fine flowering of our strength and the conquest of our weakness. It develops naturally and truest in the pure ozone of freedom, limited only by the rights of others and our duties to them. Between husband and wife there is no basic conflict of rights; there can only be conflict of wrongs. They should be their true selves, ready and glad to take loving counsel and suggestion from each other, but not weakly suffering to be poured into the mold of the other's ideas and ideals. They should be strong alone, that they may be stronger in union. Better the frailest flower, growing upright on its own stem, than the most vigorous vine made possible only by a supporting oak.

Where the individuality of either is suppressed, it means that there is conceit, arrogance, selfishness or petty tyranny on the part of the other, or a masterful personality that stifles the expression of the real life and soul of the suppressed, as certain trees kill all other vegetation around them. Paying constant tribute to another's will or bowing meekly to another's superiority is antagonistic to the soul of love.

In true marriage, under the inspiration of community of thought and the influence of a common environment, under the warm glow of mutual love, esteem, trust and dependence of each on the other, the real individuality of each develops as naturally as a flower grows in the sunlight. The happiest marriages are those where there is perfect unity and identity of view on the great essentials; perfect freedom in non-essentials; and perfect harmony, even in differences of view.

Perfect unity on essentials means that on the broad questions of their common life there is unanimity of view, a solid rock foundation of happiness and trust that no minor differences can threaten for a moment. Perfect freedom in non-essentials means that it is not absolutely necessary for husband and wife to like the same book, the same picture, the same play, place or person, if each has the proper respect for the honesty of the other's view, and confidence in the other's willingness to change that view if shown proper reason for so doing.

As they grow in closer unity, the tastes and sentiments of husband and wife will naturally come into closer accord and agreement on all subjects affecting their common welfare. But this unity can never be forced; it cannot be developed through fear, reached through a mere hunger to please, never simulated, nor acquired by tact. These give only the semblance, never the reality. The individuality of each is developed only by mutual love, confidence, and free, spontaneous action. 'True love hungers for spontaneous expression, welcomes it, joying more in a trifle that speaks instinctively as a voice of love from the heart, than in a greater expression coming from the head—an act done because it was expected, or as a duty or bit of policy.

With two living together in the closeness of day-by-day companionship there are sometimes little traits of character, little peculiarities of temperament, little phases of disposition, little habits in word, or look or act in the one that jar and fret and chafe the nature of the other. They form no part of individuality; they are but acquired eccentricity that it should be a joy to master and control merely because the sweetness and deference implied in the act of

changing is a tribute to the other. It is love illuminating a trifle. But there are personal theories with which one should not expect the other necessarily to follow in lock-step, and the other should not feel forced to accept.

The wife may have been led to worship at the shrine of a food fad through an article printed on the “woman’s page” that becomes her gospel. She may feel that the physical salvation of the race comes from eating bread three days old and may unwisely seek to force him to discipleship, because she “knows it is good for him.” He may prefer a shorter life soothed with fresh bread rather than a longer existence on the new terms. Let her revel in her petrified, passé nutriment to her heart’s content, but she is giving post-graduate courses in hypocrisy and protest when she makes meals at home an ordeal, as he silently munches the dry crusts of her theory. He suffers it as a temporary trial, feeling confident that the reign of staleness will be brief, and lets his imagination run riot in the thought of the red-hot muffins and all the other quarantined delicacies he will order, down-town, for lunch just to square himself somehow with his self-respect.

If *he*, having heard from a man on the train that the fountain of youth, health and beauty rises from going without breakfast, omits this meal for a few mornings and then brags of the twenty years that have been taken from his age in four days, let him prove his theory by the fresh ruddiness and glow of health he displays and the sunlighting of his disposition rather than by tyrannically issuing a two-meal-a-day edict for the home. It may be wiser for him to be a bit selfish with his new-found wisdom rather than through mistaken generosity and lack of respect for her individuality try to force her to take unwilling stock in his panacea. He may find it really prudent too for it will make it easier for him when he wants to edge back to the orthodox breakfast plan like a lonely little runaway boy creeping back home. Even though it should prove best for him it does not guarantee it will benefit another with a different constitution and by-laws.

If he has become a zealous devotee to pure air and is happy with every window wide open and a young tornado merrily galing through the dining-room so that they have to put paper-weights on the dishes he should realize that she may not enjoy dining in furs and taking cold food with numb fingers.

If he cannot be brought to accept Ibsen as an inspired apostle of optimism and the joys of living on the higher levels, if Ibsen really seems to him to be nearly as cheerful as a ride in a tunnel on a dark night with the car lights extinguished and he does not want to invest in her enthusiasm for her new-found literary god as “the dramatic genius of the ages,” let them sweetly and smilingly agree to differ if argument develops fervor. He may later forsake his well-thumbed Shakespeare should the higher illumination come to him and flood his soul with light.

If her adoption of some new philosophy of living brings to her calmness, rest, peace and the solution of life’s problems, making her more kind, gentle, charitable, loving and unselfish and seems a constant inspiration, it is unwise to seek to capture his conversion by an unrelenting assault of argument, protest, discussion and appeal. He has a right to his option of

non-acceptance as fully and freely as her choice of acceptance. If her living does not vindicate the rightness and finality of her belief, if her life does not convince, her arguments will only irritate but never convert.

The only parts of our individuality that should be suppressed are our weaknesses, our faults, our pettiness, those phases of character or temperament that prevent our radiating our best to those around us. We can never be our true selves until we make this a reality in our living.

Respect for each other's individuality touches in some way the heart of every problem of married life. This respect is based on justice, and justice wrongs no rights but rights every wrong. It is the Golden Rule raised from mere theory to the dignity of a living reality. In the home it means freedom, right, sympathy, tolerance, harmony and peace. Determining that neither shall suffer *from* the other, they are strengthened to suffer *for* and *with* each other whatever trials life may bring. In their philosophy of prepositions is wrapped up the secret of truest happiness in married life for both.

This respect has two vital phases: we must not only respect the individuality of the other but must demand that our own be equally respected. While never invading the rights of others we should with equal firmness resent the invasion of our own. This implies no petty captiousness in trifles, no super-sensitiveness of an inflamed egotism, no disregard of the privilege of making little compromises and concessions, the joy of sacrifices and surrenders that bring new happiness to love. Neither has the right to make the other the victim of his or her temper, selfishness, cruelty, tyranny, meanness or injustice and either is wrong to submit. We are unjust to ourselves when we meekly suffer what we have no right to suffer. It is not a virtue of noble bearing; it is the vice of cowardice. We are sapping the very citadel of our own strength; we are weakening ourselves for the battle of life, starving our very soul. There are countless instances where this is mental, physical, emotional, and, sometimes, moral—suicide.

There are grim tragedies, of which the world may know nothing, in domestic life where the wife lives tremblingly in the shadow of a husband's fierce temper or his wild, uncontrolled, senseless jealousy. Smiling, bright, gay, witty, he seems the very life of the social company gathered round his table. But there may come to her, seemingly only a table-length but really a whole world apart from him, a quick gasp, and a tremor, with a pain in her heart as though a hand of steel were suddenly gripping it with a deadening pressure when she sees for a second a certain look on his face that no eyes but her own noted, none might even understand had they seen. She knows its meaning as the plainsman sees all the devastating havoc of a tornado foretold in the spiral whirling of a single leaf caught in an air vortex.

She knows the afterward; she knows that hardly will the key have been turned smilingly on the last departing guest before the storm will burst in all its fury. She will cower anew under unjust bitter recrimination, slurs, sneers, sarcasm that eats like an acid into memory and maddening taunts that blister and blight.

We hear much of the nobility and the moral grandeur of bearing and forbearing, but there are times when bearing becomes a weakness, a cowardice, a crime against self-respect. Peace at

any price is not peace—it is smothered war. Things are never settled until they are settled right. The wife's time for meeting such temper was at the *beginning* of her married life, at its first manifestation, in its faintest phases, before it had fattened and grown tyrannous through non-resistance. In the *beginning* she was at the maximum of her power to cope with the wrong; the evil was at its minimum; the man himself was more pliable and more easily led and controlled.

In the *beginning* should she have met the issue, taking a firm, final, unalterable stand, using every weapon in the armory of her wisdom. Then should she show unmistakably, with dignity, character, calmness, courage, that never would she tolerate or permit the indignity and humiliation of such a scene. If it cannot be settled then, with an understanding that makes repetition impossible, there is no hope for the future of either. Better a single hard battle to a finish, than a long siege of torture with constant skirmishes for years, with the wife's defeat in the end guaranteed.

There are many similar problems in married life, perhaps less serious, that threaten to kill the peace of the home, that must be faced at their very inception, not in the heat of anger but coolly, calmly, courageously at the very beginning, as medical science seeks to conquer a serious disease in its earliest stages before it has gained headway. The injustice we unprotestingly accept, we feed; the selfishness we continuously humor, we strengthen; the cruelty to which we meekly submit, has its fangs sharpened by our docility that it may later rend us.

If these situations were wisely met in the beginning, by either husband or wife, much future unhappiness for both and, perhaps, even disunion later, might be spared. It is easier to extinguish a match than a conflagration; easier to control the course of a mighty river at its trickling source than at its mouth where it empties into the ocean; easier to purify the infected waters of a single well at Mecca than to conquer the subsequent plague affecting millions.

Nature meant husband and wife to supplement each other, to be stronger because of their union; differing in their qualities, in their powers and possibilities, but harmonized and uniting for the best solution of their life problems. The husband can find no help in the counsel of his wife in an emergency if he has stifled her power of individual thinking, or permitted it to become dulled and deadened through disuse.

And the tastes and pleasures which were her resources in the years before she met him need not be renounced, merely because they fail to appeal to him. The books she loves to read, the picture which for her holds a beautiful meaning—such things may fail to touch him; but that is no reason that her joy in them should be spoiled. If he finds no pleasure in music, this in itself is no reason why she should shut this avenue of inspiration from her life if it carry with it any heartening message to her soul. If either attempt to rule the other it will be found but a petty victory, an empty triumph.

The lasting good of each must be in love raising each to the highest power of individuality, with no thought of competition, no desire of superiority, so that they move, hand in hand, towards a common goal, the good of each being ever the joy of both. In this spirit of true

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respect for individuality they will find that most of their problems will be solved and made clear and luminant under the glowing sunshine of their trustful confidence, conference and comradeship.

III

Plea for More Courtship after Marriage



HERE are some men who seem to consider that their marriage certificate is a sort of fully paid-up policy on marital happiness. They act as if the courtship days were those of paying premiums of compliment, cheerfulness, courtesy, consideration and chivalry and that marriage makes unnecessary all further assessments of lover-like attention. They may sometime awaken to the realization that the only way to get an absolutely guaranteed insurance on matrimony is—to keep on paying the premiums. Countless first-class marriage policies have lapsed just because of these imprudently suspended payments.

These very men, at their clubs, often go perilously close to the dead-line of boredom in telling you of the marvelous qualities of their wives. They run the chromatic scale of enthusiasm, while you wonder in a dreamy way whether the angels in heaven were not modeled after these women. At home these husbands may keep their adoration and appreciation wrapped round with seven folds of silence, safeguarding their feeling as zealously as though it were a Masonic secret. Were but a small installment of this told at home it might prove a joy, a sweet source of new confidence, courage and inspiration to the wife who is heart-hungry for just such words.

There is a tendency to assume that this love is known and recognized, so why speak of it? “She knows how much I think of her”—this is a dangerous taking for granted of what should be made real, pulsing and vital in thought, word and deed. There is little danger of overtelling this story; it is often the wine of life and inspiration to one hungering and thirsting for the little tendernesses of affection. Ofttimes some little touch of loving sweetness throws a golden streak of happiness through a wife’s whole day, and an involuntary half-smile and a love-light in the eyes born of the remembrance, hours later, tell of the vitalizing power of a seeming trifle, forgotten or perhaps unnoted by him who thus gladdened a life anew.

There are more people on this great, big, rolling earth hungering for sweetness, tenderness, and words of gentle appreciation, genial confidence and generous affection than are starving for bread. Such words that were the current coin of conversation before marriage often seem withdrawn from circulation afterwards. With husband and wife these delicate messengers of affection cost so little—sometimes only a thought, but it is the thought that is all. They are only trifles—too great for mere money to buy, but trifles that focus the joy of life in a moment.

There are men who would no more think voluntarily of carrying home to their wives a bunch of roses just as a bit of sentiment, than they would think of taking home a bridge or a cathedral or two or three miles of seacoast. It is not fair to have all the roses before marriage,

and only their memory and thorns afterwards. A splendid present to smooth over a misunderstanding or to wipe out an unpleasant memory is altogether of another class. That is not love, it is bribery; it is not tenderness, it is policy; it is like the sacrifices the heathens offer their gods to appease their wrath.

One of the most common causes of the decline of courtship after marriage where it does occur, and there are countless instances to prove that it does not always decline, is the disillusion that often comes after marriage. When the rosy tints of the courtship days grow dimmer there is a tendency for the real poetry to turn into commonplace verse or even into the baldest prose. This cause, if one may be pardoned interpreting Cupid in terms of commercialism, may be called "buying from sample."

In the days before marriage they saw each other at their best; they were on dress parade and unselfishly thinking too much of each other to think much of self. Under the inspiring glow of mutual regard every latent virtue blossomed into full flower, every failing assumed a roseate hue under some loving interpretation, little sacrifices for each other were a joy and a privilege. Then a smile would exile a doubt, a caress smother an argument, a tender word throw a world of worry into eclipse, and a mood of disagreement be but the preface to sweet reconciliation that made them nearer and dearer.

Before marriage little inharmonies became lost in the general effect as moonlight softens and obscures discords that the broad glare of sunlight reveals. Marriage brings sunlight to bear on all things and often the goods do not seem up to sample. Then must come a time of concession, adjustment and acceptance of conditions with a smiling determination to make the best of each other. Then each must realize that if they would be real married sweethearts they must keep the courtship atmosphere vital and pervading—by the courtship methods. The love that is worth working for and waiting for is worth preserving.

Sentiment that is kept in cold storage does not amount to much; it lives and grows as it is exercised. A bunch of roses to gladden the eye on the table is worth more than barrels of dead leaves pickled in rose-jars. Love cannot live long on its past; it is its present that counts as a real force, and like all other habits it intensifies by exercise.

Courtship after marriage is a kind of matrimonial thermostat; it automatically keeps the home atmosphere at the proper temperature. When the heat of a fervid discussion threatens to scorch the respect of the two for each other and hot words of blame and protest make even asbestos in the room conscious of warmth, a smile, a sweet silence or a term of tender endearment may suddenly banish the heat like the radiated influence of a fountain or a cool fragrant breeze from a garden at twilight. When the cold cutting air of a sneer or a biting sarcasm makes it seem that someone must have left an iceberg on the door-step and the silence at the dinner table grows as tense and palling as the collaborated hush of a vast audience watching the climax moment of a thrilling mid-air acrobatic feat, the courtship wisdom comes to the rescue with that fine instinctive tact of the heart. It is not always easy but it is wise.

The two who have united in marriage *want* happiness; they crave it and when it slips away and if they lose their bearings and drift, it is usually because they are not conscious of it in the beginning and neither one may be quite able to find the way back—alone. It is so easy to let familiarity kill the courtship spirit, there is danger of taking things as a matter of course and of falling into the “married manner” of assuming that little courtesies and considerations are no longer necessary and a difference in the way of speaking to each other creeps into the conversation.

When a man trips over his wife’s skirts and explodes a condemnation as to her folly in wearing them long, blaming her, in unsterilized language, for his carelessness, he forgets the Chesterfieldian grace with which he would have atoned for the misdeeds of his feet with the courtesy of his speech in the old days. It may not be that he loves her less; he may even love her more in a deeper, truer and stronger way, but he does not show it in the right way; he may have great wealth of affection, but he does not keep it in circulation. His sense of proprietorship, by some zigzag process of thinking, makes him feel he need not bother to be polite.

There is danger in the common habit of making light of love in the home, of treating it with a flippant, cheap cynicism. It is hardly worth the smiles it may elicit. It is an insidious habit that grows from innocent breezy banter to cutting sentences that leave scars in memory. It often begins in the spring-tide of married life in foolish protest against being thought sentimental, as a sort of self-protection, and in fear of manifesting affection in public the two may swing to the other extreme.

The husband may tell to his friends assembled at this table, in a whimsical way, that now he is “done for, that he can never dare to go out at night, that no one knows what he suffers, etc.” The wife may laughingly counsel her friend, in his presence, “never to get married, you do not realize what it means to devote your whole life to humoring a man and giving up your freedom forever.”

Neither means the words: each knows it is but bubbling nonsense, but sometimes one phrase sticks in memory when the time and atmosphere of the telling are forgotten, and it stings and it does not down with argument and it starts a wondering, insistent, rankling doubt as to whether he really meant it after all, and there may be a sigh in her heart and a sob in her throat as the fear comes that there may have been something in it after all; it may have been a truth he sought to hide under the mask of a jest. One of the two may not have the keen sense of humor to understand it aright and the smile may be only a slight one from the lips, not the glad assured smile of a heart at ease and so buoyantly happy that the very eyes seem illumined. There are so many subjects that are impersonal, far removed from their life together, that this one theme might be hallowed in a way as being too dear and near and sacred to be the plaything of the public humor of either.

When the husband has the feeling, percolating through his consciousness, perhaps never quite formulated into words, that “our courtship and honeymoon were beautiful, of course, while they lasted, but now we must realize that life is serious,” he may think that he is

growing sensible. He is really a bit mistaken; he is merely relapsing into his selfishness. What he deems a reason is only an excuse for dodging the effort to master his moods and be agreeable when he does not feel like it. His attitude somehow suggests throwing away flowers of sentiment from a vase because they have wilted a little, and with their novelty now grown familiar have lost some of their initial charm. It would be wiser to make the vase ever-blooming and redolent of sweetness by filling it with fresh flowers of finer appreciation each new day. It takes time and thought and patience, it is true, but it pays in the dividends of sweetness and smiling love they exhale. It is only holding the invading monotony of matrimony at bay—with the old courtship methods.

Marriage *is* serious; so are all the other great things in life that are worthwhile, but it is never so dangerously serious as when the courtship spirit is packed away in camphor with the wedding clothes as being too fine for daily use. It is because marriage *is* serious that it needs sustaining, stimulating, sincere love that is active as a living force, not a mere golden memory. Marriage is not a summer picnic; it does not banish trial, sorrow, pain, and suffering from life even were it an ideal union under ideal conditions, but it enables two to face life's problems hand-in-hand, finding courage, strength and refuge in each other, and even peace in sorrow, instead of walking down the valley of the years—alone.

There is a romantic love that is long on extravagant phrases and short on lasting qualities. It has more of the senses than of the soul, more sentimentality than sentiment, more gilt than gold. It is built for show, not for wear; it has every element of real love except—the essentials. In the courtship days it seems to be in the gold medal class; shortly after marriage it would not get honorable mention. It is good on short spurts, but breaks down on endurance tests. It is just an emotional gold-brick.

Real love wears, endures and, like an oak, grows stronger with the years, more firmly rooted by every struggle with opposing conditions, every weathered storm. One of our great composers made the hand-organ the test of the popularity of each of his new musical creations. "Will it grind?" was his earnest and wistful question. The love worthwhile is the love that will grind, that has in it such real music that all the monotony and grind of married life cannot kill its sweetness, its inspiration, its melody and harmony.

There are husbands who think they deserve a blue ribbon in the matrimonial race because they run quietly in double harness, make no special disturbance round the house, are loyal, and, as the phrase goes, are "good providers." They say: "I give her a good home, she has servants, plenty of money and dress, all the necessities and many of the luxuries; what more does she want?" In sad hours of loneliness and heart-hunger, realizing fully all that she has, she knows that the "more" she craves is the man himself, his real companionship, his compliments, his confidence, his tenderness, his loving.

She wants to hear sometimes the very words, "I love you so, dear," and "I need you so," or any of love's synonyms that speak directly not merely inferentially through acts. She wants the phrases that sing themselves in memory while the heart listens and is glad. She wants to be told again that she "has the most beautiful hands in all the world," she wants to have him

notice the flower in her hair, to praise the fit of her new gown, to have her opinion occasionally count as an asset in his thinking, not as a liability to be wiped out. She wants him to be the one to tell her that she is beautiful, for it means more to her than what all the others say—she wants the old courting atmosphere back again. She wants, in a word, recognition of her as a woman, as *the* woman, not merely the duty and respect paid as a wife.

When we as a nation do not grow or manufacture within our own borders all that the needs of our people demand, we import them. Our hungers require certain things and if we do not find them in this country we get them from abroad, from whatever country can supply. When love, sympathy, comradeship, trust, courtesy, recognition, and happiness are not supplied in the home market, not grown by husband and wife for each other, there is a dangerous tendency to import them, to welcome them, perhaps innocently, from any source from which they may come. Guarding the home market keeps out foreign competition.

Continued courtship after marriage preserves the lover in the husband and the sweetheart in the wife. But courtship is not solitaire; like a quarrel it requires two to make it a real success. It is not the wife alone who needs the gracious sweetness of frank comradeship, for husbands who are built on the right lines have equal longing for loving kindness and kindly loving. They may rebel at having little acts of special thoughtfulness taken for granted as a matter of course and accepted with the joyless manner of a tax collector gathering in revenue or a cool croupier raking in stakes. There are some women who show more pleasure in receiving a few violets than others would betray if you gave them the whole German Empire. Perfunctory acceptance puts a premium on perfunctory giving, and it is a bit discouraging to the husband.

The husband may remember when fair hands pinned a pink in the lapel of his coat, when there was a note of sweet deference in listening to any expression of his opinions, when the superior business intelligence of the man next door was not boomed on a brisk bull market of contrast, when eyes brightened with joy when he told the story of some ambition that was dear to his heart; when a sofa cushion was tucked in, by hands that seemed to smile, just at the psychic angle of maximum comfort in an armchair when he felt a bit tired and enjoyed the incense of being humored like an invalid by brevet.

Little attentions, the perfume of consecrated thoughtfulness, are dear to husband as well as to wife. There is ever a subtle compliment in having one's tastes and preferences remembered, and appealed to, in making the key-note of the selection of some little gift the memory of an expression of the desire of either, perhaps months before. It carries with it a suggestion of a halo of importance dignifying an almost forgotten wish. A trifle, you say, yes; but trifles are the only things in life that really count; everything big is but mass and that is only the aggregate of trifles.

There are married people who kept sacred for a few years certain anniversary and memorial days in the calendar of their affections, red-letter days that in the observance and in the freshening glow of memory have a mellowing sweetening vivifying of sentiment. Then as the years go back, these anniversaries fade in their identity and blend confusedly together in the perspective like a long row of lamp-posts up a boulevard. When a man has to figure out on a

pad the date of his marriage, or his wife has to have the date of his birthday recalled to her, then the spirit of the old courtship days should be taken from the lavender of memory, and aired and dusted.

This spirit helps the wife to realize that the dainty house dresses she used to wear still may have the old power to charm, that the piano need not remain closed if sentiment can keep for it the old delight, that the songs that once soothed the mind and heart of one now nearer than ever still might exercise their old spell.

The past does not die, we kill it and bury it; we can make it live forever in the present, but whichever we do, the option is ours and the responsibility is ours. The love, confidence, sympathy, tenderness and consideration that the heart feels, let the lips and life express. Courtship is a vessel of promise that is often wrecked on the shoals of matrimony. Courtship means two mates without a captain; marriage sometimes becomes two captains without a mate.

IV

Living in Boarding-Houses and Hotels



WHEN some kind bird-lover, in a mansion facing Central Park, had a fine three-story bird-house built and placed in a big elm that extended its green branches over the park wall and across the roadway we were all interested. It was really a triumph in carpentry and it bore proudly, in large painted letters across its front, the name, "Birds' Apartment House," so that house-hunting birds could read and understand. And as an extra inducement to secure tenants a generous supply of nest-building material was placed on each of the three floors. With a neighborly interest you may say was just idle curiosity, I waited the coming of the first tenants.

It was not long before the grandeur of the edifice caught the eye of a busy chirping robin. He twittered speculatively near the open door as if attracted by the sign but fearing the rent would be too high. Then he boldly entered the ground floor apartment. In a few moments he came out and flew away till my eyes could no longer follow the black speck in the distance. Soon he returned with another bird and, idly speculating on my neighbor's affairs, as mortals will, I presumed the new bird was his fiancée whom he had called for to go house-hunting. The young couple stayed within but a little while and then, perched on the ledge as if studying the neighborhood, they chattered excitedly as if conferring on the wisdom of their choice. It was really not my affair at all, you know, and I did not mean to be in the least intrusive, but somehow I felt confident they would take the place.

Next morning, bright and early, a twittering, cheery "chee chee" and a rustle of wings made me turn my eyes to the house in the trees and I was sure that the new family was moving in. Soon, to my surprise, I saw twigs, sticks, blades of grass, tufts of cotton and strands of hair pushed and pulled impatiently through the open doorway by the indignant birds, and fall fluttering into the street. Then the two birds scurried off on a shopping expedition in the neighborhood and soon brought back in their tiny bills twigs and other furnishings of their own. Then I understood it all—it was the birds' instinctive protest against beginning their wedded life in furnished rooms; they wanted to build their own home in their own sweet way.

I agree with the birds. Furnished rooms, boarding-houses and hotels can never be true "homes" for married people. At their best they are but substitutes, not equivalents. They lack the sense of possession, of privacy, of permanency and of personality that gives an atmosphere of peace and sacredness to a home of one's own, no matter how small, how modest and plain it may be. They bear the same relation to real homes that an incubator does to a hen,—a mechanical imitation of a living reality.

In her own home the wife reflects her individuality as naturally as the sun radiates light and heat. In boarding-house rooms she has little care and responsibility, slight incentive or opportunity to exercise her individual taste—to give those personal feminine touches that grace a real home. Her one or two rooms have not the furnishings she would have selected; they have not the lovable familiarity and the storied memories that may make an old walnut dresser of her own dearer to her than someone else's mahogany masterpiece.

The little personal treasures and dainty ornaments that she carefully places around to add a touch of colour and brightness and to take a little from the strangeness of it all seem a studied, pathetic, evident attempt at cheerfulness, like a forced smile struggling through tears. When she hangs a beribboned calendar over a grease spot on the wall that is reminiscent of the head of some prior tenant, or launders her handkerchiefs at the wash-stand and spreads them flat on the window-pane or the mirror to dry, and tries new ways of disguising the presence of a row of dress-laden hooks that constitute the overflow from her one insignificant apology for a closet it all seems so woefully cramped, and temporary, and unsatisfying. It is not at all the home her girlish dreams pictured. There is no pride of personal possession.

From lack of real occupation her days are long and wearisome; she has not that absorbing stimulus which in a home of her own would fill her hours with duties transmuted into pleasures. The days of inaction are often consciously filled with time-killers, like reading, walking, shopping, matinees, visiting, and over elaborate care of her clothes, which instead of being episodes of change in her daily life become almost the whole story. There is, too, the constant forced association with those she does not like, whose presence irritates, whose jests jar when she is not in the mood for them and whose tales of private griefs poured into her unwilling ears make the lamentations of Jeremiah seem joyful by contrast. There is no sense of privacy; there is the feeling of living constantly on parade, with a constant curb of expression on the emotions. Though her heart may be worn and weary and her mind worried she must put on her property smile of sweetness when entering the dining-room, for she must run the gauntlet of critical eyes and if her own show signs of tears she knows it might start a trail of gossip and speculative comment difficult to stop. The insincerity, curiosity, idle talk, petty meanness, criticism and monotonous sameness so commonly incident to the life is trying to her. It is difficult to live in it and be not part of it; it is so easy to sink by gravity to the common level.

There is always this danger where a number of people of varying tastes, interests and ideals are forced by pressure into a family community without the genuine love, sympathy, comradeship and unity of purpose of a home family. And if even these qualities be absent in the family, there is a tie of blood which has a certain degree of neutralizing power in every discord.

This homeless life in a boarding-house is harder for the wife than for the husband, as a long term of punishment is harder than a short one. His business duties, keeping him away from the scene most of the time, make his realization of it perhaps less, yet he may suffer vicariously in noting the subtle changes in his wife, either in her struggle against the environment or in her surrender to it. In the false perspective of their living, sources of

misunderstanding multiply, and the loving adjustment of their views and ideals may be disturbed as the needle of a compass is automatically deflected in certain regions.

Meals that in their own home might be enjoyed in frank, genial, trusting companionship and sympathy are now taken under the fire of many eyes that make the sweetness of instinctive confidence impossible. In the artificial atmosphere of their living he may be almost afraid to look across the table for fear of being accused of flirting with the new boarder from Kentucky, who expects to be in town all summer. If the husband does not talk he is likely to be charged with being disagreeable and sulky; if he does talk he may be accused of trying very hard to be fascinating to someone for whom he really does not care two straws. Caught between the horns of the dilemma, the husband thinks hard, says under his breath something not for publication and wishes—that he had a home. The wife may suffer, too, the same mistranslation of her most innocent actions.

The quiet social evenings with a few friends have always to be considered from the standpoint of someone else's convenience. The lady on the third floor back is sick and cannot bear the noise of a piano, or walking on the floor disturbs the rest of the nervous old gentleman in the rooms underneath, or any of a dozen other considerations may emphasize the limitations of boarding. Where two are forced by circumstances to live for a time in furnished rooms or in boardinghouses, it makes a special call on their finest tact, patience and love to neutralize the effect of many conditions that they would never voluntarily choose.

Hotels give more independence but more isolation, more freedom, but also more loneliness. The unwelcome closeness of contact of boarding-houses is exchanged for an equally unwelcome aloofness and coldness. Hotels are excellent institutions for travelers or those desiring temporary quarters, but they pall quickly on lovers of a home. They have such an institutional atmosphere as you walk two blocks after leaving the elevator, through heavy, red-carpeted corridors, carrying a large key attached to a brass numbered arrangement the size of a young plate, and the only mark that differentiates your rooms from the others as you approach it, is the number 1422. It would be hard to imagine a wall motto "God Bless Our Home," hanging in a hotel. It would seem irreverence, with an undertone of sarcasm.

The elaborate array of dishes on the menu may attract for a few days, but you soon grow tired of the simplest articles of food masquerading under French aliases and you long for simple meals and simpler surroundings. You would like to see a boiled potato with the courage to stand up boldly and defiantly in spite of its humble origin, and not trying to slip into your good graces under the alibi of a foreign title. You long for plainer food and home cooking, for more genuine comfort and less gilt and glitter and decoration, where you can be truly your natural self, where you can even lean your elbows on the table if you feel like it. It is just an honest heart-hunger for a home.

Eating in restaurants has driven many a good young man into matrimony; living in boarding-houses and hotels later has driven many a man out of matrimony. The vain display, the vulgarity, the fictitious luxury, the constantly enforced contrast between your circumstances

and those of others, combine to create a restless, uncertain, irritating living far from conducive to happiness in marriage.

One vital note in the music of life is the sense of possession. In marriage it transforms the lonely pronoun “mine” into the one of larger, sweeter meaning “ours,” and the alchemy of love makes “mine” and “thine” interchangeable elements. It is the impelling spirit that makes homes, where the sense of dual possession in unity transforms a new picture, a new ring, a few new books, a new chair or new curtains into a real event that brings genuine pleasure. It is not the petty value of the things themselves that counts, for all that is best in the home would defy a tax assessor to discover, for it is ever the intrinsic and the intangible.

The advent of these new possessions responds to something deep in the human heart—the joy of united ownership, of building together for a larger future is what counts in the sacredness of making a home. It is this spirit that makes our simple geranium in the window seem greater and more real than someone else’s conservatory across the street. Home is the gathering together, under one roof, of all that is dearest and nearest to us. Like that earlier Eden given to a man and a woman, it can be made a real paradise if love, honour, comradeship and unity be its atmosphere.

V

The Wife's Settled Income



THE most vital problem of married life is its simplest problem. It is the money question in the home. It is the division of the family income in a domestic partnership. Its solution means putting the home firm on a business basis. If unmet and unanswered it has more assorted possibilities of disillusion, discord, dissatisfaction, deception and disunion to the square inch than any other subject in the vocabulary of matrimony. It can be settled for a lifetime—in a single hour.

Before the honeymoon reaches its first quarter this problem should be quietly promoted from the ranks of the unsolved. In a spirit of loving confidence and conference, in the interest of their united happiness, this question of the wife's settled income should be clearly and definitely understood between them. The amount of money involved may be only a trifle; but the principle means justice, and justice is no trifle. She seems in an atmosphere of sweet thoughtfulness and loving watchfulness over her happiness when he is the one who proposes this plan—a regular income for her as household queen with a private purse of her own. But should he, just drifting, let it remain in the realm of the unspoken, she should not permit pride to make her an accomplice in his silence.

When a man says at the marriage altar, "With all my worldly goods I thee endow" and two months later makes it necessary for her to resort to diplomacy to get seventy cents from him to pay the ice man, his memory needs repairing. Diplomacy in the home is the kindergarten class in duplicity.

When she sits preoccupied at the breakfast table, playing nervously with her knife and fork, and thinking so loud that she does not hear his request for a second cup of coffee; when she is so awed by the realization that somehow she must work up the courage to ask him for two dollars, and she turns over one plan after another for introducing the subject, giving an occasional side-glance at the clock to see how much time she still has left before he goes for the day, there is something wrong in the home financial system.

This is not a situation for humor; it is intense with pathos; there is in it an undertone of tragedy. It is a degradation of the dignity of wifehood, to make her feel a pensioner, a beggar in her own home. When a man puts his wife's love and her respect for him in pawn for two dollars, or any amount of money, he is likely to lose the ticket and be unable later to redeem the pledge. When she fears to speak to him about money, and undergoes sacrifice, self-denial and humiliation to avoid the ordeal, her love is scheduled for adjournment. It is true that "perfect love casteth out fear"; it is equally true that perfect fear finally casteth out love.

The husband who dolorously doles out dollars, under protest, on the installment plan, to meet family expenses, as if they were reluctant contributions to an outside charity, is viewing

home from a wrong perspective. When he requires his wife to mark down in a little book every item of expense, not to guide her in wise management but for his personal satisfaction, and then goes over it as an auditing committee, quizzing her in civil service style, on the wisdom of this expenditure, and the reason for that, he is mistaken about wanting a wife. What he needs is—a housekeeper, without pay. To be consistent, he should set up a cash register in the kitchen and have every purchase rung up and a voucher put in the drawer.

When he leaves on the corner of the mantelpiece, in the morning, just enough money to last through the day, while he is selfishly humoring every whim or wish of his own, there is a suggestion of running a home on the slot-machine principle—the mechanical delivery of scant supplies, through small investments, for immediate use.

There is an irritating assumption of superiority in man's managing of money, and a cowardly insistence on woman's irresponsibility and extravagance that is characteristic of some men. If a wife can be trusted with the motherhood of his children and their guardianship and training and the management of his home, surely she should be trusted with whatever amount he can afford to run the house, not to be extracted from him by daily "assessment," but by weekly or monthly allowance that will permit her to take a broad view of income and expenditure, to plan wisely and prudently. If she be extravagant she must be taught economy through money responsibility; she can never learn by any other method.

In the running of a household there are constantly little rills of incidentals that trickle away the funds; they can be known and realized only by the one who is spending; a week later the detail may be forgotten but the wife knows only that it was necessary at the time; but to be forced into the humiliating position where she has to give elaborate explanations of every trifle of expense is degrading to her and to him. A man would not risk subjecting his partner at the office to such indignity; how can he dare to do it to his partner at home?

The husband who splashes money in the home one week may let the weeks following be as dry as the bed of a mountain brook after a long, parched, rainless summer. You cannot keep the house wheels running by the water that is past. With this spasmodic supply of domestic funds there is usually an air of conscious generosity as if he were donating this money to his wife as a personal gift for which she should be grateful. In reality much of it may be already preempted by bills; the margin left for current expenses may be little. He usually has a vivid memory of the amount of his contributions, but a fine forgetfulness of the long intervals between them. She may have to face, too, that most humiliating and mean of all questions in home management: "What did you do with that ten dollars I gave you in February?" This method means unhealthy alternations between extravagance and penury. It is death to wise planning and systematic managing. It makes her the helpless slave to his moods and his emotions.

The wife should be the treasurer of the home funds, payable to her in the form of a settled income. Peculiar circumstances may modify methods in individual instances, but if the spirit be recognized as just and fair, the details can readily be adjusted.

When husband and wife, sitting in executive session, at the earliest possible moment in their married life, work out this little problem together they will find themselves nearer and dearer, more deeply conscious of the realness of their partnership, for they are consecrating money to love, not desecrating love to money. The wife's pride in being trusted, in being in his confidence, in being a factor in every plan of his, in having her advice and suggestions count with him, adds a tender, sweet, inspiring touch of new dignity to her wifeness. He is appealing to her head as well as her heart. She is to have real responsibility and she wants to prove worthy of it—and of him. Responsibility is a great gift; it is a great privilege. It develops, it strengthens, it unifies energy and increases mental and moral reserve. It is like the women burden-bearers of Martinique, who carry baskets on their heads—the heavier the burden the more erectly they walk.

In arranging the division of the family funds, the two, knowing the income upon which they may reasonably count, can figure out together what are the absolutely essential expenses that must be met, rent, food, insurance, and the incidentals of the household, including what business men term an allowance for depreciation, for wear and tear. This amount should be set aside weekly or monthly and assigned to the wife for her management. In addition there should be an allowance for her clothes on whatever scale their social standing, her needs and justice to the funds demands. She should further have some amount, decided upon between them, for her own private purse, her personal spending money to use just as she chooses. It is a minimum amount for trifles that increase her comforts, convenience, and pleasures. It is to be all her own, without inquiry, inquisition or interference.

In arranging the domestic finances the question of saving for the future, of accumulating a reserve for emergencies should be carefully considered by this house committee and the method accepted that represents their united wisdom. The whole problem is simplified in many homes by the wage-earner turning over to the home treasurer his weekly money and receiving for his personal expenses what his needs demand and the income warrants. He has not that petty feeling that he is being placed on an "allowance," for he is merely being relieved of a responsibility. He knows that whatever he gives will be wisely consecrated to their united interests, a fund administered by one for the happiness and good of both.

But business men, handling larger sums for use, investment and more ambitious planning, must be custodians of the bulk of their resources, leaving the stated income to the discretion of the home treasurer. Sweet conference on expenditures outside of the usual routine or on special economies in times of stress and storm make a joint session of the home partners a new strengthening of the bonds of unity and confidence.

Many men thoughtlessly fail to realize the importance of the wife's private purse. Whether the amount be large or small, whether it include additions to her wardrobe or not, is a matter of adjustment, but in itself it must ever bring a sweet sense of individuality and independence in trifles that is refreshing and inspiring. It is not giving "wages" as some husbands indignantly protest; it is assigning to one of the partners part of the dividends from the firm's success. This is simply attesting the husband's sense of justice, not debarring his generosity from occasional extra dividends.

There are husbands, generous by instinct and impulse, kind, loving, attentive and genuinely solicitous for the comfort and happiness of their wives who by some strange kink in their mental working would no more think of providing them with spending money of their own than they would of endowing a home for aged canaries. The wives may have charge accounts in half a dozen stores and the bills may be paid by check with never a word of protest and hardly a glance at the items. The household expenses may all be met on a scale of equal liberality; but of ready money of her own the wife may have little or nothing.

She is living a life of poverty in a deluxe edition. She may have to wait for her carriage because she has no money for a car or a cab. She wants to send a little money present to the old folks at a Christmas time or as a little birthday remembrance, and may be forced to seem mean because she really does not have it, and pride makes explanation seem disloyalty. She receives little favors from her women friends and feels humiliated at not being able to reciprocate. She foregoes the luxury of little charities, except they may be manifest in some form that she can have "charged." She may resort to subterfuges, lies, tricks, and petty devices that may mark the initial stage of the weakening of a strong, fine character.

She may borrow from her milliner and have the amount of the loan disguised on the next bill as "feathers." She may sell her dresses she has worn but two or three times, knowing she can easily "charge" new ones. She may surrender to a friend some prized little article of jewelry for far less than its value, swallowing with a sob the memory of its associations. She may plunge into bridge, on borrowed capital, with a feverish desire to win, as a desperate man may seek to repair his fortunes at Monte Carlo. The husbands may never guess the cost of their meanness or their thoughtlessness.

There are wives who have a strange dread, a misguided sense of humiliation, they can never quite master by reason, of "asking for money." This may lead many of them to "doing without" what they really need. Their lips may be mute, but their minds are working overtime; their hearts are filled with a restless, rankling rebellion. They feel a hurt pride that is not healthful for either husband or wife. The thought that comes uppermost, that rises persistently is, "If he really loved me, he would realize it. I would suffer anything rather than get money merely because I ask for it." And the husband, in blind blundering, may never know the real cause of many subtle changes in her attitude towards him and towards life.

Other women after studying the husband's mood as an aviator studies air currents, may secure by policy, flattery, wheedling or other artifice, as a concession what should be given them as a right. Others stint on the housekeeping, save at the expense of their own energy, health or strength in order to get a little money of their own.

The humorous papers tell stories of the seemingly absurd value some women put on money, without realizing the substratum of pathos and injustice. They picture cleverly the episode of two women in a street car; each frantically insisting on paying the fares, each struggling vigorously to come in second on the hunt for an elusive dime. They portray the easy, nonchalant way in which a man pays the two fares for himself and his friend. The man is not more generous than the woman; one of these women may be his wife who cannot afford the

liberality that distinguishes the husband. The bargain-hunting instinct of women exploited in newspaper stories as humorous, may again be but an instance of the false estimate of money value into which they are forced.

A man is unjust to his wife and to his children if he permits her to be untrained in the management of money, and the responsibility that comes with it. Should his disability or death throw suddenly upon her shoulders the burden of wage-earning or of business management, she should not have to meet this crisis unawares, learning then by sad experience the wisdom it should have been his pleasure to give her.

The settled income for the wife is important itself, but greater far are its significance as a recognition of true relationship, the individuality it recognizes, the freedom it confers, and the confidence it inspires.

The settled income is no wondrous panacea that cures all the wrongs and sorrows of married life. It is no magic formula that transforms discord into harmony by its utterance; it is no miracle worker in the home; but it clears the air and it brings union and unity on one great problem in the life of the two. Most wives who love will go down through the dark valley of poverty and sorrow, bravely, loyally and uncomplainingly if fate decide that they must, but in their hearts they resent not sharing fully with him in his prosperity. They are not willing to be invited to his fasts but be denied his feasts.

It is not the fact of the mere money itself but what they, without conscious analysis, feel that it implies. They may excuse temper, thoughtlessness, incompetency, coolness, seeming neglect and many other failings with the sentence that means so much to a hungry heart, "He must really love me after all or he would not provide so generously, often giving more than he can afford." She feels he is still standing bravely on guard between her and the world. The settled income may prove one of the water-tight compartments on the ship of matrimony—an excellent refuge in a storm of discord when the waves of doubt roll high.

VI

When Pride Comes Between



SO many of the little chafing problems of married life could be mastered, so many of the mists of misunderstanding could be dissipated by the sunshine of love, so many of the discords in the music of home could be translated into harmonies if false pride did not so often come between! Pride is a virtue if it be the right kind of pride, but, like every virtue, it has an understudy, a vice that cleverly imitates it, assumes its form, wears its livery and often deceives.

True pride is the guardian and protector of what is best in us; false pride is the sullen defender and apologist of our weakness. True pride makes us scorn to do a mean or a petty act, as treason to our truest self; it holds our standard ever high and our living in harmony with it; it fills us with the realization that only royal deeds harmonize with the kingship of our individuality. False pride ever fears what people may say or think, seeks to justify us when we know we are wrong and cares more for the semblance than for the reality, more for the shadow than for the substance. True pride thinks more of character than of reputation; false pride more of reputation than of character. It is this false pride that too often, in the home, stands between love and understanding, between love and forgiving, between love and forgetting and often threatens to dethrone the life-happiness of two. False pride, an excessive consciousness of the dignity of self, thinks too much of the importance of the solo, too little of the harmony of the duet. It is the swaggering, pompous air of a drum-major who thinks he is really the whole regiment.

Between husband and wife there often arise little differences of opinion on some topic of no real importance, involving no principle of right or wrong, but in a few moments the frank, genial interchange of views has warmed into a discussion and this into a heated argument and each may hold out regardless of the growing sultriness of the atmosphere in the desire to make the other surrender. This deadlock of false pride may be broken in an instant by the cooler and larger nature of the two saying with a smile: "Well, perhaps there is something to be said on both sides, and really, dear, it is not worth an argument, after all." Then peace and harmony may be restored without a hypocritic surrender of the individuality of either.

It is a false pride that leads either husband or wife to fear to acknowledge being in the wrong in any misunderstanding, to seek merely to pass it over without a word. Those infallible people who never make a mistake nor do a wrong, do not really belong to this world and they are probably too good to find congenial companions even in the next. There is danger in this method that unkind words, unexplained and unatoned, may leave a rankling wound that, if it heal at all, leaves a scar and a pang in remembrance. A few moments of loving explanation,

of clear, definite understanding, with no false pride coming between, is an antiseptic process of treating the hurt, before it paralyzes emotion. It removes the poison from a memory.

Through this pride, too, we often prevent wounds of unkindness and lack of thought from healing at all. Through our intense consciousness of them, reviving and re-reviving the memories in all their original vividness, we exaggerate and intensify the hurt. We carry a wounded emotion in a sling, as though it were a broken arm and thus make forgiving difficult and forgetting impossible.

This pride that comes so often from our supersensitiveness, is the slow petrifying of the better side of our natures. She may justify herself by saying, "If I did not love him so much I would not feel the hurt." If she loved more, if she loved enough, she would realize how small a matter is this pain that absorbs her compared with the greatness of her possession, the good qualities she is overlooking. Then would she forgive and—forget. Her pride is really injured more than her love. This pride kills real sympathy, for sympathy seeks to see a subject from the other's view-point, lovingly to interpret it as it may seem to the other as well as to oneself. Then, through this clear, double knowledge, the wisdom of the wisest course may come; but false pride stolidly and stubbornly sees everything only from its own point of vision.

All misunderstandings between husband and wife should be met in the very beginning and never allowed merely to work themselves out. It is a cowardly recklessness, the "don't care" spirit of false pride that urges or permits this easy-going philosophy. Were a fire to be discovered in the home, if it were only the tiniest flame beginning its devastation of curtains and furniture, we would not say, "Let it burn itself out." Our instant, instinctive action would be to stifle it, to kill it at any cost; but too often do we let the fire of discord and of misunderstanding feed on our finest emotions, burn away love, confidence, sweetness, truth, trust, sympathy—all that is dearest to us—while we stand by, blindly nursing our pride, our petty sense of dignity. We stand in the centre of the stage of our self-esteem. We will not be the first to speak, we will not be the first to sue for peace, the first to make up. We dare to permit this pride to wreck our happiness, as though any honest pride could be too much to pay to secure it or to preserve it. It is always the larger nature that is first to surrender. Pride that beggars the happiness of two is dearly bought by the petty satisfaction of not being the first to bring the joy of reconciliation to the hearts of both, who need each other.

Life has so much real pain and sorrow, so many heavy clouds floating over the sky of home, care and trouble that seemingly no human foresight can prevent, that it seems almost extravagance to work overtime manufacturing troubles merely to offer them as sacrifices on the altar of vanity, this false pride that stifles life's finest dignity.

Pride, too, has a subtle way of putting confidence into a cold storage that often kills it. Mutual interchange of confidences between husband and wife should be fresh, spontaneous and ever living. Some people bind confidence with bandages of egotism and conceit and adulterated vanity till it can no more move nor breathe than a mummy of the time of Rameses could escape from its spiced wrappers. This means death, not life.

Sometimes the husband, putting on his full armour of pride, says to himself: "There is a subject that, if she had the proper regard for me, she would speak of-it to me," and she, drawing closer to her the perfumed mantle of her dignity, says: "If he were interested in me at all, he would surely ask." When in this foolish conflict of prides there is danger that Cupid, if he do his duty, will drag confidence away off into the silence and wait till they come to their senses again. Two negatives may make an affirmative, but two silences do not make speech. When pride gets into this delicate condition, where it is constantly fearing a draught, it should be taken seriously in hand and gently but firmly chloroformed into oblivion.

Why, even in the Garden of Eden, where the first married couple resided, in a beautiful place where they lived, absolutely rent free, and they had no neighbours to criticize them and they were making a name for themselves and winning immortality in literature as the first tenants, the pride of both led to disaster. And pride has been coming between love and happiness in this world of ours ever since that day.

VII

Marriage Success on Business Lines



ATRIMONY is the greatest business in the world. It employs the largest number of people, for the longest period of time, and has the bulk of the world's capital. Most of the other business enterprises are held in trust for this one. They are tributary to it, feeders to it, providers for it, preparers for it.

There is no faintest shadow of irreverence in calling matrimony a business, no slightest tinge of disrespect to its sweetness, its sacredness, its sentiment, its poetry or its possibilities. Marriage is the greatest business for it keeps busy most of the people. In its perfection and in its ideal, it means two living at their highest and best as individuals and in united harmony. It is consecrated duality in unity. It means life partnerships of two in the pursuit of happiness. This most important business should be conducted on business lines. There should be constant, concentrated effort to make it a success. Success comes not from drifting, but wisely working.

If men and women put into their married life the same seriousness of thought, intensity of purpose, patience, sacrifice and determination to make it a success that they devote to seeking to make a business prosper, the world would be transformed. Failures would be few; divorce, the bankruptcy of matrimony, would be rare and the two could command success by their united determination to win it.

Success in matrimony is in reality a far simpler problem than success in business. In the commercial world, sometimes, despite his finest foresight, his wisest plans, his keenest judgment, a man may have bravely to face defeat, knowing he has done his best. Those whom he has trusted may betray; some new invention may suddenly supersede his valuable machinery and degrade it to the rank of mere metal. A financial cyclone may wreck in an hour the towering strength of years of toil and effort and struggle. A powerful competitor by cruel tactics may ruin him. He may be engulfed in the maelstrom of another's failure.

In business he is dependent on people he cannot always control, on conditions he cannot always master. But success in marriage depends finally and solely on the two themselves. It is not what they have but what they are, not what comes to them but how they meet it, that counts. Sickness, sorrow, trial, misfortune and poverty may even make them nearer and dearer to each other, in truer union and finer unity. What they suffer *for* each other and *with* each other brings them closer together; what they suffer *from* each other gradually forces them apart.

Man does not expect to succeed in business by merely starting it and honouring it with the sunshine of his presence. He realizes it is not an automatic music machine where he has merely to put on a success record, start the mechanism and then sit back comfortably and

delight his ears with the music of prosperity. If he wants dividends of success he must pay the assessments of effort. If we want real lasting harmony and melody in married life we must make our own music. It means the collaboration of two, never the lonely contribution of one.

In business when problems arise a man seeks to solve them; if inharmonies threaten to destroy his success he seeks to remove them; if one method fails he tries another. He does not let things drift or work themselves out some way; he knows it is his business to find out where things are wrong and how he can right them; he does not shut his eyes to troubles and think he is curing them by obscuring them. Men are often blind, or resigned in a cowardly way, to unpleasant conditions in the home partnership that they would never surrender to in their office business. They often accept as inevitable in their home life what they could change if they only would. It is unjust to both for the husband or wife to accept any wrong condition, if any amount of effort will set it right. When all methods fail, bearing bravely may be moral strength; before they have been even tested, bearing meekly is sheer weakness.

There are people who fan themselves into serene self-satisfaction with the thought that they are heroically accepting the shadows and shallows of married life, its preventable pain, sorrow and discord, when they are really only too lazy mentally or inert morally to take a bold, firm stand to win the freedom of thought, harmony and peace they desire. It is not patient tolerance, fine forgiving and forgetting, gentle bearing and hopeful waiting. It is a false resignation that their reverence for the clinking approval of the cash register would not permit them to tolerate in their business down-town. They are not considering matrimony as a business they must make succeed; they are degrading it to the gamble class. They have the assumed airy indifference of a man who has drawn a blank in a lottery and is trying hard to forget it. They are not seeking to make the best of some phase of married life, for this implies direct, consecrated, purposeful effort; but they are becoming resigned to the worst of it. It is a brand of hopelessness that does not deserve a hero medal.

There are little rifts in the lute of happiness in married life, that, unnoted or uncorrected, widen with the months and years until the music of love, sweetness, tenderness and comradeship becomes mute. So little might have saved the situation in the beginning. There are trifling differences and discords that a few moments of listening, a few moments of kindly wisdom, conference and explanation might set right. But foolish pride may deter and a heart is wounded; unrest, vague misunderstanding, chafing protest and blighting suspicion dethrone confidence, and a sad growing apart may darken the years. They manage these matters better in business. The conditions are different, the elements are not identical, but the principles are the same.

When an excited customer enters a business house with some grievance, real or fancied, parades a schedule of wrongs and injustices as long as a tariff bill and starts in on a high-keyed monologue of protest, exploding epithets of denunciation and filling the air with sparks of phrases sulphurous with indignation, the wise man of business remains cool and calm. The temptation to become emotionally overheated and to match sarcasm with sarcasm he resists. He realizes that by losing his temper he may lose a customer, that it would be

unwise, it would not pay. He waits patiently for a comma of intermission, a slight slackening in the cascading torrent of speech.

He smiles apologies, he presses the soft pedal of expression, he explains, defers, conciliates. He argues gently, appeals to reason, to justice, to pride; he seeks to create an atmosphere of cordiality. He feels a pleasing glow of triumph in the consciousness that he has met an unpleasant situation wisely, calmed the angry waters by the oil of his tact and perhaps converted an irritated customer into almost a friend.

He has mastered his mood for dollars. Why does he not try the same method at home? Why does he not answer gently the first few words of a discord there, disarm the sting of a sarcasm by a smile, forego the victory of his logical position by a word of tenderness or a caress, that gives him a finer triumph through a sweet appeal to sentiment, the logic of the heart? The phrase that irritated him to retort still more bitter may have been unintentional, unweighted with the meaning he ascribes to it. It may have been only the expression of her physical nervousness, the strain of a day of hard duties, vague longing, repressed weariness, worry, an unmastered pain of grief manifesting themselves in a way she did not intend or hardly knew. It is as a sigh sometimes creeps up from the heart to the lips without our knowing just why it came or how much it meant. She really needed sympathy, and sweetness, and soothing, and comfort—understanding not condemnation.

When a man finds that he and his business partner do not agree, when friction intensifies and they do not confer and plan together as of old, he does not storm and rage and fume and thus widen their separation. He does not build up a solid wall of coldness and silence and studied indifference. He waits for an opportune moment, nerves himself to be easy, gracious and kindly, and, without anger or blame, talks fully, frankly and freely. He says in a tone that will not make his partner feel that he is being put through the third degree:

“We do not seem to have struck it right somehow recently; we are on the wrong trail; we are drifting and we must find our way back. We are in this business together to make it a success; it needs us both; we need each other. There is something wrong somehow. I may be at fault or you may be to blame, perhaps neither of us is cut out for an archangel. Let us talk it all over quietly and see if we can get our bearings; let us call a new deal and start all over.” There is a manly, honest, business ring to this and if any hope of unity remain this spirit of conference will reveal it.

But there may be in his home firm a little woman who realizes that *they* too are drifting. She knows down in her heart that she loves him and she needs him and that he loves her, but somehow little discords are separating them. The song dies on her lips when she is working in the little home that once was their heaven, and there is a moisture comes in her eyes that dims them but does not bring the relief of real tears. It seems as though she were in a fog, and she has lost her bearings, and the love-laden craft of their happiness has somehow slipped from its moorings in the silence and the dark and is drifting far out to the great open sea. And she feels hopeless and helpless, she wants to; do the right thing but she does not know what she should do or say that will be right. They are just drifting, and she is tired and worn, heart-

sick and heart-hungry and she wants to be comforted by loving arms as we soothe a frightened, sobbing child. She cannot find her way back—alone.

If the husband, so wise in his office, were to transplant his business wisdom to the home, he could bring back the atmosphere of the old courtship days in a single hour. Seeking not the blame of either but the happiness of both, with no shadow of recrimination, he could tell her sweetly, seriously and calmly, with the occasional punctuation mark of a caress or a gentle pressure of the hand, that they need each other and they have somewhere stumbled on a wrong trail and must go back together hand in hand to find the right path, and they will get light and love from each other and they will forgive and forget and they too will “have a new deal and begin all over.” The resulting happiness is foreordained. It is merely business wisdom. It is consecrated common sense, bringing the two home partners closer together and inspiring the home firm with new life, courage and confidence.

Success in business life demands constant watchfulness, wisdom and work. No business thrives on neglect. Like a clock it requires regular winding and frequent setting; left to itself it runs down. A plot of grass, whether the size of a pocket handkerchief or a ten acre lot, left uncared, runs to weeds. There are men who take no more genuine interest in their home beyond paying the bills, than if they were merely occasional guests. They seem to regard home as a mere dormitory and a dining-room. They often wonder, in a vague way, why their marriage is not successful. If it were a success it would not be merely a wonder, it would be a miracle.

There are wives who spend most of their days outside the home walls, devoting their golden hours of possibility to dress, visits, theatres, gossip, idleness, frivolity and amusement. The house that they might convert into a shrine of love and peace and happiness is delegated to the care of servants; their children are practically orphaned, under the trusteeship of nurses. These women are losing the realities of life in chasing shadows. They are mere lodgers in their own homes. They are too much interested in the sidelines of life to spend earnest thought on making the real business, marriage, a success. They are often the ones who, in bursts of feminine confidence, bemoan the failure of their married life and display their robes of martyrdom. They are incendiaries of their own happiness and that of another, yet so self-blinded that they delight to collect the insurance returns of unmerited sympathy.

In business there are minor annoyances, trivial irritations and petty trials, usually taken for what they are worth, accepted as “all in the day’s work,” seen in their proper perspective, passed by with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders and forgotten in a few moments. In married life trifles are often exaggerated, augmented by argument, given a fictitious value, vitality and force out of all proportion to their real import.

Sometimes it takes only three minutes from unjust impatience over an underdone chop to a fever-heat temperature, followed by thunder rumblings of protest, dark clouds, lightning flashes of super-heated indignation, sudden coldness, falling barometer, and a rain of tears. One stalks out of the dining room, leaving a trail of smoke and sparks of irritation like a

speeding locomotive, while the other buries her head in her arms near the untouched dishes and just sobs in the silence, for her world of happiness has come to an end—again.

Electricity sometimes seems snail-like in its motion compared with this sudden, silly change of atmosphere caused by magnifying a trifle that should have been ignored altogether or made the subject of a jest that would bring smiles and sunshine to both. The whole attitude is wrong; it is all unnecessary, cruel, preventable. It really is poor business judgment, shutting off rich dividends of possible happiness for a trifle.

In successful business partnership there is cheerful conference and counsel whenever it seems necessary to unite the best thought of both on the problem of both, but there is respect for each other's position, duties and responsibility. They avoid even the suggestion or semblance of intrusion or interference. They realize that their united strength comes from the fact that each is doing a work distinctly different from the other.

This business wisdom of non-interference might well be introduced into many home firms. When a husband is tempted by a meddling spirit of bossism to run every detail of the home and assumes omniscience on every phase of housekeeping from the cellar to the cupola, let him think for a moment how his partner down-town would resent a similar intrusion and then quietly subside into silence. The wife too must realize that while her keen, fresh mind may serve her husband in some business problem that troubles him and which he carefully presents to her, she should be satisfied with being ready to help in need; but she usurps undue authority when she actually attempts to control his business for him.

No business is really successful unless it is yielding fair dividends on the capital invested. Even this success may be considered a partial failure if wiser management will double or treble its returns and if many of its possible revenue-producing resources remain unworked and neglected. A man does not flatter himself that his business is a success if it merely pays expenses, yet he may be too easily resigned to a marriage partnership that is just jogging along, in a dull, lifeless, colourless way with hardly enough vitality to have even a serious discord. It is like a patient who is too weak even to cough. That home firm requires not merely revitalizing but reorganization on a new, real, pulsing, red-blood basis.

When a business firm is passing through deep financial waters, when there is trouble and discord in pulling through a crisis and dissolution of the firm seems tremblingly near, they seek to keep the inharmony secret from even employees who may perhaps inadvertently reveal it and precipitate a crash. Husband and wife are often not so careful nor so prudent in safeguarding the sanctity of home conditions as they should be and often betray the impending insolvency of the home firm in weak confidences that may make mastery of the condition almost impossible. The darker the situation the more it demands the strongest light of wisdom to illumine it. The more nearly snapping is the tie between husband and wife the more insistent is the necessity that they should stand together. Reputation needs most protection at its weakest point.

There are times in business, as all men know, when enforced expansion, the better fortifying of prosperity already attained or heroic effort to keep from being forced back by conditions,

requires the investment of new capital. In married life there are many trying hours, when the glooming clouds of doubt and fear hang low on the horizon, when one, or both, is passing through the dark valley of a temptation, a trial, a test, when the pressure of conditions threatens to silence forever their trust in each other. There are times when they enter a dead calm of life where no faint breeze of inspiration or impulse fills the idle sails of the craft of their living, and they feel that they are slipping away from each other. Then new investment is necessary to keep the matrimonial stock from falling too far below par, new capital of love, faith, loyalty, consideration, cheerfulness and tenderness.

In marriage true love, trust and real comradeship often unconsciously utilize all the wisest business wisdom in making the union that is so near and dear and all to them a success. By their own sterling common sense and fine soul instinct, they solve many problems so naturally that it hardly seems they have recognized the problems existed.

VIII

Little Compromises for Happiness



HIS life of ours is a constant series of compromises, of concessions, of surrenders of what we hold dearest, and acceptances of what seems second best. That for which we have nobly struggled may fail us and we find what consolation we can among the wreckage of our hope. We make sacrifices of our desires on the altar of expediency; we pocket our pride in the interest of our purse; we smile over present loss in the hope of possible future gain. We travel along the line of ambition by slow freight when we had fondly dreamed of whizzing through on the “limited.” We surrender at the Waterloo of a hope and bravely look to regaining at the next battle. We bow to custom while we inwardly rebel at the obeisance. We play at battledore² between fear of the world on the one hand and approval of conscience on the other.

It is compromise, sacrifice, paying tribute, placating power, making terms with the inevitable—compromise with someone, something, some system. Sometimes it is involuntary; sometimes under protest, with the same variety of cheerfulness we manifest when we surrender our watch to a highwayman. Some of these compromises are unjust, unwise, cowardly; some are necessary.

There is one place where the spirit of compromise has only its beautiful side—that is, the home. In the home where we can turn a key and lock our world in and the smaller world out, compromise reaches its highest dignity. It is love manifesting itself in kindness, thoughtfulness, tenderness, forbearance and self-surrender. Love makes such compromise an instinct of the soul. It is as inseparable from real love as perfume is from the rose that exhales it. Compromise, in its true sense, is settling differences by mutual concessions. To be real it must ever be mutual. If the spirit of compromise be ever on the part of the husband only or the wife only, it is unjust. It then means absolute selfishness on the part of one, stimulated and intensified by the unselfishness of the other. It makes a Dead Sea of love wherein the waters of affection flow without issuance— constant assessments with no dividends.

If marriage meant the wedding of a saint and an angel there would be no problems to solve, no perfection to attain, no progress to make. This may be why there are no marriages in heaven. On earth, except in the pages of fiction, it is different; husband and wife are usually strongly human. No matter how lovingly united or how sweet their accord, they never have the same temperaments, tendencies and tastes. Their needs are different, their manner of looking at things is not identical, and in varying ways their individualities assert themselves. Concession is merely a buffer or spring in the home machinery. It eases the jolts, lessens the

² A game, from which badminton was developed.

friction, distributes the strain, reduces the wear and tear, prevents each part from injuring itself or another. Concession in the home is the fine diplomacy of the heart. It is delicate self-adjustment to the individuality of another. It is self-sacrifice in trifles without sacrifice of principles.

A man who before marriage used to write his initials fourteen times on an evening dance-card may, after attaining the dignity of husbandhood, claim he is too tired to go into society, too wearied to go to entertainments or to make calls, though his wife may still desire to see her old friends and to keep alive some of the wires connecting the home with the outside world. Here is an opportunity for a compromise, for him to realize that the pleasures of both are to be considered, that a graceful surrender occasionally to her desire is but equity. If he do it under visible protest, with the disguised cheerfulness of one going to the dentist's, he has killed the merit of his compromise.

If she feel that during the whole evening away from home he is suffering the orthodox after-death fate of the wicked, he has spoiled it all, wrecked the pleasure of both. He should make her radiant in the thought that he has been glad to do it if it gave her a little change and extra happiness. His deference to her wishes will stimulate in her a desire to reciprocate, to make some sweet little sacrifice for him and never let him know how much it may cost her.

There may be some simple dress of hers that he loves to have her wear. It has memories or associations or something else that pleases him. She knows it does not fit well in the back, and that the sleeves are actually two seasons behind the times, and no one wears them that way now. He may be in blissful ignorance of the awfulness of a woman daring to defy fashion, but at home, some rainy night, when no one will make a call, it really would not hurt much if she were sweetly to put on this dress unexpectedly—just to please him. Little compromises and concessions make up much of the poetry of married life; standing ever squarely on one's rights constitute its prose.

At any critical moment if both express, at the same time, a desire to defer to the other's taste, the result is foreordained for happiness. This makes matrimony not merely union, but unison and unity; it makes it a duet rather than two solos. Matrimony is not a game of chess where one must be victor; it more resembles true conversation where the pleasure arises from the united contributions. In the choice of a home, in the matter of furnishing, in the question of servants, in the management of the household, occur daily little problems that seem to solve themselves in the spirit of compromise, of quietly talking matters over, of gentle conference of two, working to the attainment of a common aim and a single ideal. These, after all, are only questions of taste and of judgment; often more subtle and vital are those problems that relate to temperament.

Sometimes a word of impatience may bring its echoing reply in the same spirit to the lips of the other, but a second's firmness, just a momentary self-control, an instant's translation of the thought into another key, of sweetness and sympathy, and the desecrating discord has been passed in safety. Sometimes, too, a silence of gentle reproof may be oil of compromise on the troubled waters.

Most of the surrenders in married life are in trifles where it really makes no difference which surrenders. The great questions, the large problems, usually unfold all their phases under the sunshine of conference, and the issue is the dual wisdom in a single verdict which is unanimous. If the matter be vital and the jury of two cannot agree on a verdict, then it seems part of the wisdom of compromise for the one who is the abler judge of what is proper and fitting in the special instance to decide the momentous question with the force of a final vote.

There are occasionally topics of conversation upon which the two cannot agree, where the husband or the wife feels the rightness or wrongness of a certain subject with an intensity that seems to brook no opposition. It may be as far outside of the field of logic as the most distant star is beyond the solar system,—then what is the use of trying to put new life into a dead issue by discussion? When the signs “Thin ice” are conspicuous, it really might seem like prudence to confine the conversational skating nearer to the shore line. Argument in general is dangerous, and often a graceful dropping of the subject is a kindly admission that there may be two sides to the question.

Do you not think we often expect too much of those who are dear to us and that this very exaggeration may often render us unjust? The optimistic effort to make the best of things, to look as closely as possible on the sunny side of life and its problems, to keep away from needless worry and useless regret will do much towards lubricating the wheels of the domestic regime. It is a talent worthy of cultivation in the home—the special ability not to see certain little inharmonies that may adjust themselves if they are unnoted.

The spirit of compromise does not demand a continuous performance in the way of self-surrender and self-sacrifice; it does not require ceasing to be a voice and becoming an echo; it does not imply or justify any loss of individuality. It means simply the instinctive recognition of the best way out of a difficulty, the quickest tacking to avoid a collision, the kindly view of tolerance in the presence of the weakness and errors of another. It is the courage to meet an explanation half-way, the generosity to be the first to apologize for a discord, the largeness of mind that does not fear a sacrifice of dignity in surrendering in the interests of the highest harmony of two rather than the personal vanity of one. The spirit of compromise rolls away many of the stones from the pathway of love and happiness.

IX

Providing for the Future



HERE one problem that dominates the home, an obtrusive, pervasive problem that oftentimes fills the whole horizon of life, one that, like Banquo's ghost³, "will not down"; it is the ever-present question of home financing. When we have mastered the "to have," the problem of the "to hold" confronts us. It is the question of providing for the home, which can never be properly answered until we realize that "provide" is a verb we must learn to conjugate in two tenses—present and future.

There is in our American life, too often, a blind optimism in living up to an income, in assuming that because the sun of prosperity shines warmly today there is no need of providing umbrellas for a possibly rainy tomorrow. Those who wisely live within an income rarely have to face the problem of trying to live without one. There are two simple guarantees against future poverty and dependence on others, two great safeguards for home and family—a bank-book and an insurance policy. They represent the material defense of the home, a bulwark of love's forethought standing strong and firm in the hour of need.

Providing for those nearest and dearest to us is no special virtue for which we should receive a gold medal and a halo. It should not be construed as just a duty; it is greater and bigger and sweeter than duty—it is a privilege that is ours alone. Financial independence can be secured by most men only by hard, careful saving. It means preparing in times of peace for the hour when fate may wage war against us, being ready for any sudden storm of sorrow, trial, affliction, accident or adversity, and holding poverty for a time at bay in trying hours when the individual is unable to stand bravely between his loved ones and the world.

Saving means wise economy, careful planning, thoughtful management and prudent forethought in handling the home funds, be they large or small. If met in the proper spirit, it brings husband and wife into closer harmony, more loving cooperation and deeper recognition of mutual helpfulness. The wife, too, then becomes a money earner, but it is the sweet atmosphere of her home, where she belongs; she is practically earning money by her wise economy and her wise saving. The savings bank is the best and most practical way of keeping together small amounts of money, for it is safe, conservative, pays interest and is available when it becomes necessary to call on this reserve.

Systematic thrift will accomplish more than spurts and spasms of saving. If the members of the home finance committee decide that they can afford to set aside monthly or weekly a

³ A character in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. He is at first an ally to Macbeth. Later, Macbeth in his lust for power sees Banquo as a threat and has him murdered. Banquo's ghost returns causing Macbeth to react with alarm during a public feast.

regular stated sum from the family income, it should be reserved religiously. This surplus should be considered as not really belonging to them at the time but merely as part of a little fortune they are preparing to come into at a later date. Saving does not imply penuriousness in the home life, but just wise watchfulness against the tyranny of the unnecessary, guarding against the little leakages in home expenses, and pitching the key of living in proper harmony with the incoming funds.

There are times when the needs of the home are so pressing and the income so small that it requires most careful straining merely to keep the ship afloat and saving seems impossible, but even here the true spirit of saving may serve to keep at the lowest possible point the creeping invasion of debt that must somehow be paid later. Debt becomes a hard mortgage to be paid off when times brighten, a heavy, clogging burden easier to put on than to cast off.

The savings bank is an excellent reserve in hours of sudden need, but when the breadwinner of the home is called forever from his defense of the family, an insurance policy often proves of inspiring helpfulness in the dark hour of loneliness and need. The very best wedding-gift that a young husband can make his bride is an insurance policy. It carries with it a conviction of starting out right, it is a guarantee that living or dead his protection still will be the constant atmosphere of her life. The wedding-ring may bear its consecrating inscription, "Yours while life lasts," but the policy tells of love not ended with life, of love that spreads over her the wings of guardianship even from beyond the grave. It is vital that the insurance question should by all means be solved as early as possible in married life.

No amount of money spent on little luxuries for the wife, no unbroken record for Saturday boxes of candy, no loyal observance of birthdays and other red-letter days on the calendar of love, no acts of thoughtfulness, nor graceful attentions nor easy-going liberality in household expenses, can ever compensate for the treason to love implied in forsaking the duty of insurance. The husband's square, inevitable duty is to insure his life if he can possibly meet his premiums. The amount of his policy should be as large as he can afford, with due recognition of his resources and his other responsibilities. Many men who carry a twenty-five thousand-dollar fire-insurance policy on their store or factory have only a three-thousand or five-thousand-dollar policy on their life.

Insurance should not be unthinkingly put in the luxuries class. It should ever be faced as one of the stern, inevitable necessities of life that have an irritating way of rising superior to argument, like rent, food, fuel, taxes, light, clothing and other unsuppressible and omnipresent elements of home living. Men whose hearts are in the right place on the insurance issue, bothered in the day-by-day battle with the seemingly immediate problems, often through mere thoughtlessness defer their manifest duty. Mere intentions to insure, no matter how good and generous, amount to nothing unless translated into actual deeds. It is not the seed we meant to sow in life, but the seed we have sown that brings the harvest. Grocers, butchers and other tradesmen will not accept his intentions as collateral when dealing with his heirs.

Wives are often afflicted with a strange hesitancy, an oversensitive delicacy, in broaching the subject of insurance to their unspeaking husbands. They fear that the suggestion might be misinterpreted, that they might be deemed mercenary or some other wildly improbable thing; so in a really cowardly way, that throws into eclipse their own rights and their duty to their children, they suffer in silence what they feel is a slight of love's consideration. Their simplest expression on the subject might have acted as an alarm clock on the sleeping conscience of the husband, wakened him to his duty and stirred him to instant action. The result of this would have been greater peace of mind to all concerned, and a hardly noticeable increase of present expenditure.

For the future protection of the family, for a given sum of money, insurance will yield greater returns than a savings bank which it so admirably supplements. Two or three annual deposits in a bank mean at the death of the depositor merely the return of his capital with interest; a single payment in insurance, shortly followed by the decease of the insured, gives prompt payment of the full amount of the policy at the time of greatest need. The regular date at which premiums must be paid acts as a wonderful impelling incentive to thrift, which the bank, with no such leverage, cannot inspire.

Until the questions of saving and insurance, the two great provisions for the future of the family, are fully met in the home, one of the great problems of married life remains unsolved.

X

Pulling Together Through a Crisis



HAVE you ever thought how war or a great common calamity, awful as they are, unifies a nation? Petty differences between political parties fade into nothingness as they face together a common danger or a common grief; the courage, strength and reserve power of the people is focussed in a supreme united effort; the artificial walls of class distinction fall as too trifling to be considered for a moment. Society is fused by the very pressure into closer companionship and deeper communion in the unity of a common humanity. The key-note of the universal soul is struck in each. Personal selfishness abdicates that the welfare of the whole may reign. The electric thrill of a common kinship and a common destiny vitalizes and regenerates the nation. Then brotherhood, for a time, becomes a living, pulsing fact—not a poet's radiant dream.

When the nation is passing through a crisis, it is only by loyally working together that the people emerge again into the sunlight of peace and prosperity. What is true of the nation is true of the family. A crisis in the affairs of a household, if met in the proper spirit, means a new benediction of love, a new restfulness of the deepened sense of mutual dependence, sweet, silent, sincere sympathy, tenderness grown more subtle and a feeling of protection that underneath every sorrow are the supporting arms of mutual love. There is a soul tonic in the pervading consciousness of a last resource in each other's devotion no matter how high the waves of sorrow may roll, or how threatening their foaming invasion. This is the spirit of pulling together through a crisis that leaves a golden trail of strange happiness in the memory of a vanquished sorrow that threatened to submerge us.

It is not our days of greatest joy that we look back upon with most pleasure; it is our time of struggle and effort, of conquered hardships, of pain outlived, of sorrow survived, of failure and of grief transmuted into something higher, truer, uplifting. It is when all these have grown fainter in the perspective of time, with their sharp angles dulled, that we recall them when we are in better conditions, and can then review them with even a peaceful sense of calm.

Have you ever noted how successful men of business delight to tell the story of their early struggles? When gathered together in frank, easy talk, if one of them speaks of the days when stomach and purse were both empty, it will start a series of hard-luck stories around the table. Each man seems to take a diver's pride in relating how far down he went, and how long he stayed under the waters of oblivion before coming to the surface. There is in these stories no note of bitterness or pessimism. They sing the inspiring triumphant music of optimism, telling man's victory over obstacles, opposition, trial and poverty.

We must all face trouble, care, sorrow, grief. It is how we face it, how we battle, how we stand the strain, that really counts. If we have a loved and loving one to stand bravely by us, for whom and with whom we can battle, heart to heart, made nearer and dearer by the united conflict, then we should feel we have been more than blessed. It is the lonely fight that is hardest. When no heart inspires us with the sympathy that is an atmosphere needing no words, when no hand reaches instinctively out to ours in the stillness and darkness and meets ours in a clasp of inspiration and 'new strength—then the battle is hard indeed. Plants grow most in the darkest hours preceding dawn; so do human souls. Nature always pays for a brave fight. Sometimes she pays in strengthened moral muscle, sometimes in deepened spiritual insight, sometimes in a broadening, mellowing, sweetening of the fibres of character,—but she always pays.

Into every home come days when the clouds of trouble hang low, when sorrow shadows the doorway, when the hand of affliction tightens the heart-strings; when the light of hope dims, nickers and darkens into despair; when sickness comes, and its master, death, holds the trembling scale of life; when our very soul seems heavy with an untold grief. These are but some of the crises that husband and wife must meet—somehow. How they meet them rests solely with the two who must solve the problem. It cannot be met by others. Sorrow never recognizes a proxy vote. We must ourselves elect how we will meet our problems.

A period of business depression or failure, the loss of position, or other reverses, the cutting down of income and the many dangerous sequels to this dire disease, may bring the husband and wife face to face with a financial crisis. It is the entrance to a time of stringency, strain and sacrifice, with no exit made visible even by the telescope of optimism. It means a reconstruction of the home regime on siege lines. There is a re-classifying of household expenses and many of the luxuries are quietly removed from consideration, and many of the old necessities are promoted to the luxury class.

Financing, in times such as these, rises from a mere science to the dignity of an art, and every dollar has to work overtime and do the duty of two or three. Chafing restrictions take the place of the old freedom, wants grow impudent and insistent, and a new atmosphere fills the home. It is a situation requiring slow, careful watchfulness as that of a sea captain, standing on the bridge of an ocean steamer and directing the snail-like progress of his ship under slow steam, through a heavy fog.

There is danger of fretting, blame, recrimination, protest and lack of sympathy on the part of the wife, met by a tendency to coldness, crossness, bitterness, anger, hopelessness, sulks, sarcasm or despair on the side of the husband. When conditions are darkest it is no time for blame of either; it is the hour when each should forget self in seeking to inspire the other. When conditions are darkest, the lamp of love should be kept burning brightest. This is an occasion where the two should pull together. You cannot move and guide a boat properly with one oar; it requires the two, on opposite sides, to move in harmony.

A spirit of unselfishness, of making the best of things, of not taking trouble too seriously, of laughing away little inconveniences instead of erecting a monument of a moan to them,

counting the blessings that remain, thinking more of the salvage than of the loss, realizing the sweet duty and privilege of the stronger to be brave for the sake of the weaker—all helps greatly in the crisis. Such an experience is not the most awful in the world. In the later days, if it has drawn the two into closer harmony and fuller realization of mutual dependence, it will be but a happy memory of an episode, the dawning of real living.

They may even later laugh merrily over that meagre Christmas dinner they had in their one little room the year the factory failed, when they gave fancy French names to the simplest dishes and helped each other to wine that their imagination transformed from water, and gave orders in dignified society manner to the serving maid who did not exist, and did other brave, foolish little things to hearten each other. They had determined that this Christmas should not be sad, and they were almost afraid to look into each other's eyes for fear of breaking down.

There were the extravagantly mendacious letters they wrote home about the building of the new wing to the house, their trouble with the servants, the parties they attended, the beautiful necklace her husband gave her on her birthday, when in reality all he could put around the throat he loved was his arms with a clasp made of his hands, and the plays and operas of a New York season, just because they were too proud to let the old folks know and they were going to fight and to win together—somehow.

Then there was that quaint, old German landlord who used to call every day for the unpaid rent and spoke with such peculiar phrases and half-digested idioms. It all seems tinged with humour now, but it was appallingly serious when they were living through it. Its pathos and its sordidness and its tragedy have been sweetened and haloed by love, and transformed into joy in memory, because they pulled through the crisis together, and almost all they had in the world was just each other. These are the things that take the sting from memory and bring the strength and inspiration of outlived sorrow, strain and struggle to lighten any future trials they may have to face.

There are real sorrows that make mere poverty seem wealth by comparison. There is the standing together by the sick bed of a dear little one, in the hush of a dimly lighted room, watching, waiting, fearing and hoping. Then come long days and longer nights when weak, worn and wearied, each looks for hope in the other's eyes, when all life is reduced to moments; when the light of hope dies and they face their great sorrow—together. Then must they meet the slow, creeping tide of long days of loneliness and emptiness of life when the thought of a child's laughter forever silenced brings a pang of anguish that no mere words can deaden. The gentle mutual thoughtfulness, wistful watchfulness and tender-handed love of each ministering to the other lightens and lessens their journey through this Gethsemane in the lives of two.

When the mantle of disgrace falls on the shoulders of someone near to both husband and wife, and a hurt pride and a wounded sense of honour threatens to leave an ugly scar, when their natures seem to grow bitter and resentful at this pain and shame coming to them who are innocent, then together must they meet it and, together, must each be a source of strength to the other.

There are crises, too, where misunderstandings, begun as a trifle, augmented by that clever circumstantial evidence that so deftly fits into a theory, shake the foundations of faith, and doubt wedded to suspicion kills confidence. Then a calm conference, holding the balance of judgment suspended in the firm hand of love, listening to explanations without bitterness, seeking only truth with the wisdom that does not translate, perhaps, an innocent imprudence into a crime, may help to tide over an unhappy episode that assailed the whole future of both. Faith and trust and love, to be worth anything, should be ready and equal to any emergency. They should never surrender if a ray of hope remains. Trust should be like a life-boat, designed not for sunshine and calm, when the bright blue sky is unflecked by a cloud; but when darkness, storm and tempest make troubled seas.

The spirit of unity that pulls together through a crisis has little to fear for its happiness in any of the situations that may arise in the life of the home.

XI

The Danger of Summer Separations



LONG summer separations between husband and wife are unwise, temporary divorces that often leave a long trail of sorrow, grief and misunderstanding. They may not actually wreck home happiness, but they are an unnecessary risk, like “rocking a boat”—a foolish experiment that may overturn and swamp it. They say that “absence makes the heart grow fonder,” but it is not always fonder of the one left behind. Brief separations may be love’s tonics, but long ones are often love’s narcotics.

When one member of the home firm voluntarily takes a long solitaire vacation and the other stays at home in loneliness, Cupid, though blind, sees trouble ahead. With two who love each other the temporary separation may be the thin edge of the wedge of a permanent growing apart. These unnecessary solo vacations force each into a new environment in which the other has no part; they lessen the sweetness of mutual dependence; they break the continuity of loving conference and constant confidence; they make it easier for each to face life’s problems alone instead of hand in hand with the other. They add in many ways to the complexity of home life, often creating a restless, vague sense of doubt. It is not always easy to piece again the broken threads into the old fabric of absolute unity, trust and dependence. Some note of discord creeps into the music of life for them both, and neither may be quite able to silence it.

If the two have already lost the glow of their first love, with the power to recuperate from a wound of misunderstanding growing less, and sweet new treaties of love and peace no longer follow grievances, and a voluntary summer spent apart from each other seems a kind of welcome relief to both, the long vacation may widen the distance between them beyond hope of bridging. It may be impossible to fan again into the glow of reborn life and light and warmth the dying embers of an old love when they were all to each other, when no thought of travel, change of scene or new society could bring any joy to compensate for the emptiness and loneliness of separation. Continuous absent treatment is a poor cure for wounded love.

The danger of these summer vacations apart is not when they are taken reluctantly and regretfully because of the pressure of compelling conditions; when business calls the husband away on some necessary trip; when the wife takes the little ones out for a visit to the old folks; when either is ill and is forced to go away and circumstances forbid both going; when a sickly child requires change of air, a breath of pine woods or the invigorating tonic of the sea. The very inevitability of a vacation, accepted under protest, may not lessen for an instant the constant heart-hunger of each for the other; it may really intensify it.

But the regular exodus of the wife, because she has a restless desire to get away somewhere, because she has friends who insist on her accompanying them, or she fears the neighbours will think she cannot afford to go away, or her selfish desire for personal pleasure throws into the shadows all thought of the loneliness and other hardship it may entail on her husband—these are the forms of voluntary separation for weeks and months that are dangerous. Sometimes they even prove a short-cut from matrimony to alimony. Of the twenty-seven explanations by which she may finally secure his consent, twenty-five are merely weak excuses and the other two are shaky reasons that would not even have deceived herself for a moment in the first year or two of their married life.

These separations are always hardest for the one who is left. He, in the city, still attending to his monotonous round of daily business and duties, goes home at night to a lonely house, eats where he can, and walks through empty rooms until they grow unbearable in their grim isolation. If he really cares deeply for her, he pictures her walking on the beach in her dainty new dress with the parasol to match, sitting on the wide verandah of a summer hotel in the evening in the midst of a merry group, laughing and jesting at trifles, or, in imagination sees her rowing across the silvered waters of a moonlit lake with a gay party of friends.

There is a feeling of restless rebellion that now he forms no part of her living. In his honest heart he may try to make himself believe that he is glad she is having a good time and that he does not begrudge her a single hour of happiness, sunshine and new joy that may come to her, but down deep in his heart there is a note of insistent protest that she can *possibly* be happy away from him when the separation is of her choosing.

If she writes of the loneliness she cannot bear apart from him he involuntarily wonders why then does she stay away week after week with no word of return, why does she thus condemn herself to the misery of the continued absence, the awful days she pictures. He may have a pride of love that keeps back his pen from urging her return; he may feel that if her heart does not make her cut her visit short and come back to him, he does not care for his words to do so.

He may study her letters with undue criticism, reading new meanings into words and phrases. He does not like the references to “the young man from Boston who is stopping here a week and is such jolly company.” No, he does not doubt her in the least; of course she does not mean anything by it, she is just thoughtless, he says to himself, but somehow he—does not like it. He would like to take a run down to the beach for a week or so, himself, but he cannot afford the time, or the money, and he gives up the idea.

His long evenings at home alone may soon become unbearable. He seeks distraction from this battle with time; he joins little parties of friends, goes to the theatre, takes up the threads of old acquaintance of his bachelor days and seeks to enjoy himself as best he can. In the beginning he may do it as one takes opium to dull a pain, but there is danger that he may learn to like the taste again. How far he may drift depends on the man.

And she, down near the ocean, may wonder vaguely why his letters, which ran seven pages long in the first two weeks of her absence, have dwindled down to brief notes like telegraphic

messages, written in short, hurried sentences with no details—just one unexpanded fact in each sentence, like caramels in separate wrappers. In the old days she used to reread his letters until she knew them by heart; then the mere facts they contained were of minor import,—they were merely the excelsior in which the terms of endearment were packed. At that time she used to go over his letters, picking out the adjectives and nouns of loving, like a child dislodging raisins and citron from a cake.

She may forget, too, that her letters to him are written in a large, sprawly hand, spreading little news thin over four small pages, making her brief communications little more than epistolary vacuums. The notes grow shorter as the absence grows longer. In blissful unconsciousness that she herself is erring in the slightest, she feels that he must be losing his love for her, and that now that she is away she might as well enjoy herself. If he really wanted her to come back at once, she feels sure he would say so. This sophistry is ever the logic of the selfish.

When she finally returns in the early autumn she finds that he is not so effusively glad to see her as she expected. She feels in a subtle way some shade of loss that may elude expression in words. He may not thrill with enthusiasm at her story of the “perfectly delightful times” she had; he may not be melted into his old lover-like mood when he hears again how lonely she was and how she just “tried to seem to be happy because of the others.” He listens, and thinks, and of what he thinks he may say little. Then she grows suddenly and acutely desirous of knowing just how he spent the summer. He feels that her fusillade of questions and shots of intense interest are coming a little late in the day, and all would have been unnecessary and they would be nearer and dearer to each other were it not for her self-imposed exile on a solitary vacation.

Perhaps next day she looks over the summer gas-bills, and if they be small she grows reflective and wonders how they could possibly be so small if he really sat every night alone reading till midnight “so he would be tired enough to sleep.” If the gas-bills loom larger than the amount her housewifely instinct tells her is just right, she feels confident he has been having card-parties up to unearthly hours and that he has been having a splendid vacation of his own. Innocent or guilty, on this or some other charge, he is lucky if he be not caught between the upper and the nether millstones of her withering doubt and criticism. She, too, may have to stand the brunt of his protests, and in the face of some unwarranted jealousy, tortured out of perhaps innocent trifles, she may find it difficult to prove that convincing alibi that leaves no slightest residue of doubt. The result is often the distressingly unsatisfying Scotch verdict: “Not proven.”

Vacations in the household are good, stimulating and revivifying for husband, wife and the little ones. If the spirit of love be true and constant, they will realize that if the increased expenditure of money can be spared for an outing, it should be arranged so that his vacation could be taken with theirs to lessen the term of separation; that some place nearer home could be chosen so that he could be with them at the close of each of his business days, or that, at the most, only the few days between week-ends would find them apart. Vacations have a true place and a real place in the economy of life, but it is making them a fetich if they be

permitted to endanger the unity and truest harmony and mutual dependence of husband and wife.

There is a theory that occasional brief separations of husband and wife are actually necessary, that they break the monotony of life, give the two a fresh start and tend to restore their real appreciation of each other. When one has to fast for a few days to get a normal appetite for meals, there is something wrong with one's system. When recourse to absence is necessary to keep the two together; when short separations are desired and sought on this plea, and they welcome good-byes for even a few days with a glad sense of freedom and a long, deep breath of relief, there is something organically out of gear. It requires more direct, radical treatment than absence, which may temporarily ease a trouble it does not cure. They should hold a thoughtful inquest and discover the real causes of their mutual boredom, and make the change *within* the home together, not seeking it outside and apart. The danger is not in the mere fact of separation but in the conditions that make either of them actually long for it.

Vacations *with* each other may be new miniature honeymoons bringing renewed love, life and light to both; but long vacations *from* each other are what the insurance companies term—"extra-hazardous risks."

XII

When the Children Come



Do you remember the spirited argument between the two Irish labourers on the subject of mortar, one asserting that the mortar held the bricks together, the other contending that it kept them apart? Children play this doubtful mortar role in the home; they may bring husband and wife into closer unity or they may gradually force them apart. With the advent of the children a new element enters the home. It is a new transforming power for better or for worse, but a factor that never leaves conditions unchanged.

When the anticipated joy of parenthood has become a reality and it brings to husband and wife only greater peace, truer companionship, only sweeter love and more delicate consideration as the weeks grow into months, strengthening with the flight of time, it is a home benediction, an ideal far above even the thought of problems. But this is truly rare, because every privilege in life carries with it a responsibility, every right a duty, every power a danger, every light a shadow, every gain a loss. It is the element of change, the enforced readjustment of the mutual dependence of husband and wife on each other that must be recognized.

The old freedom and finality of their whims and fancies is gone because every decision may now be overruled by the baby's veto. The pleasure of a little railway journey together, a night at the theatre, a proposed social call, the comfort and comradeship of a read and a talk under the library lamp, the loving counsel and confidence after dinner, may all be sacrificed in a moment by the opposing cry of protest from the autocrat of the nursery.

The husband may begin to grow restless under the new regime. The novelty of paternity may begin to lose a little of its charm and his heart hunger for the old singleness of companionship. He may begin to feel he is being gradually pushed aside and supplanted and a latent rebellious feeling of jealousy stirs him. He cannot quite put it into words, even if he would. The heart is more subtle and sensitive than the head and is often pained beyond the power of clumsy words to express. He may try to laugh at his foolish rebellion, but the laugh is not very merry, nor does its note ring true. He feels the loneliness of unshared pleasures, the isolation of unspoken confidences. He grows hungry for the old allness of importance; he wants the little tendernesses, the graceful attentions, the smiles of sweetness, the little nothings that make up the all of loving. And in his failure to get he may foolishly forget to give.

He may thoughtlessly accept an invitation for some evening entertainment, and later find that his baby forbids his wife to accompany him. This first time he may loyally forego the pleasure rather than go alone. But subsequent invitations puts his resistance to sleep and

finally he surrenders, perhaps saying he can do no real good by staying at home. Then he may remember that he has not been to his club or the theatre for a long time, and this opens to him a change of scene. He may in his heart and speech honestly revolt at the enslavement of the mother to her child and feel helpless in facing a condition he cannot change.

He may even grow irritated at the crying of the child and feel that the mother should somehow manage to keep it quiet, as if the child were a mechanical music-box where you merely had to touch a certain spring to shut off the sound. He may find that his rest at night is disturbed and selfishly go off to another room to sleep, forgetting that the tired mother may then be left with the sole burden of soothing the fretful little one to dreamland. Even if a nurse relieves the mother of much of her responsibility the problem is merely modified, not solved. It is not that his paternal love is lessening, but he is still seeking to hold to an elusive memory of an old, sweet companionship that somehow seems slipping away.

The mother, absorbed and concentrated in the loving care of her child, which has become so nearly all her world, may let motherhood eclipse the tenderness of wifeness. She may someday wake to realize with a strange, sudden tightening of her heart that she is missing certain customary graceful attentions and caresses—the small coin of love—that the good-bye kiss in the morning is forgotten or become perfunctory, and finds many other little beads of attention missing that but a short time ago made bright spots on the golden thread of her daily living.

She may miss the old conferences and confidences and feel in a vague way that it is all his fault, thoroughly unconscious that, on repeated recent occasions when he had told her little cares and worries as of old, tried to win her enthusiasm to some new plan of his, or some new dream of ambition, she had only half-heard, her interest was slight, her sympathy unexpressed. Her thought wandered as she waited for a pause and side-tracked his confidence with the latest instance of the marvellous intellectuality of the baby. She may not realize that the child that began as a real reason for dropping familiar customs and sweet habits, is now but an excuse.

If their past life together were not always roses and sunshine, they may have made up their little misunderstandings, smoothed over difficulties, and let new love and kindness take out the pain of a memory. But now the child may become a refuge to the mother. Concentrating upon it all her love, she bears stolidly a coldness that otherwise she would seek to remove, sits in the shadow of her dignity when but a word would bring peace and sweetness, while the husband, playing his poor counter-rôle, draws more closely around him his robes of sackcloth and ashes. And they both think things about each other, not edited for publication, and they just become sulkily reticent and selfish with speech, and they will not talk.

When the child begins to escape from babyhood and the mother begins her siege of morning talks on the necessity of moving away from the city, so they can get good country air for the child, though he may murmur something about there “being cases on record where children were actually brought up in the city and lived through it,” he may finally capitulate. But there is a resentment that cannot be stifled that his comfort and ease might have at least standing-

room on the floor of discussion; he hates the suburbs, he does not relish an hour's railroad ride night and morning—but at last, finding opposition wearying, he succumbs, buys a monthly ticket and becomes a commuter.

When the children come these problems have to be met and worked out by both; neither can do all. The husband must make “allowances,” manifest new tenderness, watchfulness, consideration, thoughtfulness, forbearance and self-denial; he should not take himself and his grievances too seriously. He must take broader views and throw away the microscope with which he is studying the wounds of neglect inflicted on his vanity. If he wishes the home life to move along as it did of old, despite the temporary shadow the light of the new joy may cast, he should do more than his share towards keeping up all the traditions of the old sentiments.

He should, so far as he possibly can, relieve the mother of the mere drudgery and added care of her new responsibilities, so that the close lines of the old comradeship may never be broken. A rose or some trifling gift that means nothing but the thought it messages may bring instinctively the smile, the glad look, the love-light in the eyes, which he so misses, and in the rewinning he may find new happiness that will never come to his sulky demanding as a right.

To the wife may come the need of care to prevent the child even temporarily eclipsing the husband. As her mind glows under the inspiring dreams of the child's future, and in fancy a twenty-years' panorama of its growth and progress unrolls before her, she must watch that she does not lose that close, telepathic kinship of mind and heart with her husband, so much more easily lost than regained. It merely requires a wise sense of values, seeing life and its relations in true perspective, a little sterling common sense united with love—then the coming of the children will mean only new joy and truer companionship to both.

In the true spirit of acceptance of changed conditions they will waken to the completeness and consecration of the larger life with the children, the new inspiration, the new, sweeter dependence on each other, the new, broader vision of united usefulness, and they will be dearer and nearer to each other because the children are dearer to them, and the rooms echoing with the laughter and romping of the little ones will seem to them filled only with music.

XIII

Talking Home Matters Outside



HAVE you ever met women who seem continually flying a flag of distress from the ship of matrimony? They give monologues on the slightest provocation, and often on the very slightest acquaintance, on the ever-new subject of their home troubles. They seem to be a private press association for syndicating news of domestic cares, worries and miseries. They keep their memories of home discord all labelled, classified and dated, and seem to take a collector's delight in parading them. It is a false advertising instinct that publishes the weakness of the matrimonial firm.

If the sky of the home is overcast and the sun of love is temporarily darkened by doubt or misunderstanding, it is not wise to bring in the neighbours to witness the eclipse. If there is a little sand in the sugar of home happiness, it really seems better to concentrate on the sweetness that remains than to carry around samples of the grit in envelopes of conversational confidence.

In the business world, when a firm has to pass through a period of sunless days and stress and storm; when they are long on hope and short on prosperity; when the partners enthusiastically agree with each other's policy; when the present looks grim and the future grimmer, they guard their confidences carefully; they fear their troubles may be known outside; they realize that they are facing a problem that must be solved from within, not exploited from without. They feel an esprit de corps that makes it seem disloyalty to talk matters over outside the breastworks. And in married life love, loyalty, dignity, a basic mutual respect should make this guarding of the sanctity of the home even greater. Talking home matters outside is advertising the insolvency of harmony. It weakens the credit and reputation of the home firm, and often causes unjust ratings in the Bradstreet of society.

A temporary trouble, that may be merely a week's cloud in the home itself, may be recorded as a "Damaging tornado," if given intensity of life by being idly talked of outside the family walls. Gossip is a natural weed in the garden of conversation; it grows so freely and spontaneously that we need never plant with our own hands the seed of needless criticism, comment and condemnation of ourselves and of those who should be nearest and dearest to us.

There are times in the home when some grievance, real or fancied, swells our feeling to a dangerous high-tide of emotion; pique or pride may add a new pang to suffering, and, carried along by the torrent, we feel we must tell it to someone. It hardly matters what ears hear the story, so that we may have our hearts filled with the consoling music of sweet sympathy. It may be a natural hunger, but it is none the less dangerous. Its very nature may make it unjust.

In the intensity of feeling we concentrate in our complaint on the climax, the word, phrase or act that seems the essence of our hurt. But we rarely tell the true story truly; we unknowingly suppress part, slur over in innocent lightness our part of it—an incendiary word that added new fire, an unkind silence, perhaps, that made us equally guilty. This is the element that makes the telling unjust and intensifies its disloyalty; we eagerly drink in the sympathy, feel a moment's balm of righteousness in hearing the other condemned; and it usually intensifies and exaggerates our sense of hurt.

But when our wiser judgment returns and night dawns into day, and the bright sunlight pours in through the windows, we see things in a more normal perspective. Our high-strung emotions of the night before seem unjustified, foolish, with the garish disorder and confusion of a banquet-table still standing the morning after. We would give so much to buy back our confidence of the night before, and would pay a good premium just to be able to lock our secret again in the silence of the unspoken. But that is one thing that all our most earnest prayers and sincere repentance cannot bring to pass. What we have told, we have told, and it has gone from our keeping.

This is the cyclonic confession, understandable, and even forgivable, perhaps as a cloudburst; but there is a mean drizzle of complaint, a constant fog of petty charges, that is one of the worst phases of talking home matters outside. When a husband adopts the martyr pose and talks freely of all the things he has to put up with at home, interposing sample home conversations and incidents, one longs to take him into a corner, remove this "Dead March in Saul" cylinder from the phonograph of his conversation and put in a "Home Sweet Home" one. When a wife feels that everyone must be interested in her story of her difficulties in divorcing her husband from a little money for household expenses, and continuously encores herself with similar narratives in her repertoire, one cannot but feel, somehow, a good deal of sympathy—with the husband.

If the horse-power energy that married people thus put into syndicating their trials, sorrows and troubles were concentrated on trying to lessen the cause; on seeking, through love, to discover a way out; through mutual esteem to reach a truer basis of understanding and harmony, they would accomplish wonders and would realize that the larger part of their suffering is cruelly wrong because—preventable. Advertising it to the world publishes, of course, the competition, but does not bring a solution. They should some time stand reverently for a while before one of those modern engines that consume their own smoke, and then heed the moral of this sermon in mechanism.

Confidences on vital home matters are dangerous in proportion to their importance; they imply so much that they should be entrusted, if at all, only perhaps to one or two, whose tested love, honour and loyalty make doubt seem sacrilege. There are friends of the mind, friends of the heart and friends of the soul. It is with the last only that we have assurance and certainty that open ears will ever be associated with closed lips, that any message committed to them is stored in the holy of holies of memory, where speech can never reach it to reveal it.

In life, usually, the only absolute, incontestable insurance of a secret is to tell it to no one. If one does not want a fact known it is wise not to tell any part of it. Partial confidences are dangerous, because in time the separate pieces retained in the memory of the listener may be carefully put together, like the irregular sections of a dissected map. Sometimes a word, a suggestion, an inadvertent phrase, meaningless in itself, vitalizes unnoted trifles of old memories, which suddenly combine and stand out, vivid and luminous in a moment as a complete revelation, such as the speaker never intended to give. There are sometimes exclamations that are life-revelations in a word, autobiographic confessions in an unguarded phrase.

Sometimes in the desire for sympathy or advice, one is tempted to tell a home problem impersonally, or rather in the third person, as the life-experience of some dear friend, with a hazardous confidence in the safety of the alibi; but the turning of a phrase, a sudden tension of emotion, a feverish note of protest or plea may tend to puncture the frail bubble of deception. The vicarious sympathy may be forthcoming, but it hardly pays for the risk. The advice under such circumstances is valueless, because it is not based on the absolute knowledge of every detail requisite for true judgment and counsel really beneficial to the one asking advice and help in some individual crisis.

Circumstances, personality and character are so interrelated that it is difficult, impossible, indeed, for one human being to give an opinion on the merits of a question affecting two others when he knows really little about them. Such advice might well be not only worthless, but harmful. Far better is it to deny even this indulgence to oneself—for, after all, it is only an indulgence.

There is unwisdom in talking too freely even of happiness in married life outside the home walls. It may give a new touch of pain to one struggling with a serious heart problem and unable to see a way out. It may be a tax on the courtesy and patience of those who cannot be expected to feel a deep personal interest in the vaunted joys of another. Often in the swift current of speech one may speak of some little domestic episode that should be held too sacred for the ears of others. What may be sweet and dear, in the words and acts of either, may seem but silly sentimentality when translated by unsympathetic minds and repeated with variations by wantonly wagging tongues.

Should there be any drop in the value of the home stock and one no longer tells of the pearls of happiness, the very silence will be construed as a confession and may bring a trail of humiliation, or criticism and gossip. It may entail lying and hypocrisy to sustain the old record. There are knowing ones, too, who feel that effusive protestations and proclamations of matrimonial joy, when not merely silly and undignified, may be untrue. "The lady doth protest too much, methinks" is the shrewd Shakespearean phrase that comes to their mind. The sober man does not proclaim his sobriety on the midnight highway; it is the zigzagging pedestrian who wishes his speech to be believed instead of his walk.

True happiness rarely boasts; it radiates. If it really exist the little world that cares at all, the few who have real heart interest in the two, will read it in the eyes more truly than from the

lips, more in the voice than in the words. It will glow and pervade an atmosphere of sweetness, trust, peace and comradeship, manifesting itself in a hundred little ways that tell the story without words as a rose reveals its presence through its perfume, the sun the light and warmth it radiates. True happiness need not advertise; it has merely to exist to make itself felt.

When the home problems assume the acute phase when confidence somewhere seems compelling, then let husband and wife confide more closely in each other, realizing that their problem must first be tried by this council of two, if it is really to be solved at all. In the sweet, honest, full, frank interchange of views, seeking, not the blame of either, but the happiness of both; letting no personal pettiness or false sense of momentary triumph eclipse the looked-for justice, and feeling that, for the time, the great struggling, busy world outside is too microscopically small to be worthy of a thought, when weighed in the balance of their united happiness—their happiness in union and unity—then, in such a spirit, and only in such a one, great things become possible.

It is this spirit of the finality of the two, love recognizing no higher court of appeal in the world around them, that holds the ideal of married life so high that it would seem the desecrating hand of an outsider touching the ark of the covenant of their love even to think of talking these matters over outside the sacred walls of home.

XIV

Danger of Growing Apart Mentally



WHEN two friends start out for a long walk together they seem instinctively to adjust their steps so that they walk side by side, within touching distance of each other'. If one gradually quickens his pace until he is yards ahead of the other and, in his self-absorption, increasingly widens the distance between them, they cease to be two walking together and become two walking alone. Marriage is a lifelong walk together of two who have selected each other from all the world. It is community of thought, ideals, aims, needs and sentiments that tends to keep them in step. It does not mean a sacrifice of individuality, nor does it demand unanimity of opinion, but there should ever be progressive harmony on essentials and progressive sympathy on non-essentials.

Some men feel a pleasant glow of satisfaction in fulfilled duty when they divide generously with their wives their material prosperity. If money were the only thing in life, or even the greatest thing, their view would be correct, but the really greatest things in the world are those that money cannot buy. When a man finds himself growing broader mentally and does not share his new self with his wife, he is taking an intellectual elevator and letting her trudge alone up the stairway as best she can. When he grows into a larger and finer social world and does not make her a part of it he is travelling in the parlour-car and keeping her in the day coach. When the larger interpretation of life and its problems strengthens his spiritual and ethical vision, while his wife continues in the narrow horizon of unilluminated household cares, he is monopolizing the telescope, which brings the great things near and larger, leaving her the microscope which only increases the importance of her trifles.

Growing apart mentally must, under these conditions, become inevitable. It may be that he alone is to blame; it may be her fault, or it may be the blind thoughtlessness of both. His repeated attempts to talk over with her his ideals, his dreams of ambition, his plans, purposes and progress, to stimulate her interest, to share with her his intellectual uplift may be met with no real comprehension, no sympathy, no inspiring response. When comradeship in marriage dies, it really makes very little difference what the postmortem verdict as to the decease may be.

When the husband is out in the world of business which tends to blend with the social world, he may broaden mentally as he prospers materially. He travels over the country, and in a wider acquaintance with men and conditions has many of the rough edges of provincialism worn smooth. He meets men of attainment and action, men of power and prestige, and under a more stimulating environment develops latent strength of his own. He brushes up against keen minds that put a new edge on his thinking; he is in closer touch with current thought and opinion; he has acquired a polish. The key-note of his living, so far as society is concerned, is

higher. His tastes become more discriminating, his demands more exacting. If he has not been sharing these things with the wife of his youth, he finds she has been standing still while he has been progressing.

She who faithfully struggled with him and for him, helped him to get the foothold of his present success, and become absorbed in working, planning and saving, may now be a mere drudge. He has a new standard of life now, and she falls sadly short of it. He measures things more superficially, and though her heart may be unchanged her head is not up to date. He may be ashamed to introduce her into the new society of which he has become a part; she is plain, unattractive, over-retiring or over-loquacious. She is aggressive in her dress and display; she is not familiar with the rules of the social game—with the “technique” of his new set.

The old equality between them has been destroyed—killed through neglect. It is not the work of a moment, but the slow, widening process of years of growing apart. But the realization of it all may come in a moment. There may be suddenly an illuminating flash of consciousness, when he involuntarily faces it, in comparing her with other women.

Some little mannerism of hers that once was sweet, just because it was hers, jars on his sensibilities and strikes a discordant note. Once he did not care whether she thought it was Homer or Carlyle who wrote “Silas Mariner,” or whether she had heard of either author or book. Perhaps at that time he did not know the book himself. The red tape of society’s cards, passwords and methods may have become second nature to him, and he is unjust in his condemnation of an ignorance which would not have existed had he been sharing with her his expanding life. He may notice with a grating sense of dismay that she does not put the soft pedal on her laughter to conform to the proper rippling notes of mirth prescribed by the social code. She, too, may have her saddening moments of realization and refuse to enter a world where she feels her inferiority, or not realizing, may, to his chagrin, insist on her rights. Usually she boldly takes the plunge into the social waters, confident that she will, somehow, get back to shore.

She may live, in his presence, in an atmosphere of patronizing tolerance, fearing at every word that she may stumble into some pitfall of mispronunciation or an inadvertent phrase, or, growing self-assured and reckless, she puts on a full head of steam in the presence of a position requiring tact and just crashes through it like an engineer running his train over a burning bridge. His bearing may reach its melting point; in his acquired supersensitiveness he puts fictitious values on points where she is deficient and his tolerance fades into positive neglect. He may then devote his whole time to finer minds, fairer faces and freer morals. How far they may drift apart, no one can tell.

It may be that it is the wife who advances mentally, and he who is the laggard. The increased prosperity may mean close confinement for him to the drudgery of business. The society of a few old friends, survivals of the time when he was poor and struggling, may be all he cares for. Literature may not appeal to him. His daily paper supplies all his needs. The activities of the world of modern science, thought and culture have for him no real interest. His wife, left

free to the rounding out of her mind and life, may develop a taste for reading, for companionship that is mentally worth having, for original thinking, for the charm of true conversation, for the discussion of subjects of real importance. She may gather around her a circle of friends who feed her mental hunger and stimulate her thinking. He feels vaguely out of place with these new friends of hers, like a poor relation at a Christmas dinner.

She has found her way into the land of the intellectual and has established a residence there, while he, in his loneliness and isolation, is camping on its frontiers. He feels somewhat a stranger in his own house at social gatherings of her friends. He may chafe under the feeling that he is on the wrong side of the proscenium arch; that he is not one of the performers, but merely a spectator. He longs to cut out all "this heavy intellectual business" and go off quietly with a friend or two and just sit, and talk, and smoke.

This growing apart mentally may assume any of a hundred phases. Husband and wife may be subjected to any class of differing environments that change their mental standpoint and their moral sympathy. New ideas and new ideals may sweep old landmarks of mutual understanding far out to sea. It is a sad outgrowing of a union of love and companionship, a growing unsatisfiedness where speech that meets no sympathetic response lapses into silence. When sympathy and recognition of one's ideals are found only outside the home walls, when the instinctive impulse to tell of a success or a failure turns to someone else, when ears grow hungry for outside praise, there is serious danger to the happiness of married life.

It is so easy to keep together if both realize the vital importance to all that is sweetest in life in keeping in step, in true comradeship. Talking over the affairs of their individual lives and their life in common, the hopes, the longings, the doubts, the joys and the problems, gives each the basis of knowledge from which most truly to understand and advise each other. Reading the same books, discussing the same current events, hearing the same music, seeing the same plays, criticizing the same pictures, having dearest friends in common, agreeing on the same spiritual and ethical attitude towards life, and sharing in thoughts and plans will do much towards making a growing apart mentally an impossibility.

This keeping in step does not mean the sacrifice of the stronger to the weaker, but the stronger ever, through love, raising the weaker to higher planes of thinking and living. It is not necessary that they should even agree as to the value of each other's pursuits or views, but that both should know them, understand them and respect them and be lovingly tolerant where they are not united in their sentiment or desires. They should give ever their best to each other.

When the husband is a clever, delightful companion at someone else's dinner-table, but a sad, still-life study in silence at his own, he is not giving his best at home. He is retaining his best for the export trade and reserving none for home consumption. When the wife has charity, consideration and sympathy for the cares of others outside the home, and only sharpness and sarcasm for those inside, the time-table of that home requires instant revision or there will be a crashing disaster to their train of happiness. Sources of discord multiply like Australian rabbits when the growing apart intensifies. It is the sacred duty of both to

prevent it at the very beginning, to determine that *they* will permit no thoughtlessness, no drifting, no false sense of duty to family or to the world, to separate them from each other.

XV

Throwing Overboard the Old Friends



IN that famous journey of Jonah the prophet⁴, from Joppa to Tarshish, nearly three thousand years ago, when the wind and the tempest rose, and the great waves washing over the little craft threatened to submerge it, they threw Jonah overboard that the lightened ship might ride easier in waters smoothed into peace and tranquility. In this twentieth century, the old time friends of the husband are often similarly cast overboard from the ship of matrimony that its burden may be lightened and the waves of home discord may be stilled.

The direct primitive simplicity of the Jonah incident is rarely followed today. It is usually accomplished by tact and tactics, by seeming innocent comments and criticisms, by delicate diplomacy, by placing the friend in an exposed position which makes it seem that he merely *fell* overboard. It is the final result of gentle, gradual pushes instead of one bold, fearless toss.

When a girl marries she does not feel that the curtain has been rung down on the nearest and best in her old life. Her girl friends do not give her up for lost and feel that she has passed forever out of their love, sympathy, regard and companionship. Her life has but broadened; they will visit her and she them as of old; they will take interest in her new world and she will retain as best as she can the threads of the old relationships.

The husband usually is honestly glad that her days alone may be brightened a little by these friends, that she is getting out of life all the happiness that she can. Of course he has very little appreciation of her old admirers; her fervour of approval of their good points seems to be more sentimental than judicial; he cannot imagine what she can possibly have ever seen in A, or B, or the others down the alphabet of her men friends. Wild enthusiasm over them is hardly to be expected but for her woman friends, except when they camp round the house at all hours and make it impossible for him to have a quiet talk alone with her, he is usually complaisantly tolerant if not cordially encouraging. He does not always receive similar courtesy and consideration.

When a man marries, even his truest, worthiest and best friends, those who have been close to him, who have been his confidants, his chums and his comrades, feel with sadness that it has now come to the parting of the ways. They bid him goodbye, in spirit if not in words, as though he were going to some island in the South Seas and they might never see him again. It is not the natural drifting apart that comes from his absorption in his home, with new duties and responsibilities that they fear; it is that they will be disqualified by his wife— and that her secret influence will be turned against them. Of course they do not think she is just the

⁴ *Old Testament* Jonah 1.

one they would have picked out for him, for a man rarely does approve of his friend's wife as quite good enough for him, but they are willing to be magnanimous, and let loyalty and charity wipe away prejudice, and even believe that she is the wonder her husband declares.

If she be wise, for her own sake and that of her husband, she will try to make them her friends too and guard carefully against their even being washed overboard, much less being thrown ruthlessly into a sea of forgetfulness. If they already happen to be her friends as well, they usually will be admitted into the home on her ticket and have a comfortable orchestra chair, but often, when it is otherwise, the husband alone can issue but a pass entitling the bearer to standing room only.

There are some wives who show a strange jealousy in trifles. They have a hunger for allness; they are not satisfied with being merely supreme, and first and best and most—they want to be “only.” They are not content with being the sun of his life; they want to be the sun and all the constellations too. They want to corner his emotional output and control the entire market. They often seem to consider his affection, regard, esteem, liking and favour as his emotional cash and that if he spends the least bit of it elsewhere it is taking just so much from them. Their constant fear of competition is a poor tribute to their own powers.

When a man first tells his sweetheart or his wife about his best friend, in his loyalty, generous pride, and confidence that he is speaking to welcoming ears he may boom him unduly. Soon he may become conscious in a vague way that the audience is a bit cool and unenthusiastic, his words do not seem to carry over the footlights and the applause is faint and perfunctory. When he tells of the time when they roomed together at college and pledged eternal friendship, it seems to her just a bit young and sentimental. When his voice trembles a little at the episode of the mining camp when his friend nursed him through the fever she says: “Never mind, dear, now you won't need him, you have me to take care of you.”

The recital of a story of his friend's sense of humour does not appeal to her; it is weighed in the balance and found wanting. Every good point she discounts in a quiet, illusive way he feels but cannot combat; every virtue is shown to have some failing wrapped up in the seams. When he is most interested in impressing her she looks way off into the distance or flags his train of thought at the way-station of some commonplace observation that shows she has only been half listening as she interrupts to point out the funny shade of a cloud or to ask him if he does not think old-rose sash-curtains are beautiful.

When he invites his friend to dinner at their house for the first time he is filled with a boyish delight—and overanxious that it will be a success. He is proud of his home and wants to have it admired; he is proud of his wife and proud of his friend and wants them really to like each other. She is pleasant but just a little more dignified than is absolutely necessary; there is a slight air of constraint; talk does not flow freely. The fountain of his friend's wit throws only a timid, tentative spray occasionally and causes only the faintest splash of a half smile. After the coffee things brighten up a little and over the cigars the two talk over old times but—it is not a real trio. When goodnight time comes and he goes to the door and helps his friend on

with his coat, and they stand on the steps a few minutes, look up at the stars and discuss the weather prospects, there seems a note missing in the music. Both are conscious of it.

When he hurries back to the dining-room, where they have tarried because it seemed more comfortable, to hear the verdict of the jury of one, he is disappointed even though he feared it was prejudiced. The first remark "Hasn't he large hands?" does not seem really vital but it is significant. He does get credit for dressing well but as this was to be expected, it does not count. He laughs too loudly; he seems conceited; he mispronounced four words; he called her husband by some flippant nickname; he has such strange views of religion, she is sure he is an atheist; there must be something wrong with his family, he never mentioned any of them; she would wager anything there is a cruel streak in him for she could tell it by the expression of his mouth. She seems to have a certain pleasure in checking off the items, seemingly unconscious of the pain she is giving. In her prejudiced mood even St. Paul would be disqualified had he come in as a friend upon whom the husband depended for affection, counsel and comradeship.

In the days that follow the resentful rebellion stimulated by the defense and protest helps her to find new flaws and defects, and the never failing trickle of comment and criticism may begin to wear away a rock of friendship. The friend's visits become shorter as the interval between them grows longer and then cease. The husband occasionally meets him down-town and he chafes at the thought that he is not treating him squarely; it seems disloyal, but he cannot see how to change it. He frets at the curtailment of his freedom; he does not speak of the meeting at home. He knows that if he should speak it would mean a fusillade of questions, not of real interest but of curiosity, the instinct of being on guard like a sentry whose duty it is to challenge. He does not care to invite the inquisition. It is sad when a wife, even through overzealous loving, closes with her own hand the door of her husband's confidence; it may rust on its hinges and become difficult to reopen.

Other friends of his may be dropped overboard in many ways and for many excuses but with the same real reason. One may borrow money, another may have bad table manners which her comments convert into almost a crime, a third is not tolerated because of his wife, and so the catalogue of extinguishing the lights of friendship runs on until all the old ones are snuffed into darkness and forgetfulness. The friends then are the new ones they have made together since their marriage and her old friends that are new to him. They are those that have not weathered the storms and trials of life and been tested and found staunch and true.

The old friendships carry with them a sentiment deep-rooted in the past, a sweetness, a tenderness, a loyalty, a communion of memories and experiences that cannot be duplicated in after life. They are like old books that we have loved for years. The binding is worn and smoothed by our hands and by dear hands now stilled forever; the inscription with the date is growing fainter for the eyes to decipher but easier for the heart to read; there are passages that helped and inspired us still loyally retaining our penciled lines so we could turn to them in perfect confidence whenever we desire.

There is the thumb-mark that floods memory with a glow of hallowed golden light, for only we know what it means. There is the turned down page it would seem irreverence to fold back; there are dim, dried brown tints on the margins that somehow suggest the autumn of our years; there is the fern-leaf slipped in that night we shall never forget while a smile is still left in the heart, and the narrow ribbon book-mark is faded and crinkled. And the whole book is dear to us and we love it and we trust it. It has an honest feel as we open it and it speaks the same old words just in the same old way with no slightest change through all the years. The new editions in green and gold are beautiful but they seem so self-conscious and assertive; they look new and they smell new and they seem untried, untested, unproved.

So it is with the old friends and the new. The new friends come in on a different basis; we do not commonly call them by their first names; they have been mellowed by the years; there is no poetry of sorrows outlived together or of joys shared together, no romance of the recalling of old ideals, struggles, efforts, memories and hopes. Breaking the ties of seasoned friendships is not fortifying the wife in her position or intensifying, in the least, his love for her.

If the friends be objectionable in themselves and reveal a weakening influence over him then is she justified in exercising her wisdom in saving him from them, but they should not be sacrificed by her on the altar of her vanity and her selfish love, her desire to be omnipotent. She should realize that the same spirit of loyalty that makes a man wish to keep real and living the old friendships, the constancy, the unchanging devotion, the singleness of heart and purpose is likely to keep him truer and more steadfast as a husband. She should safeguard his real friends as though they were her own and they should be welcomed to the home.

She should feel their union must add to the possibilities and powers of his living, not subtract. She should determine that he shall, because of her, lose nothing of the sweetness, strength, sentiment and satisfaction of life that does not detract from her rights, her absoluteness, her dignity and her peace of mind. Throwing overboard the old friends may prove unwise policy in the voyage of the ship of matrimony. The wife who determines to secure monopoly of one, will finally get only—monotony for two.

XVI

The Spectre of Constant Jealousy



WHEN a man is afraid to remark at the breakfast table, even mildly and casually, that, from what he has heard, Cleopatra must have been a beautiful woman, it is fair to assume that the spectre of constant jealousy dwells in that household. When a wife fears to look at the moon because she may be accused of admiring the man in it, the husband needs to be gently reminded that he is taking a very rapid short-cut to killing the love he seems to hold so sacred. Love is fed by confidence, trust, faith, and serene restful reliance. Morbid jealousy is a poison of doubt, suspicion and injustice that dulls the love it does not deaden.

Scientists tell us that every known poison is, in small doses, a stimulant; in larger doses it is a narcotic; in still larger it kills. In a mild form jealousy is inseparable from real love. It is the heart's guardianship of its treasure. It is the hunger for the sacredness of sole possession; the righteous demand to be absolute and supreme. It is the instinctive protest at even the thought of another sharing in those little tendernesses, graceful attentions, and words, looks and expressions of love that should be concentrated on one, not syndicated among many.

This instinctive jealousy, though roused in an instant, falls gently to sleep again with a smile of peace at the recognition of a false alarm. It makes sure that it is suffering from a real invasion of its rights, not from the fancied wrong that fear creates. It guards itself against solidifying the semblance of a suspicion into the solid, impregnable substance no truthful explanations can melt. This proper form of jealousy realizes that it is Love's guardian, not Love's jailer. It does not go round constantly with a thermometer to test half-hourly the temperature of loyalty.

Jealousy, in any instance, must belong to one of two classes. It is either justified by the facts or it is not; it is a right charge or an unjust one. If justified, the one who causes it may do so, in one or two instances, through thoughtlessness or because of a less finely balanced appreciation of the demands and duties of love, for some natures are more wounded by a look than others by a blow. Here a few words of gentle protest may bring a new course of action that is absolutely jealousy-proof. If the offending acts become a continuous performance, then the offender is unworthy of either the love or the jealousy. But if the constant jealousy be undeserved, the one thus continuously storming in jealous tempest is not worthy of the love and loyalty thus traduced and put to scorn.

Nothing weakens loyalty and constancy so quickly as morbid jealousy; nothing inspires, feeds, strengthens and almost guarantees loyalty and constancy like loving confidence, real comradeship and restful trust.

Jealousy, even when justified, should not be permitted to run away with discretion. The emotional pain it may be natural to feel it may not be wise to express. There is a tendency to an emotional explosion that may wreck happiness. It is a moment when one should heed the advice of the sign at a railroad crossing: "Stop, look and listen." The first suspicion in married life may be more hazardous than the first real quarrel. It may develop an exaggerated estimate of the importance of what may have been merely a foolishly indiscreet word or action.

The offender, conscious of innocence of real wrong even in thought may become angered and indignant at condemnation many sizes too large for the offense; apology for the minor thoughtlessness may be withheld or if spoken, ignored in the presence of the injustice of a weightier charge. The burden of injustice becomes shifted to the one originally innocent. If the inadvertence of a moment, now looming large, be but an error of action, not of mind or of heart, it should instantly be forgiven and forgotten because explained and understood. A rankling sense of protest, feeding on trifles, may finally separate the two, unjustly to both.

If there be real reason for jealousy in a trifle, wise action may confine it to the trifle. Jealousy through its own indiscreet expression may plant what it fears. Let the wounded one seek to find the cause that led to the action inspiring the jealousy. The wife, through pique at being neglected, may receive innocently and unwisely the kind attentions of another. The husband, brought to realization of the drifting possibilities of his negligence, may by special marks of affection, returning to the old courtship methods, restore the old certainty of faith and allness. If wise, he will let the consciousness of his initial wrong keep him from revealing too plainly his pain. Angry protests and condemnation never cure; they merely put a premium on secrecy and deception. It does not remove the disease, it merely drives it into the system.

In every instance of jealousy the innocent one should meet it at the beginning, at its earliest manifestation. This means recognition and a wise determination to remove the cause, but not necessarily blame or indignant streams of condemnation flowing hot and lava-like from an emotional Vesuvius.

There is a false pride that says, "If he is growing interested in another let him go. I will not compete for his affection," or, "If she feels that way, let her have her way." Love, happiness and trust are treasures too sacred for us to permit them to slip out of our lives and leave us lone and dreary, on the mere technicality of the petty pride of a moment. This philosophy of resignation may be proper when it becomes inevitable, but never before. We would not let health, money, position, reputation or property thus drift away without using every effort to retain it; why does false pride sometimes make us so reckless with what means most to us?

Morbid jealousy is a real, sad problem of the married life of many homes. It may break out at any moment and many a guest, as he passes his cup for more tea, is struck with surprise at the strange expression on the face of the hostess, sees the lightning flash in her eyes and watches it strike the innocent husband at the end of the table, and the guest almost hears the thunder as he hopes he will be home before the cloudburst comes. And the sudden sultry atmosphere, and that strange hush, with the air of the room surcharged with electricity, may

all have come in a moment with not the slightest real justification. It is the self-torture of love.

To morbid jealousy civility, just of the ordinary type, becomes flirtation; indifference, disguised feelings; good spirits, conscience masking a wrong; silence, thinking of someone else—all is translated by the cipher code of jealousy. Jealousy always plays with loaded dice—the cast is always foreordained. Jealousy does not require a cause, it is satisfied with an opportunity. It may be inspired by what one does or does not do, what one thought or did not think, what one said or did not say; it may be what one might have, could have or should have done or said or left undone. Jealousy conjugates in all moods and tenses.

To this morbid jealousy explanations mean nothing but aggravation or a change of a base of attack. The most tactfully delivered explanation is often dexterously caught, and with a whisk of the vocabulary is quickly transformed into a foaming whipped-cream conviction on some other phase, while the innocent sufferer, in a dazed way, wonders how it was done. Vesuvius, in its eruptions, is slow, snail-like inactivity compared with the explosions of this jealousy. Unlike cigar smoking, jealousy is not a one-sex specialty. This morbid jealousy is always unreasoning and unreasonable. Its misinterpretation of a word, a motion or a glance may throw into eclipse the loyal unselfish devotion of a life, and the one who suffers innocently in this tempest must bow the head in helplessness, realizing that words of protest would count no more than attempting to lead a tornado to change its itinerary.

Jealousy stifles faith, which is the soul of love. It is emotional suicide. It is a peculiar form of fear which seeks constantly to discover what it does not want to find. Jealousy is the chloroform of confidence. It requires faith to keep faith, trust to retain trust, love to cherish love.

Jealousy blights spontaneity and the free expression of one's thought; one soon consigns one subject after another to the quarantine of the unspoken. One involuntarily sterilizes one's conversation, omitting simple little incidents and references nothing in themselves but which experience has shown carry storm-signals, so that one involuntarily picks one's way carefully in talking, like a person getting up at night in a dark, chairsprinkled room. How Cupid must moan when he finds married people grown tactful and politic with each other. The delightful free interchange of thought can exist only as love and trust make Bluebeard chambers of interdicted subjects unnecessary and impossible in conversation. We should guard carefully against closing up any room of confidence in the mind and heart of one we love.

There is pathos in this morbid jealousy, for no innocence of the object of the feeling can prevent it. It is like one of those concave or convex mirrors that distort whatever passes before them. This unreasonable jealousy is hard on two people—the subject and the object. Its presence in the home means a problem for two. For one it means the overcoming of a morbid suspicion and the other somehow to keep the sacred flame of love burning despite the suspicion. There is always a benumbing, paralyzing sense of helplessness and of hopelessness in resting under a cruel, unjust charge more awful when it is made by one who should be most ready of all the world to be convinced of the innocence of the accused.

Jealousy is a disease that can be cured only by the subject, not by any one else in all the world. No matter how gentle, kind, forbearing, forgiving and forgetting the object of it may be, this in itself will not cure the attacks. The subject whose heart is thus swayed by fierce gales of jealousy must first awaken to the folly of it, the injustice of it, must be conscious of the trail of bitterness and unhappiness it brings to both, must realize the cruel continued assault on the tolerance, love, loyalty and patience of the other, and when the next attack comes, seek by strength of will, by force of character, by consecrated self-control and by every help of highest wisdom to kill the feeling.

Jealousy must be fought as one would battle against a pestilence that threatens the safety of a town or a country. It is not sufficient conquest merely to hold back the expressions of the jealousy; the continuous repression simply defers the explosion and makes the next outbreak more disastrous. Jealousy must be killed in the thought. In the mind, the battle-ground of the soul, must the fight of extermination be waged. In the thought must the jealousy be neutralized by faith, conquered by justice, and transformed by trustful love into a restful abiding confidence that only absolute proof and certainty of just cause can ever reawaken.

XVII

When the Family Interferes



ANY a good matrimonial ship, with its sunlit cargo of happiness and hope, has been wrecked on the rocks of family interference. If it were customary to erect tombstones to the memory of dead loves the cause of the death of marital happiness in thousands of homes might be given in the chiselled epitaph: "Died from an Overdose of the Interference of Relatives!"

If there be one place in the world where the justice of "Home Rule" should be unquestioned, that place is—the home. Marriage makes the couple a new firm, an independent partnership, not a branch house under the management of a parent company. It is a home trust controlled by two. No matter how loving, kind, solicitous and anxious the family of either partner may be for the success of the new firm, they must realize that they do not own it, that they are not stockholders, are not on the board of directors and must not interfere in the management. They may stand ready and willing to give loving counsel, sympathetic suggestion, and help and service in any emergency when needed and desired, but it is unfair, unnecessary, unwarranted to interfere.

It was interference and bad advice that spoiled the first marriage, started the first quarrel, and broke up the first home in the world in those early days, long, long ago when Eden was the only spot on earth that had even a name. This was the first lesson to man and now after sixty centuries some people have not learned it yet. Husband and wife must work out their own problems in their own way. They must do it by the best light of their united wisdom, not by the flickering torches of obtruded advice from the family. They must convert their experiments into experience, transmute little failures into great successes and little failings into finer strength, win confidence and closer union through fuller understanding of each other, learn the superiority of a caress to logic, master their own problems and gain the strength that comes from mastery.

The problems of two must be solved by two. They need only kindness, sympathy, a reserve of help in emergencies and a free open field all the time. There is no justification for gossip, criticism, complaint, condemnation and incendiary meddling by members of the family. These things should be put on the list of unnecessary luxuries in the home and gently, firmly, definitely cut off.

We may sometimes be privileged to help others to live their lives; it is arrogant assumption for us to attempt to live their lives for them. We are told that we should not bury our talents, but there is one talent,—that of special aptness for impertinent management of the affairs of others—that we should carefully wrap in a napkin and on some dark night, quietly bury forever.

It is in the first years of married life that foreign interference is most trying and dangerous and it is this very time when it is most conspicuous and dominant. No need for the family to remind the wife that the husband is not eighteen karat, that he will never make a fortune, that they fear greatly—and then let their fear expand into a long catalogue of detail that fades away into the dim perspective of the unspoken. After the goods are bought and sent home and cannot be returned, what is the use of discouraging the purchaser? Why not point out some recognized good points, something helpful and inspiring? It is manifestly unfair for the family to sit as a self-appointed jury of awards and criticize and condemn the exhibit.

The wife may think she has the finest little home in the world; everything seems beautiful to her and she has even pride in the array of cooking utensils, dazzling and new in aluminum and tin, and the dishes ranged carefully on the pantry shelves. She often stands at the door and smiles as she looks in—to get the general effect at a glance. When the family makes a tour of inspection, her indiscreet sister may say, “Oh, what a mite of a kitchen. You can only wash the small dishes like cups and saucers in a little box like this.” It had never seemed small to her, none of the rooms seemed small; they held so much love and hope and happiness that the size did not count; but now her heart sinks, and the joy note seems gone and a cloud comes over it all and she begins to compare her home with that of some friend and it suffers. She thinks of all the other deficiencies pointed out by the visiting inspectors. She tries to be brave so she will be smiling when he comes home but it is hard to keep back the tears.

When her husband’s sister tells her in confidence, “just to put you on your guard so you will know how to handle him,” what a temper he has, it comes to her as a surprise and a grief, for it does not seem possible he could ever speak a cross word. When she hears, still in confidence, about the “girl he was so much in love with two years ago and was going to marry,” she feels twinges of vague jealousy and she wants to be alone.

He too may suffer from the early stages of family interference if his mother begins her maternal vivisection of his wife. She doubts if she will prove a good housekeeper, but “of course we have to hope for the best.” Little possible failings are discovered, aired and discussed with genuine love for the son and honest wishes for the success of the marriage, but such a jumble of doubts and fears and such a strenuous effort to be just and to be optimistic in a heroic way like one trying to calm frightened passengers in a shipwreck that he breaks away as quickly as possible knowing that his wife is really way above par, but the interview has wearied him.

Soon the family may begin a campaign of education on how she should manage him. She hears with irritation the words: “You surely won’t let him smoke in the parlour! You know you can never get the odour out of the curtains and that cartridge paper drinks in smoke like blotting paper absorbs ink.” If she weakly assents they increase the dose; if she rebels they think she is overconfident and setting her right becomes more than a pleasure—it is a duty. “Never permit him to be five minutes late at dinner. Just assert your independence” is the next shot from this peace-congress in the interests of domestic war. So the siege goes on.

The husband may return home in the evening and find the wife nervous, irritable, brimful of suggested new arrangements in the home and repairs that he might make in his manners and disposition. She does not tell him who has been there all afternoon but he knows it as absolutely from the traces left in her conversation, as the hunter reads the passing of a bear from tracks in the snow.

She may later tell him of a change to be made in one of the rooms and she unwisely names the member of her family who made the motion; or he to sustain a position may repeat some criticism his mother made. They are planting seeds of discord in each other's minds, unconsciously stimulating prejudice and opposition and intensifying family interference. When a man buys a cheap hat he sometimes conceals the dealer's name with gilt paper initials. Let him be equally careful in the home to remove the identifying tag of authorship from any unpleasant advice that comes from his family.

As the days go on critical appropriation from the family committee on interference may grow harder and harder to bear. It is depressing to live under the microscope of criticism, like an impaled insect. There is often condemnation where, if the full facts were known, there would be only praise. There is altogether too much judging in the world, too much idle intrusive censorship of the acts of others. It is uncomfortable to hear constantly that "you ought to do this" or "you should certainly do that." It is so easy to solve the conundrums of another's life.

The reason that advice is usually of little value is that it is not based on a perfect knowledge of the infinity of detail that makes up a condition. Perfect advice should fit the situation as a glove fits the hand; most advice does not get much nearer than a boxing glove in the matter of fitting.

That the family interference may arise from genuine interest does not excuse it nor even explain it; where love is greatest it should be most tender and most considerate. There are times when some tiny flame of misunderstanding arises between husband and wife that a breath of kindly interpretation might blow into nothingness, but, talked over by the family and canvassed and debated and intensified, grows into a conflagration.

Under the gossip, often unthinking of its evil influence, a tiny molehill of difficulty may become an almost impassable Rocky Mountain range. Oil is a good thing to pour on troubled waters but it is poor to put out a fire. A difficulty that originally concerned only a duet now has been made to affect the whole family choir. It is easier for two people to reach loving harmony than to distribute it among a dozen.

Sometimes the interference of families becomes even more active and aggressive than this, and because of a fancied grievance or a genuine opposition it actually comes between husband and wife and by harsh criticism or condemnation seeks to incite strife and discord between them. Here instant loyalty of the one to the other should assert itself and refuse to listen to the voice. In an instinctive spirit of protection there should be a calm, dignified protest against the recital of what if unessential should never be spoken, and if of serious import should be heard only in the presence of the one thus charged with what he or she

should have the opportunity of denying or disproving instantly, before the weeds of suspicion have time to root themselves in the heart of the other.

In many homes, there is someone in the family, on either side, whose visits bring a trail of sadness, sorrow, protest, bitter opposition, an unnecessary and unwarrantable intrusion of a discordant element tending to worry, irritate and perhaps even to bring into inharmony husband and wife. In this delicate situation it often seems a problem how best to act. The health and happiness of the home must be considered as of first and greatest importance. If it be but a trivial inconvenience or jar to the domestic serenity, the wisdom of tolerance for a time should be manifested.

If it be of more serious menace, impossible to master by patient bearing, the privilege of hospitality should not be strained beyond the bearing point. There is a moment when sacrifice ceases to be a virtue and degenerates into cowardice, vice. There may be an injustice to oneself and to one near and dear that this unwelcome guesthood outrages. It is not true hospitality to mask the heart's continued protest under a smile, to submit unnecessarily to an atmosphere that saps one's mental and moral vitality, that dulls energy, deadens one's finer sensibility, and kills the joy of life, leaving one worried, weak, worn and weary, unable to meet as one should the questions of every-day living.

If we constantly suffer injustice that we can remove, we are slaves to the individuality of another and cowards to our own. The rankling irritation of the unjust bearing, if continued, will permeate our whole nature, like an emotional poison. We should therefore act calmly, wisely, with kindness and dignity, and frankly recognize conditions and with perfect fairness take the gentlest action that will remedy them. Better a short, decisive battle fought to a finish than a constant series of petty squabbles and skirmishes.

We cannot be just to others if we are unjust to ourselves. If one lives ever under the sceptre of the decision of others, it is not free life—it is slavery. One cannot keep emotion constantly corked up; some time that cork will come out—perhaps inopportunately. True love, true companionship, true living, can reign in the home only as there is in the home an atmosphere of liberty, of individual freedom in its highest sense.

If there be interference from outside forces, whether they be from the family or others, that tends to blight the joy, rest, peace and calm of the home, that threatens to bring in even the thin edge of the wedge of discord between husband and wife—that interference should be silenced forever. The home should be a sanctuary of refuge, not a battle-ground of discord; it should be a place where the angel of love ever swings the censer of peace, and calm, and happiness.

XVIII

The Incubus of Constant Faultfinding



JOB the patriarch of sublime patience, suffered many grievous trials and sorrows, ingeniously selected by Satan to compass his downfall, but he was mercifully spared one supreme test—a wife with a talent for nagging. It is true that his wife was indiscreet on one occasion and offered him some unwise advice, but this may have been only the impulsive outburst of her love, her loyalty, her sympathy, her protest, and that desperation we feel when we see someone we love suffer while knowing we are powerless to help. But she did not fuss, and fume, and fret, and fury, and find fault from dewy morn till darkening eve; had she done so, samples of her method would surely have been entered on the record.

She must have been a wonderful woman, Job's wife, and she has never received the credit and honour she deserved. She won no medal nor no crown in history. She never made a single personal complaint; her one emotional explosion was for her husband, not for herself, yet she suffered the sudden death of her seven sons, the fortune swept away, the stealing of the cattle and the camels, the burning of the sheepfold, the murder of the servants, and, in fact, everything that Job suffered except—the boils and the three friends. It was not to her, but to this nagging visiting committee of three, that he cried out in agony of soul and righteous resentment and rebellion he could not restrain: "Ye break me to pieces with words."

Constant faultfinding is an intoxication of the tongue that has destroyed more homes than drink. It is an insidious evil, so innocent in the beginning, yet it may bring every other source of unhappiness in its trail, and two who have loved and should love may mourn over a dead happiness slain by discord that one or the other should have prevented by self-control. To keep the air of the home sweet, wholesome and life-giving does not require two angels or two saints, but just two human beings with sense enough to realize that nagging is foolish, unnecessary, cruel, and that it—does not pay.

In an atmosphere of constant faultfinding, real respect for each other soon dies, every good impulse is dwarfed, every effort discouraged, every spontaneity stifled, love is killed and, goaded to desperation, with misunderstandings multiplied beyond the bearing point, two finally become separated in everything that means unity, though they may still present the semblance of union to their friends and to the world.

If there be one place on earth where peace should reign that place is—the home. It should ever be an unfailing sanctuary from the struggle, stress and storm of the world. When conditions are reversed and the world becomes a refuge from the home, then the death of love and all possibility for happiness becomes inevitable unless there be speedy

reorganization in the home partnership. That home is doomed to disruption from within; like a nation bravely meeting foreign aggression, but having dissension within, it will finally be broken by internal revolution.

The husband honestly and earnestly seeking to furnish the funds for the home on as liberal a scale as he can may have a faultfinding wife, discontented, unsympathetic, unappreciative of his efforts, selfishly thinking only of her own desires. Nothing that he can do ever satisfies and he may have to face at each home-coming the eternal money discussion and argument. It dominates the dinner-table, overflows into the evening session and rises with new force at breakfast time, a depressing, nagging influence that saps spirit and energy in meeting the business problems and duties of the day. If there be a temporary lull, a brief spell of sunshine, he feels ever a sense of apprehension like a canoeist on certain mountain lakes who realizes that a squall may come at any moment. He enters the house with dread; he remains in fear; he leaves it with relief.

There is not a subject on earth that he can venture to introduce without feeling that her ingenuity will find in it some opening for a monologue of complaint, a slur of condemnation, a mood of censure, an irritating pose of martyrdom or some other of the roles in her elaborate repertoire of faultfinding.

If he ventures to remark that the evening papers say there will probably be a general war in Europe she loses sight of the awful horror of the thought in her remark about the expense of it: "No one can understand better than I what war must cost, when it takes so much money to run a house." This becomes the text for a sermon on his failure as a money-maker and his inferiority to the man next door. The suggestion of the high flight of an air-ship gives her the chance for a sudden transfer to "the high cost of living."

The barbaric treatment of women among savages makes her remark with an undertone of personal significance that would be humorous were it not so maddingly serious: "Yet the women of America suffer terrible things too and they are silent about it." If on some other occasion after looking in every direction for storm signals, thinking that now at least he is safe, he may hazard the information of a new submarine that has made wonderful descents. He may suddenly be jostled from his self-complacency as he hears the warning preface: "For years I have known what it means to be down in the depths. I can sympathize with them."

He soon puts himself in the attitude of a careful chess-player who mentally moves every piece on the board and studies all its new possibilities before making the actual move. He thinks of the radiation of every phrase before he speaks it, but even then, some seemingly innocent sentence may hardly have passed his lips before he hears what means "check" to his soul.

He may hear: why did he marry her? she had everything in life at home; her sister's husband has just put through a new deal; the people in the corner house have bought an automobile; she reminds him constantly that she sacrificed so much in taking him when there were so many other better candidates. It requires heroic self-control for him to resist saying what he feels at this point, but he may find it prudent not to put into her hands fresh ammunition for

future assault, when she will quote the fatal phrase of his outburst while forgetting, or even denying in her own mind, that she gave the slightest provocation.

When this faultfinding reaches a chronic state, though he might have done much in the earlier stages, now it seems he can do nothing. No matter what action it takes it proves to be the wrong one. The cards seem stacked against him so that he must lose. His explanations are riddled and ridiculed and mean simply new points of attack; his tenderness may be construed as a weak admission of the right of all she says and of the justice of her siege; his arguments are all mowed down by the avalanche of her unreason; his indignation bursting bonds may break into angry protest that brings a cascade of tears at “this new suffering.”

In sad despair he may valiantly try silence, determining to say nothing no matter what it costs him in self-control. This gives her a free field for a little while until she suddenly becomes conscious of the lack of return fire that seems like shelling a deserted city. Then she may become aggravated to say something specially stinging to draw some spark of response from the flint of his silence. He may at last sadly feel that absence from home is his only resource, and accept quiet outside if he cannot peace at home. In his desperation he may care nothing for the outcome; he simply lets go and—drifts.

It may be the wife who suffers all this or some similar brand of nagging from the husband. She lives in a state of terror of his moods, grows old before her time, loses her spirit, her sweetness and her interest in life. She feels as hopeless and helpless as a leaf in the tempest of his faultfinding. Her battle with herself during the day to be thoughtful, kind and forgiving and to meet the storm in the best way she can, may be nullified in a few moments when her good resolutions and her plans for patience and prudence are suddenly laid low as a cyclone levels a town.

Some little thing she worked over for days for his pleasure or comfort may be ignored, treated with contempt or even condemnation for wasting her time. Her powers of endurance are killed by a sneer cruel as a blow. His grumbling at the food, at the house, at the servants and at her may finally “get on her nerves” so she feels she cannot keep still. She feels like an electric machine, vibrating at a tremendous velocity, and that any moment she may fly to pieces. She, like Job, knows what it means to be “broken to pieces with words.” And then he may lapse into cold, bitter sarcasm that seems to suffocate her, words that bite like an acid into her consciousness; they are unanswerable in their form, cruelly, cowardly, contemptibly unjust in their spirit. They blight everything that is best in her nature, they shrivel every good impulse. She hates this sarcasm with an intensity of soul she cannot express and she may soon hate—him.

He is venting his temper on her, getting the relief of the outburst in a degrading tyrannical way he would not dare to do at his club or at his business with customers though he would doubtless make helpless clerks his victims. He masters it for dollars at his store, why does he not conquer it for peace at home? A mislaid collar-button, that he forgets he himself lost in the morning, may be sufficient to convert a home into an inferno in a few moments.

Such a man, too, smiling and gay with his guests, may say in the course of a dinner a number of mean, vitriolic things in the way of slurs and allusions, that fall innocently on unknowing ears, but which the wife knows are aimed with deadly intent at her. He is shooting from a masked battery, with a silencer on his gun and with smokeless powder, but as each shot finds its mark, she may hear herself talking automatically to the guest she is entertaining, hardly conscious of what she is saying, because of the pain in her heart, and the very air of the room seems to grow stifling; she is humiliated by the shame of it and she wants to get away, somewhere, anywhere, and to be alone.

Faultfinding, when it is the atmosphere of an individual life, is but an assertion of intense selfishness, it is seeing things only from one's own standpoint and expressing the feeling of discontent, dissatisfaction or protest that things are not going as we wish, that the universe is not run on our schedule. Faultfinding is the father of all the bad tempers. We sometimes speak of anger as if it were the only temper when it is merely one of them. Tempers are the indispositions of the mind, the emotions, and the will. There are many: scolding, complaining, nagging, fretting, grumbling, fuming, whining, sulking, pestering, fussing, moping, sneering, snarling, opposing, arguing, and the others. The fault primarily rests not with conditions but with the subject, the individual himself or herself. It does not need a reason, an excuse will suffice; it creates a wrong if one does not exist. It is often the spontaneous combustion of a mood or a temperament that needs no outside conditions to start its fire; it burns because it is its nature to burn and everything is food for its tongues of flame.

There are times when, merely in an acute form, it means only tired nerves, illness of body or of mind, a little touch of loneliness or the blues, the burden of anxiety and strain on the part of the wife or of financial pressure, worry, or business cares that fret and chafe on the part of the husband. Then it should be borne patiently, sweetly, soothingly, with gentle forbearing and forgiving and forgetting as the mother bears the irritability and peevishness of a sick child. But if it becomes chronic it means wantonly killing the happiness of both.

Sometimes the wife through her love and loyalty and with the best intentions, wounds and wearies her husband by her persistent remonstrances, entreaties, and pleading and complaints, bringing up constantly new arguments on the same old theme. There are certain subjects upon which the two find they cannot agree, each new discussion intensifies misunderstandings, yet one or the other constantly reopens them. There should be an absolute quarantine on these topics; they should be consigned forever to the realm of the unspoken, in the best interests of both.

There are some people who hoard up petty grievances as a miser does gold coins and take a strange satisfaction in turning them over and studying them in detail, giving them new dignity, power and exaggerated value. We should cultivate the talent for fine forgetting, banishing forever the disagreeable from our life, our speech and our thought, if experience shows it cannot be cured. If it can be cured it should be cured and—forgotten. We never truly forgive if we let ghosts of regret haunt a memory.

Men and women who have nagging tempers are often blissfully unconscious of it. Were it called to their attention they would in most cases file some alibi of explanation or interpretation that reveals their self-delusion. The wife feels that she is a martyr, that no one realizes how much she has to suffer— she forgets that most of it is of her own creation. She may even wonder why there is continuous discord in the home; she may recount her good qualities and as she tearfully checks off the items you may agree with her in every instance, but she somehow overlooks the fact that her tongue and her temper have made all these virtues count for nothing. The sterling qualities of her character simply intensify the sadness of it all; the greater the value of a building and the finer and richer its treasures the greater the loss when it is fed to the flames.

The husband may expand his chest as though it were covered with medals when he tells how bountifully he provides for the home—why does he not provide happiness? He says he is strictly temperate—why does he not introduce this quality into his language? He never smokes—why does he not realize it is better to smoke than to fume? He never goes in bad company—why does he not get away from himself occasionally? He is popular among men who know him— why does he not try to be popular at home? He is successful in business— why does he not make his home a success?

Constant faultfinding means death to the happiness of both. It is hopelessly foolish too, for no man or woman was ever converted from a fault, failing or weakness through nagging. It rouses the worse side of human nature, stubbornness, bitterness, opposition; it never stimulates nor inspires the better side. Man responds better to an ideal to live up to than an evil to live down. Praise for good accomplishes more than blame for evil. If you tell a child that she has beautiful hair and a little care will make it more beautiful you have touched through praise the secret spring of her pride. If you tell her constantly how horrid and disorderly her hair looks she is apt to grow defiant, reckless and uncaring. The same philosophy applies to us older folks.

Where there be any habit of husband or wife that displeases, a word of praise on some occasion where it seems mastered for the moment, spoken with no reference to its being an exception, may accomplish wonders by inspiring pride without wounding. Nagging can only be cured in the individual by self-control. It must be mastered or happiness and all hope of it will die. Love, comradeship, confidence and trust in married life will banish it and bring sweet peace, confidence and harmony in its stead.

XIX

Talking Business Matters at Home



HERE is a theory held by many that a man should not “talk shop” at home, that when he puts his latchkey into his house door he should leave business with all its cares, fears, worries and trials on the outside as the Orientals take off their sandals before entering a dwelling. It is a goldbrick of advice that will not stand the acid test of wisdom and experience. It sounds unselfish, sacrificing, considerate, heroic and magnanimous, but it is a dangerous half-truth. The husband has no right to bring home his irritation, his impatience, and his restless anger and vent them on his wife and family, but cutting off his whole business life from discussion is unjust—to both.

One half, at least, of the waking hours of most men is devoted to business. When a man builds a solid wall of silence around this half of his living, and puts up a warning sign “No Admittance,” so high that his wife cannot peer over, so unbroken that she cannot peek through nor learn anything of what is going on, it kills confidence, weakens comradeship and unwisely strains love.

Women do not always realize that genuine interest in a man’s business is often the shortest road to his heart. His ambitions, his efforts, his hopes, his fears, his longings, his dreams and his ideals that centre in his business mean much to him. He cannot always ring down the curtain after the day’s performance is over and put it all away for the night as children do their toys. He wants, sometimes, when the pressure is a little harder than usual, to talk it all over, to get sympathy, reinforcement in moments of doubt, a kind helping hand through a perilous place, fresh unprejudiced eyes to see a problem, new courage in despondency, new hope when too tired to find it alone.

When business matters are not talked over at home it is often the fault of the wife. In the courtship days it may have been her interest in his dreams of success and his struggles to win it, her sweet ready sympathy that first made him really care for her before he was really conscious of the depths of his feeling. They talked over his little trials, his discouragements, his ambitions; she knew all the clerks in the office by name; it was to her he first told some compliment, some word of special appreciation that some work of his had received. It was her counsel and sympathy made smoother and easier to bear a little unreasonable jealousy; the promise of an increase in salary he confided to her with a boyish eagerness and delight, for it brought their union nearer and seemed to make the future more serene and certain.

But after marriage the threads of this confidence may somehow slip silently and unnoted through her fingers and she may sometime suddenly awaken to the realization of the change and be unable to say when it began. He may speak little of business and when he does speak it is only to tell of some important change that she must know. Even then he gives only the

bald final fact with little or no detail. It is like a newspaper heading telling the essentials in the fewest possible words. She wants detail, all the minutiae of conditions, the whole story.

She may long to share in all his sorrows, griefs, fears, worries. She may feel that she is a rank outsider, beyond the pale of his confidence, when she overhears his cozy chat over business matters with some man friend; she is conscious of a sense of inadequacy as though she were not necessary to him in some way, and that there is one room in his life where she does not enter. She feels a broken link in comradeship and may blame him in her heart.

Confidence is a delicate plant and it is so easy to blight it. Sometimes a wife listens to a talk on business in a half-bored, half-listening, unsympathetic manner that gives confidence a cold chill. Sometimes when he tells her of some big deal he hopes to put through, her first thought is not of its success for his sake but of a sealskin coat, and she thoughtlessly asks him will he get one for her if it comes out right. The husband thinks sadly: "It is the rake-off that interests her—not me."

Sometimes she pounces down on a mistake of judgment, an unwise move, just to show how sharp and shrewd she is in business, and it makes him feel mean and humiliated. He needs a poultice of sympathy; she gives him a blister of condemnation. She may speak in an irritating tone of finality, as to the wisdom or folly of some course, that would be arrogant assumption of omniscience even from the Supreme Court. She may on one occasion have scored a bull's-eye with some chance shot of advice and think she is infallible. Sometimes in her love and interest she may be overanxious, take things over-seriously and his little incidental reference to a matter of no real consequence her imagination may conjure into a Waterloo and keep her awake nights. Sometimes she demands confidence as a right and, of course, fails. You cannot open confidence as you do an oyster; it expands gently from within in response to a genial, stimulating influence from without, as a bud becomes a rose.

Sometimes the husband refrains from talking because he foolishly underestimates the wife's ability to understand. At one time he would have been willing to spend a week explaining the inscriptions on an obelisk or even some more puzzling subject, like the tariff, had she expressed the slightest wish to understand it. Sometimes he does not let her know that he is navigating through dangerous waters because he "does not want to worry her." This may be a reason or an excuse—in either case it is unwise.

This attitude is not just nor complimentary to the woman nor to the wife, neither to her sex nor to her as an individual. It is the wax doll theory of wifehood, keeping her in the pink cotton of ignorance, far away from any warmth of trouble. If she be well in body and mind, let her worry a bit if it seem necessary. It will not really hurt her; as a real wife and comrade it is what she wants. Better the worry of knowledge than the worry of ignorance.

When he comes home, night after night, preoccupied, wearied and anxious and to her repeated question, "What is the matter, dear?" gives the same old answer, "Nothing at all, not a thing," then she does worry. Her imagination runs every note of several octaves of speculation and possibility. Then may come that instinctive fear that sometimes clutches a wife's heart, that comes first because she fears it most: "He no longer loves me." With this

thought, innocent, disassociated facts, words, acts, things said or unsaid, done or undone, through that strange ingenuity of circumstantial evidence dovetail to make suspicion seem absolute truth.

If he had told her the whole story frankly, freely, fully, and then said: "We are going through trying times at the office, dear; business is dull, money is tight and collections slow. I don't want to deny you a single thing necessary for your comfort or your pleasure, you know that, but if you cut down expenses wherever you can, just for a little, everything you don't really need, let's trim sail and keep close to shore and we'll pull through, dear, we'll pull through—together. I need you now more than ever, just stand close by me and let me feel you trust me every minute and that you understand and just forgive and forget if I am a bit cross or impatient, for it is not really me, you know, but the worry, dear"—she would feel almost happy.

There would be the weight of an anxiety that steadies a character and unifies a soul. It is not that vague phantom of worry that paralyzes energy. She has a new object in living; she is going to help him through, he needs her; she loves him more because they seem nearer and dearer; she will save so carefully and find a joy in it. She will fall bravely into line and almost forget the restrictions of their life in the glow and tingle of the pleasure of the comradeship. She wishes she had known it sooner for she might have spared him so much impatience, bitterness, and worry—had she known.

Talking business matters at home does not mean that the husband should save up all the nagging details of every-day business and retail them to her at night, like a child showing a pin-scratch and gently squeezing it a little to widen it and redden it a bit to make it look more awful and to win more sympathy, but the real big things that puzzle him, that worry, that mean much, that interest deeply—whatever interests him vitally should interest her.

Business is not all sorrow, struggle, strain. There is the keen zest of competition, the red blood of enterprise and accomplishment, joy-spots of pleasant interviews and special successes. There are incidents of quaint people, the humour of funny customers, interesting news of new inventions, improvements, changes, tendencies, movements and trends. These are worthy of the telling and may be of value as information or warning.

Wives should know of the temptations and trials and tests of business life. Many a man has been encouraged to stand bravely by the right by a wife who heartened him in his ideals, who counted principles higher than mere money and who would not consent to some get-rich-quick scheme that might get under the wire of the law but would not square with sterling honesty and the higher ethics of truth and justice.

The wife, whether she be sympathetic, helpful, and genuinely interested or not, should know, at least, the amount of the husband's income and whether the business is prospering; how much more she is told rests with him and—herself. She should know this in order to gauge her expenditure and to direct properly their living.

The world often condemns a wife as being extravagant at a time when her husband is passing through a period of business stress and storm. She who should be the first to know of this

may be the last; she may believe that her husband's income and position not only justify but practically demand her living on a certain scale. It may be the husband who really sets the pace and she merely follows. She may be not only willing but anxious to live the simple life, and would gladly lower the key of their spending if she realized it would help him.

A wife may believe herself provided for in the event of the death of her husband, but when this sad hour comes, may find his insurance policies have lapsed, his business is mortgaged, his creditors are practically in possession and she is penniless. Had business matters been talked over at home the wreck might have been obviated or its evil lessened,—at least the sudden shock of revelation could not take her unawares.

A wife may find at her husband's death that he has left her ample money but not the knowledge of how to keep it, how to invest it, how to guard it. His silence for years on business matters has left her innocent and ignorant as a child. She may be easy prey to the dazzling schemes of unscrupulous promoters with great land enterprises, claims of inventions that will revolutionize an industry, Golconda mines⁵ that are earthy mints of millions, marvellous rubber plantation properties that will pay tremendous dividends, or some other painless method of becoming Monte Cristos without risk. The money that means the consecrated devotion and love of years may all trickle away in the sands of knavery because of her ignorance of business.

Some poorer sister, left destitute of money as well as of business knowledge, bravely facing the world alone in a hard fight for daily bread, may run perilously close to the rock of disaster, and be subject unnecessarily to cruel snares and entanglements, insidious dangers and pitfalls. She walks unprotected in the weakness of her ignorance, along a way where she should have been armoured with wisdom had the husband who loved her been wise as he was loving.

Talking business matters at home inspires confidence, strengthens comradeship and intensifies love. It helps to hold monotony at bay; it is a bond that may keep two from growing apart mentally and perhaps even from drifting apart emotionally; it helps both in pulling together through a crisis and it means truer, deeper union and unity on one of the great questions of married life.

⁵ Golkonda, a ruined city of south-central India and capital of ancient Kingdom of Golkonda (c. 1364–1512). The golconda fort use to have a vault chamber where once the famous Kohinoor and Hope diamonds were stored along with other diamonds.

XX

The Ebb-Tide of Love



THE saddest thing in married life is the drifting apart of those who have lived and loved for years in the sunshine of each other's presence. It is just a heart tragedy in the life of two. The greatest trials of life are not those which come to us from the world outside the home, but those from the world within. With the inspiring pressure of the hand we love held tight in our own, the battle of life can be borne bravely, but when the refuge of love and mutual respect and esteem is swept away, the very bulwarks of the home seem gone.

Occasional discords, misunderstandings and little clouds of unhappiness may not be serious. The sun of reconciliation may scatter them, and in the balmy atmosphere that follows they may be forgotten. But it is different when love itself grows cold and respect for each other, which is so able an understudy to love, goes on a long vacation. Then inharmonies intensify as the days go by; antagonism on the basic questions of life grows more bitter; grim, hopeless silence takes the place of speech, or the atmosphere becomes vitiated by hot words of recrimination and contempt. There is sometimes an indignant outburst of anger at white heat that is not so awful as it seems. It may be the fierce flame of protest from the heart that shows the fire of love is still burning; but constant, cold dead sarcasm and bitterness speak only of embers.

This condition is not a matrimonial duet; it is a matrimonial duel. When either husband or wife speaks words meant to sting, phrases seemingly innocent to others hearing them, but which are deftly loaded to annoy or madden as they relentlessly find their way through the vulnerable point in the armour, it is time for those two to declare a truce and to hold a speedy peace conference or there will not be enough love left to hold an inquest over. They may even grow to hate each other's ways, moods, acts, and turns of speech. The voice once loved may now sound shrill and hard; the step on the stair which was sweet music may seem a jarring discord, and the rippling laughter may strike only a vibrating note of vague rebellion. This surely shows Cupid is getting ready for a post-mortem and a dead happiness will soon be buried.

Sometimes the growing separation is on one side only, and one still loves with the old intensity and the old heart-hunger. As absence is always harder for the one left behind, so this twilight of love is most painful to the one whose love is still constant. It is the dead nerve that carries no pain. The finer nature suffers most in life, as variations in temperature that may disturb the sensitive soul of a violin are powerless to affect brass cymbals. There may be a conscious effort on the part of the one who loves to disbelieve in the growing separation—not to credit it, not to realize it, nor to accept it for a moment as a possibility. But sometimes

a word, a look, a sentence or an act makes further self-illusion folly, as a lightning flash may reveal to a traveller an abyss at his feet.

The smile that was the light of our life no longer cheers us; the caresses that told of love unstinted are withheld; the tenderness that seemed as sure as sunrise or sunset has turned to doubt, and the one who still loves may battle hopelessly when all life around him seems to move in a fog. At such times despite every wisdom of heart and mind, one can never say the right word or do the right thing. Heart-strings of sentiment, that once vibrated at the slightest touch and brought out in an instant a flood of music from the finest memories of the soul, are now mute. No explanations, no pleas, no baring of one's very heart, no illumination of the subtlest windings of thought and emotion can vanquish that vague something that separates.

We may stand broken-hearted by a wall of separation made up of gossip, fear, doubt, suspicion, injustice, and misunderstanding, with that most helpless of all despairs when we see love that was our whole life, and still is all that makes life worth living, swept away as one would watch from a distance a boat carrying a loved one swept by the rapids over an engulfing cataract. This is the time when memories of past joy rise like ghosts and bring only pangs of pain, when love's dead roses leave us only the thorns.

Love rarely dies a sudden death. It is usually ailing a long time before its decease. Little ills that could readily be cured in their early stages are permitted to run into more serious conditions; complications set in and love, with its vitality exhausted through long suffering, finally dies. Love's neglected colds often develop into consumption. Prompt treatment with a little unselfish care, tender watchfulness and cheerful, patient nursing may restore love to perfect health.

The great things that separate two who have loved are usually only trifles grown big and tyrannous through being ignored, basic evils in the character, temperament or disposition of either that should be silenced and conquered in the best interests of both. Even disloyalty may be only the climax form that heart-hunger, neglect, loneliness, jealousy, vanity gone to seed, revolt from an atmosphere of nagging, monotony, unsatisfied longing for sympathy, injustice, idleness, long-suffering, or a dozen other phases may finally assume. Any of these may furnish the soil in which it finds root and sustenance. Sometimes it is the fault of one; sometimes husband and wife both are to blame. The "innocent" one is often unknowingly, and perhaps even recklessly, an accessory before the fact.

The way to prevent the ebb-tide of love is to determine at the very start of married life that there will be no ebb-tide. Sometimes husband and wife, really loving each other as of old, wander blunderingly apart through 'pettiness, pique, false pride or misunderstanding. Often with hands outstretched in the darkness, just hungering for each other, almost touching, when a motion, a smile, a term of endearment, a love-light in the eyes of either, would bring them conquered and submissive in each other's arms, yet a recklessly indiscreet word, a mean taunt, a psychic moment of possibility passed by unheeded, or a silence that seems cruel, may drive them still further apart. The stream of fine sentiment and heart emotion should sweep them out of themselves; sometimes it backs water and engulfs them.

It really seems that some people do not want happiness or they would not dodge it so successfully, and begrudge the trifles it takes to secure it. People who would be shocked at the bare thought of actually destroying a two-dollar bill often toss idly aside the happiness of two for the merest trifle. Life is too short and love too great to sacrifice one hour through pettiness. What matters it whose the fault or whose the forgiveness? It is a very poor brand of personal dignity that dares to throw its desecrating shadow between them and the joy of reconciliation and new bonds of love.

When the realization of the waning of love comes, the two should seek to forget for a moment the differences, the saddening changes, the cemetery of dead memories and buried emotions, and try to get back somehow to some common ground of unity and understanding. They should seek to gather together the trifles of sacred things not yet lost. In the thought of these there may be a vitalizing flame of the old love flashing out from the dull gray of the ashes that will burn away the dross of discord and misunderstanding.

Argument itself rarely counts; this is but an intellectual appeal; what is needed is an emotional inspiration. We should recognize conditions fully for our own guidance in action, but it is not wise to make evident our pain by pleas and protests. Cruel words meant to sting can be neutralized to a degree by showing no sign of being effected by them. There is a yellow streak of cruelty in love grown cold; it likes the cringing that shows its power. Studied neglect and cool indifference are rarely continued if they are received with an innocent absorption or preoccupation they cannot penetrate. There is really little fun shooting with these blank cartridges. 'An unexpected kindness, a note of tenderness in speech or act, the regenerating influence of the sweet sentiment, and graceful attention of the earlier days of loving, may melt a mood of opposition that any argument would solidify as heat sets clay.

Trying to get back to the fork of the road where parting came may illuminate life and show the insidious element that keeps apart two, who should love each other. In the care of a garden there is a twofold duty—the elimination of the weeds and the planting of the flowers. In the home life the dual duty is specially vital; when discord reigns there should be at least the negative virtue of avoiding subjects of inharmony, of cutting off those things that intensify differences, of stopping the fire of verbal grapeshot that sting like needles. It is a time for antidotes, and if you cannot possibly give an antidote, in mercy give a poultice—not a blister. It is the hour when two people should work overtime making allowances for each other, and pack their sense of wounded personal dignity away for the season in tar-paper, for it is in the way during such a crisis.

In a storm at sea everything is sacrificed to save the ship; personal discomfort, suffering, trial, hardship—all count for nothing if the vessel itself with its people be kept afloat. When the life-happiness of two hangs in the balance, when love is sinking in a night of doubt, there should be a supreme effort to save the ship. Throw over pride, self-will, pique, dignity, fear, selfishness, all little pet vices if necessary, sacrifice every wrong and even minor rights—just to save the ship. Love is the most valuable cargo on the ship of life. It is the greatest thing in *this* world and the only thing that will make the next worth the living. The ebb-tide of love is

the saddest thing in a true individual life. It is a life's folly to let love die if aught we can do will keep it real and living.

XXI

Holding Monotony at Bay



MONOTONY is the malaria of matrimony. It poisons the home atmosphere, gradually exhausts the life-giving oxygen of love and comradeship and leaves one stifling in an air of discontent, protest, and rebellion. It means dull, deadly depression of spirits, a general tired feeling regarding life, weakened hope and will, loss of appetite for the trifles of every-day living, a listless, languid indifference, a nervous irritability difficult to control. It takes all the brightness and vividness from the colour scheme of life and thought and leaves them a cold, dismal gray. This monotony saps the vitality of mental, moral and physical resistance to trivial cares and worries that assume portentous proportions like figures blurred into bigness by a fog. It needs the fresh tonic ozone of change, the vitalizing sunlight of a new interest, the windows of life opened wide for freer air and a broader outlook.

Monotony in married life is an insidious evil. It is hard to cure but easy to prevent. Husband and wife should realize that it rests solely with them; the conditions are absolutely within their control when acting in unity and harmony; either can do much, neither can do all. They can create an atmosphere of comradeship, cheerfulness, and courage that defies monotony. It takes so little to hold it at bay, in the beginning; it takes so much to kill it, in the end. It is easier to dodge a few snowflakes than the wild fury of the storm at its worst.

The secret of monotony is over-absorption of the head or the hands where the heart is not in it. It is the overfeeding of one side of life at the expense of the other; it is the prostrating effect of unbroken sameness in an environment. When the daily drudgery is unilluminated by the conscious joy of consecration, when through brooding and self-sympathy we translate it into a treadmill of routine, then monotony holds us captive. It is what we put into life that makes it great; it is what it takes out of us that makes it mean, miserable, and monotonous.

The wife in her devotion to her home may place a false estimate on trifles. She may become house-bound; never crossing the threshold except when absolutely necessary, she may unconsciously convert her home into a prison and submerge the wife in the housekeeper. The unending repetition of the same duties, this continuous performance without change or intermission, begins to chafe and fret and weary her; it seems like the regular tramp of a vast army on the march, continually passing but never passed. The deadly routine begins to wear on her nerves, like the irritating, insistent tick of a clock in a sick-room. The narrow horizon of her living depresses her spirits; she grows faultfinding, dissatisfied, helpless and hopeless. The salt of life has lost its savour.

She must lessen the tension some way, drop the whole outfit occasionally, forget she is a machine and remember she is a human being, and get out for a change of thought and

experience. Let her turn her steps to the green pastures of rest and restoration, take a walk or a drive, hear a little music or see a play, make a visit or entertain a caller, go shopping, that does not require money, for it is only buying that costs, read some book even though it is only “one of the best sellers “—anything that will freshen the mind, quicken the blood, gladden the heart, or put a new edge on life.

Some people do take duty a bit too seriously. It is delightful occasionally to turn your back deliberately and impolitely on a duty for a while, to give saintship a little vacation, for the duty does welcome you so when you return and it does not seem half so hard. Much of our loyalty to duty is simply disloyalty to higher duties and when we are dulled by monotony, we do not differentiate clearly between them. There are honest, earnest, good women who, like Martha of old, are “cumbered with much serving.” They let the house eclipse the home, creature comfort overshadow heart comfort; they make themselves unfit companions for themselves, much less for their husbands. They should cultivate the courage to let go; they should realize that monotony is never a bargain, never worth what they pay for it.

There are other wives who have no cares nor responsibility, no tax on time or energy, no money worries; burdens of housekeeping are reduced to a minimum by the help of efficient servants; the children are away at school. These wives, too, often face monotony. It is not the monotony of work, but of leisure. It means time that must be lived through, somehow, hours of idleness, loneliness, moodiness, with no deep compelling interest to consecrate them to highest usefulness. Sometimes social duties may prove as exacting as real labour, and in the monotony of parties, receptions, balls, calls, driving, musicales and dinners, husband and wife may really enjoy a quiet evening at home where they may become acquainted again.

In the absorption of making money for the support of home and family a husband may lose the true perspective of life. He may become unduly anxious for more money; he may key his desires too high; he may be sacrificing too much of his real self in acquiring wealth. In over-absorption in providing all that money can buy he may forget the greater things that mere money cannot buy, forget that mere material things do not bring real happiness. If he goes home tired, physically, mentally and morally, and is preoccupied and silent or irritable and faultfinding, he is drifting towards the rocks of matrimonial monotony. He is sinking the husband in the treasurer, the lover and companion in the business man. He should lighten the pressure if it be possible; if not he must make a mighty effort to neutralize its effects rather than intensify them, to disinfect his mood with cheerfulness.

The failure of many marriages is not any great positive wrong nor even a series of lesser wrongs but just lapsing into the omission of words and acts of love, comradeship, thoughtfulness, confidence and interest that mean the joy of life; it is surrender to monotony that may at last bring revolt and a break for freedom. And two who have loved may just grow tired of each other, hardly knowing why or when or how—and both may be to blame.

Monotony means surrender to an environment, not conquest of it. Man is the only animal that can consciously change from within, change manners, thoughts, impulses, desires, dreams, ideals. Man is the only animal that can consciously modify his environment, by deliberate

choice move to an entirely different one, transform an old or create a new environment. All the other animals are derelicts carried along by currents of instinct, habits, hungers and environment; man can head his craft towards any harbour despite the currents. If husband and wife determine to keep the ship of matrimony out in the free open sea far from the shoals of monotony and hidden reefs of discord, it depends solely on their navigation, not on winds, tides or outside forces.

The blight of monotony is not solely one of wealth or of poverty. The less the income and the more restricted the life the less is required to do something that will break the spell of monotony, that will bring a change, a new impulse, a new impetus, a new inspiration. A dinner away from home, an evening at the theatre, a long ride or a sail, a day at the beach, a walk in the country, a visit or a guest, some new books, may be the trifle that may break the deadly dullness of uniformity. The two must realize that the monotony is in them rather than in conditions, but changing the conditions or the thought of changing them often has a tonic reaction. It is at least—a start. It is the conscious conquest of environment

Business men realize the effect of cleanliness, comfort, convenience and change in making a store more attractive to customers. They vary the display in the shop-windows, they decorate in harmony with the seasons, they rearrange departments, they continuously seek to banish monotony. This philosophy of change might well be introduced in many homes where the same articles of furniture stand in the same places for years as if they were built into the walls. Rearranging the furnishings, changing the position of the pictures, packing out of sight the surplus of ornaments and bric-à-brac that make rooms look like museums and bringing them out later and retiring the old ones, may freshen and brighten a home and give a new life and inspiration. Flowers in a room, a window-box of green growing things or a touch of colour somewhere work wonders in a simple way.

There is a tendency on the part of many married people to surrender to their moods, not to bother about making themselves agreeable to each other. There are times when a guest comes to the home and the husband may be surprised to see how entertaining his wife can be; he hears her tell stories and incidents that are new to him, that amuse and brighten the atmosphere. He may narrate entertaining episodes of his business life, talk interestingly of new inventions, new discoveries, city improvements, national men and measures, facts and fancies from his reading, observation and experience and she may look across the table in a pleased wonder and try to keep back the expression of her rebellious protest that with her alone he usually surpasses the oyster in silence except on the old subjects now talked to tatters.

Monotony comes from many causes; it can be held at bay in many ways. The courtship method helps by keeping the two from settling down into a matter-of-fact, humdrum existence, by hallowing trifles, by banishing a sense of duty and putting the spontaneity of love in its stead. Comradeship helps too; it puts both on a basis of consecrated friendship, willing to take uncomplainingly together the rough or the smooth, the lights or the shadows, the deeps or the shallows of living, just as equals, with no awe, no oppressive dignity, no

fear, but with freedom, frankness, full respect and confidence that smiles away sorrow and suspicion.

Humour helps; it livens trifles, takes the sting out of little troubles and miseries. When the servant leaves at four minutes' notice, there need not be grumbling, and protest, and fretting. What if the meals are not up to par or the house not manicured and given a heavy polish, for a day or two? There is no need for worry, the world is not yet come to an end. If taken in the right spirit it may be a picnic time for both. Children have the advantage of us older folks; they know how to pretend and to play things are different from what they are.

A little of this spirit, sometimes, keeps us young; it brings imagination to the rescue; it crowds out the oppressiveness of the serious side of things when tears may be just trembling near the edge of the eyelids, like actors in the wings waiting their cue. An honest laugh is worth a hundred sighs in any market. It does not really make much difference if the humour seem a bit home-made and show signs of wear, if it please the two, who enjoy without criticizing, and carry a bubbling laugh from their lips to their living.

Reading aloud, music in the home, the romping play of the children, the welcome guest—all help to keep monotony at bay. Looking out for the joy-notes in the commonplaces, finding happiness like a four-leaf clover because we know just where to look for it, seeing reason for thankfulness in what we have rather than regret in what we have not, singing and smiling at one's work, make monotony fade away like mist before the sun of the morning. Really loving one's home is the best way to make it worth loving; having a pride in it will make it proud of us. Doing more for each other intensifies love, for we love most those for whom we do most. Love grows and gains by giving.

Let us hold monotony at bay by utilizing to the full our trifles of possibility. If we cannot go to Europe or even take a trip to the mountains or the sea, let us take a trolley ride or a walk; if we cannot do even these let us look out of the window and smile—do anything that breaks our over-absorption. If two kill monotony in their hearts, they will kill it in their lives and they will be just glad and happy that they have—each other.

XXII

The Tyranny of too Tight a Rein



TYRANNY in a nation can transform the freest people that ever breathed into hopeless slaves, numbly submissive and spiritless, or scheming rebels with a smile on their lips but hate in their hearts as they dream their golden dreams of secret revolt and a bold break for liberty. There is a brand of bossism in married life, of petty tyranny in the home that duplicates in miniature this dilemma of results. It saps the ambition, courage and vitality of husbands and wives and transforms them into dull, crushed, colourless beings, or if they do not submit thus meekly it trains them persistently in smiling hypocrisy, trickery, deceit, lying and plotting to cheat the tyranny they do not dare openly to resent.

Have you ever met the husband, of the timid, suppressed type, who always answers his wife's call with "yes, my dear," "no, my dear," or "just in a moment, my dear." It is never the sweet "dear" that drops gently into a sentence like a caress. His "my dear" with its monotonous iteration of a phonograph record seems a continuous phrase of placating. It is not affection, it is just fear; it seems a pleading deprecatory gesture of the voice as if trying to dodge a rebuke or a lecture as one involuntarily wards off an attack with the upraised arm. You somehow feel that you should take him into a cozy-corner and soothe him, and tell him not to be afraid, that you will protect him.

When you are alone with him he may talk easily, cleverly and well; the stream of his conversation runs smooth and free like a mountain brook but it suddenly trickles into irrelevant commonplaces when his wife enters the room, the whole atmosphere seems changed, and you vaguely wonder who shut off the water supply. You do not like the surreptitious way he covers his lighted cigar with his hat; it seems too much like a child caught with its hand in the sugar bowl. He can never tell you definitely whether he can go out to-morrow night; he will let you know later and you feel that he has already begun to plan how he can secure his wife's countersign to his pass. Even when he is doing what is absolutely right and harmless he becomes wondrously fertile in lying excuses, those conversational capsules to sweeten the breath of suspicion. His ill-concealed joy when his wife has to go out of town for a day or two is not a mere confession; it is a condensed biography.

Sometimes it is the husband, in domineering assertion of authority, who plays the poor, petty role of domestic tyrant. He dictates, he demands, he threatens, he forbids, he issues his orders as ultimatums in a manner that would be unwarranted even were he a pirate captain haranguing his crew. He forgets that marriage means partnership not proprietorship, freedom of both in the best interests of both, not slavery of either. His assaults on her rights when he

crosses the dead-line of intolerance and despotically demands obedience may not be received as submissively, as uncomplainingly and as finally, as he in his blind conceit believes.

He may secure an outward semblance of submission but actually contemptuous rebellion. Brought to bay, her bitter protest of opposition may make her dangerously ingenious in outwitting him. When in a moment of pique at some act of her family he dares to order her never to see them or write them or hear from them, she feels the cruel injustice of this cutting of the ties of love and tenderness she may resort to subterfuge, intrigue, evasion and systematic deception and defy him behind his back while she seems sweetly and serenely resigned in his presence. She may drift unknowingly into a course of action normally repugnant as she surrenders to a tide of conditions of constant despotic injustice. Tyranny needs a hundred watch-dogs—trustful love, none.

When she finds a quarantine ordered against some of her dearest and best friends coming to the house, her self-respect blushes at the plausible lies she writes or speaks to prevent their knowing the real reason. When she fears to tell him of some misdeed of one of the children because of the cruel punishment his anger may prescribe, he is slamming the door on her confidence and giving a bonus of new license to the little rebel in the nursery. When she gives false statistics as to the price of some simple article she has bought, just to avoid a “scene,” he is giving her unwise post-graduate courses in duplicity which may later prove costly. He is worse than wrong—he is foolish.

He is paying a big price for his tyranny when the song dies away on her lips as she hears his key click in the lock in the evening and she draws a long breath of relief when he leaves home in the morning. Then she may remember with a sigh and a little dimming of the eyes the sweet early days of their married life when, not satisfied with the mere good-morning kiss, she used to stand on the porch and follow him with her eyes and semaphore love with her fluttering little wisp of a handkerchief as he looked back in the sunshine at the bend of the road that soon shut him from her sight, And she had struggled so long and faithfully to hold back the ebbing tide of her love for him and love had gone and carried respect with it, and she, grown hard, and bitter and rebellious, had lost the best of life and so had he.

Sometimes a wife may unwisely seek to keep the love, loyalty and constancy of her husband by holding him with a tight rein, by restrictions and limitations that fretted and chafed, by petty exactions and tyrannies to keep him close by her side. Have you ever held a butterfly in the prison of your palm, with the slightly-parted, arched fingers as bars, and, fearing it might escape, press inadvertently a little too tightly and then be suddenly conscious that the fluttering whirr had ceased and, opening the bars and peering in, find that the beautiful wings were stilled forever and that the butterfly was dead?

There are men and women who thus kill love carelessly; they may have a great love secure, right in their hands, but there is a pressure of doubt, tyranny, distrust or compulsion and the life of that love may die. Love grows strong with freedom, confidence and trust. Love that needs constant watching is not worth watching, and no guarding through fear of its honour

will ever keep it from straying. Its strength must be in itself and in the inspiration that comes from realization, recognition and response.

There are homes that are over-governed. They have as many laws, rules and regulations as an institution. They remind you of those closely printed charts for conduct tacked on the inner side of doors in hotel rooms. In these homes you move about gingerly for fear of stepping inadvertently on a “don’t.” No individual is big enough, nor wise enough, nor great enough to dare to live the life of another, not with him, but for him. If he were all these his reverence for the individual rights of others would make it impossible for him to usurp their sacred privilege of freedom in living their own lives, fully, freely, frankly, at their best.

This domestic tyranny rules in thousands of homes. It means the wrong of two—the one who inflicts it and the one who bears it. We hear much of the grace of patience and the beauty of long-suffering. They are virtues when it means self-sacrifice for the right, vices, when for the wrong. Tolerating injustice meekly without protest and a mighty effort to overthrow it when no good cause is served, no noble purpose promoted is not moral bravery, it is sheer cowardice. It is the fear of an unpleasant half hour that may save years of suffering. The one who bears meekly is doing injustice to herself or to himself and—to the other. It means weakening and wronging self and feeding the evil in another’s nature by inaction.

The wife may say “he would flare up in an awful temper if I said a word.” Let him flare, but let him understand that you will not be a party to it. These home bosses are always bullies and bullies are always cowards. They do not stand out long against a bold defiance that shows no fear. At the first manifestation of this variety of performance, let husband or wife state positively that no encores will be permitted. At a quiet, dignified session, with no shade of anger but just a calm, cool ultimatum that while the innocent one is willing to do the square thing in every relation, and to meet bravely whatever the tides of fate may bring and to suffer *for* the other, but never *from* the other.

Like most evils it is easy to meet in the beginning and it is then it should be met in the right spirit for the good of both. A single bold stand for the right is worth years of cowardly patience for the wrong.

The greatest trials and sorrows are those that do not come from outside the home, but are absolutely created within, that are manufactured for one by the temper or wrong of the other. They are absolutely preventable and there should be a kindly helpful spirit on the part of both to remove any wrong that separates them rather than to intensify the reign of the wrong by weak and meekly bearing. It is not selfishness, not the reckless assertion of individuality, but the consecrated wisdom that seeks to cure what it cannot endure and to endure what it cannot cure. Love and sweet conference smooths out so many of these problems. Let there be but one boss and that one—the two. Let them unite in loving comradeship and fine cooperation, each doing the best without thought of competition or conquest and then even the wish of one become the will of both, in union and unity, with no tyranny but that of love, love of right, love of peace, love of justice and love of each other.

XXIII

Comradeship in Married Life



HERE s but one real reason, but one justification for marriage, and that is—love; all the other motives are not reasons, they are only excuses. Those who start in married life with a good capital of love feel that they have an absolute guarantee of harmony and happiness that will endure through all their years, but if they depend solely on love they may find they are exhausting their capital instead of living on the interest and may soon become bankrupt of love. But love alone is too fine, delicate and emotional to stand the constant hard usage of daily life. Like gold, it is better and stronger when alloyed; love should be made sturdy and lasting, reinforced, strengthened and intensified in its power to resist wear. It is only when alloyed, or blended, with comradeship and trust that it is at its best.

The truest, sweetest and happiest marriages are those of two who just are wedded sweethearts and good chums. With this duality of condition and trust that keeps their atmosphere pure, clear, bracing and wholesome, all sources of discord are neutralized, all joys are doubled by sharing, all sorrows lightened by mutual sympathy, comfort and inspiration, and all problems solved in the sweet sacredness of conference, with the united wisdom of both ever at the command of either, needing no outside referee.

Success in married life does not require heroic spectacular qualities possible only to a few chosen ones, the elect of the earth; it needs only loving comradeship and confidence, a little self-control, courage, kindness, unselfishness, cheerfulness and just daily patience along the way. It does not require wealth, for often the poor are the happiest and most contented. It does not demand intellectual powers and fine education, for two aged lovers, hardly able to read, may sit together in the sunshine by a cottage door at even-tide, finding all their world in each other's eyes, telling their beads of sweet memories of past joys and of sorrows outlived, and as her thin worn hand rests lovingly in his, there seems a benediction of calm peace and consecrated love that makes mere intellectual wisdom seem worthless by contrast.

There are some who tell us the qualities necessary in husband and wife. The long inventory sounds like an unabridged dictionary of all the virtues and one can imagine the saints blushing with shame at the sudden realization of how far short they are of this perfection. It seems like a test-examination for a front seat in paradise and few of us would get more than a nine percent, rating on an honest marking.

Let us be thankful that two who are just human and with all their faults, foibles and failings can have happiness if they determine to have it and pay the price in thought and effort. It is not a gamble; it is a certainty if both determine to do their best and work in union and unity.

It does not mean a life unclouded by trial, sorrow, or suffering but a home filled with love and peace, a rest and a refuge where no real discord can long throw darkening shadows.

Comradeship is one of the strongest ties of married life. Comradeship is friendship in a negligee suit; it is free, near, trustful, comfortable, familiar and intimate. It has a basic respect that makes formality out of place, and pretense and pose seem treason; the two are their natural selves, spontaneous and unrestrained except by that respect for each other's individuality that makes each careful not to wound or offend the other.

Comradeship between husband and wife is the finest type of friendship, for pulsing through it is the constant current of love, tenderness, sympathy, nearness, dearness and closer communion of interests, that ever vitalizes, intensifies and freshens. Comradeship gives to each a finer, truer understanding of the other that comes, not from the mere observation of acts and of moods, but from glimpses into the depths of each other's thought, the revealings of standards and ideals, the unconscious confession of hopes, fears and longings and restless ambitions that are hidden forces struggling towards expression like the root of a plant seeking to penetrate the soil and reach the light. These come only in easy conversation where there is no thought of talking for effect, no sense of being on dress parade.

When the two are real comrades the wife is interested in the hobbies, games, business, friends and politics of the husband. She may not see what fun he can have knocking a little ball over the landscape and then poking round a big field to find it, but if golf gives him any real pleasure she is glad, and is interested, and wants to understand. Politics may seem to her just something we pay office-holders to manage, but if he sees anything in it she is pleased to give him a chance to let her in on the puzzle.

Her talk about her friends, her clothes, her reading and the hundred trifles of gossip and comment that may appeal to her he hears with genuine interest, not with that condescending tolerance that some foolish people, unconscious of how much they might learn, employ in listening to some little toddler who wants to talk. He has always rather sniffed at women's clubs, but when she joins one, and is appointed on the committee, and has been scheduled to write a paper he is pleased to talk it over and dig up some gems of material from the mine of his masculine wisdom, just to help out. They criticize some book she has been reading as she tells him the story, or perhaps she has read it aloud to him after dinner, and though she may think the hero a demi-god and he calls him a pompous prig and they grow a bit enthusiastic and finally laugh at each other's view, their non-agreement really does not make the least difference, you know, for this is just—comradeship.

With this spirit of comradeship there is never any thought of settling the question of "who is boss?" for such a question never arises. When a problem comes up before this home supreme court, they have a quiet little earnest session and if they do not see the issue from the same point of view, by concession and compromise the one who has thought most deeply on the subject, who feels it most intently or who is most affected by it casts the deciding vote.

Comradeship inspires tolerance and throws little peculiarities into the shadow; it ignores or obscures petty failings as of no real consequence; it concentrates on the fine sterling qualities

and forgives and forgets the little mortgages. Love oftentimes is exacting; in its intensity it may place undue importance on a trifle and be seriously disturbed at a flaw or failing that seems a scar on a noble character. Comradeship helps love to a more human view, a saner, wiser charity in judging. A man says of a friend of whom he is genuinely fond, "he is a bully good fellow," and all the emphasis of his heart goes into the words and atones for the phrasing; he knows his friend's failings but loyalty minifies their importance, the eyes are trained not to see, the lips keep silence.

In his bachelor days the husband may have had some friend tried and true who was dear to him, whom he trusted as one good man does another. If the golden light of some success or prosperity threw a glow of radiance across his pathway an involuntary smile brightened his face as he thought how pleased his friend would be to hear it, how unselfish would be his sympathy, how hearty would be his congratulations; he could bank on his friend's happiness just as certainly and absolutely as if his own dear mother were listening to the story and eager for every word of detail.

If the hand of sorrow pressed heavily on his soul, and the night of doubt and fear settled down on his life, and the ship of his great hope had sunk when it was almost in port, and he faced failure and defeat, he knew one who would be unchanged, whom he could count on to the very end. And when some problem affecting the welfare of either had to be solved it was the problem of both and they would stay up half the night to settle it like a jury locked out until they came to a verdict and they put together their wisdom just as they had often pooled their meagre funds when the exigencies or need of the one became the privilege and glad opportunity of the other.

When this instinctive impulse to confidence is carried into married life and the heart and the lips and the outstretched arms turn to the wife as naturally as the magnetic needle finds its north, with the truest comradeship made greater and finer by love, then married life has no real problems that the two, united and in unison, cannot solve.

Comradeship holds the spectre of monotony at bay. With two ever bringing their best sweetly to each other, as a little child carries to its mother a wayside flower it has plucked, just because it is most natural to bring it to her, there is little fear that their days will be long or that they will hunger for change from each other when they are finding this change in each other and with each other. Whatever tends to lessen their comradeship and to decrease their dependence on each other is a menace to their happiness.

One of the early temptations of married life is to live with the old folks. It all sounds so alluring when it is proposed that "they can take the entire third floor which is not really needed" by the home company who are willing to donate it or sublet it to the young firm. The advantages are obvious, the disadvantages are more subtle, but it is a hazardous experiment. It is an unwise blend of two families, that should be kept separate, not at telescopic but at visiting distance. Two shows under one canvas may pay on the road, but it is unwise for families, especially in the beginning.

The opening words of the world's greatest book are "In the beginning," and they are the most important words of married life; they open its chapters of greatest joy and keenest sorrows. All its problems are most easily mastered "in the beginning"; wrongs and injustice that may throw the dark shadow of despair over the life of one and perhaps even finally separate forever the two who have loved may, in a spirit of calmness, courage and wisdom, be silenced forever "in the beginning." If there have been mistakes and blind blundering and folly, if the two determine to start afresh, to begin all over again and wipe out the past, letting love, comradeship and trust be their watchwords they can have a new—beginning.

And what was true of that first marriage in the dim dawn of history, in that garden of Eden, is true of all marriages and will be till time shall end that their paradise is committed to the absolute keeping of the two, and that they shall watch it and guard it and care for it and that only by their own wrong shall this paradise with all its joys, and its peace and its sunshine ever pass from them.

“Little Problems of Married Life: the Baedeker to Matrimony” was written by William George Jordan (1864-1928) and first published in 1910. The term Baedeker refers to a travel guide. Karl Baedeker pioneered the publishing of travel guides in early 1800’s. The book was well received by the public and press as a valued resource for couples. Interestingly enough William did not marry until 1922 at the age of 58. Nonetheless, because of his great insights into human nature he provides a lot of valuable counsel for newlyweds as more experienced couples. Below are excerpts from contemporary reviews of this book.



The beauty of this book is that it points out the difficulties and misunderstandings the most people take so tragically, and puts them into their right relation with life as a whole ... It might look a trifle pointed to send a copy of this book to one's married friends but if it appeared in every collection of wedding presents, with a request that it be carefully read by both husband and wife or, better still, read aloud and discussed, it is safe to say that a good deal of marital misery would be averted.

The Craftsman, Oct 1910

His point of view is that happiness in marriage is not the result of chance but is pieces of success, of good fortune to be earned only by the separate and the united efforts of conjugal partners, just as one wins success in any other department of activity. The advice he gives on the various "problems," that are the usual phenomena of the marred state is all marked by wisdom, good sense, genial humour, and a sympathetic understanding of human nature.

The American Stationer, 8 Oct 1910

As you read this, if you're like me, you'll chuckle as well as nod your head in agreement with the author. William died in 1928 after being married for only six years. His wife Nellie never remarried and passed away thirty-two years later in 1960. More information about the author and downloadable versions of his books can be found on my blog at mannkindperspectives.blogspot.com.

Rod Mann
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