

GETTING MARRIED

BY DR. JOHN HALL

It is very unfortunate for many that a subject so practical and important as marriage is often spoken of as if it were a mere jocular incident in human life. The opportunity to fill young minds with just and pure ideas concerning it is partially lost, and from the habit of treating matrimony as a comedy it is sometimes turned into a horrible tragedy.

Marriage has its *social* side. Persons rise or fall, or are kept from rising or falling, in a great measure, by the companions for life whom they select. Mr. Small would never by himself have amounted to much, but he had the good fortune to marry a capable, energetic girl, and the result is the Small family stand among the foremost in the town.

Marriage has its *prudential* side. When the young people set out in disregard of the first principles of honest living, they lay the basis of many a bitter sorrow. When self-denial, forethought, and careful calculation are made at the beginning, and even overmastering affection is made to bend to practical wisdom, they have laid a foundation for safe future prosperity. Tom Fawcett was desperately in love with Miss Greer, but he knew just how much it would take to "set them up," however modestly. He told her his ideas and plans; he got a savings bank book; she kept it for him; it was a salutary check on any little extravagances to which she might have been tempted. Mr. Fawcett is now a bank president, and Mrs. Fawcett keeps four domestics, and makes every one of them keep a savings bank book.

Marriage has an *intellectual* side. A man with a handsome face and figure, but without brains or any wish for knowledge, makes it hard for a wife of average capacity to maintain the "looking up" attitude. On the other hand, a refined and educated woman with an active mind lifts up a man who has inherent force, though, perhaps, without early advantages. A wise young fellow ought to say to himself, "When that hair is less thick and glossy, when that cheek is paler, when that eye has less lustre than now, will there still remain a mind that will stimulate and strengthen mine?"

Marriage has a *moral* side. Harry Bell admired his "girl," but he did not respect her. There was nothing wrong about her, but he did not in his heart do honour to her principle. She dazzled others, she fascinated him, he was proud of her in society. But that was all. When he had his home and his wife in it he did not keep away the men whose looseness or coarseness would shock a good woman. Wit might be wicked, but she enjoyed it if it was witty. So his tone was not kept up, but let down; and, unfortunately, the boys are "bad," and the girls are "not turning out well." It might have been different if Mr. Bell had set up a higher standard of goodness.

Marriage has a *personal* side. A little high temper, a little dull moroseness, a little looseness of the tongue, a little—a very little—jealousy of disposition, may be the ruin of two lives that ought to have been happy as one. Dear Edith was a lovely girl, but her girl friends knew that she had a temper of her own; and, unfortunately, now that she—temper and all—is Charlie's, he knows it, likewise. He is most cautious in her company. A man who carries about a bag of gunpowder needs to avoid sparks. She might blow him up. On the other hand, Dick Brown is, in many respects, a nice fellow, extremely precise in manner, but so jealous that his wife's own relations are watched, snubbed, and at length driven from his house by him, lest they should get the affections of his wife. He has in various small ways "cribbed, cabined and confined her," till a sprightly, warm-hearted girl, with frank manners and an honest nature, is changed into a restrained, timid, hesitating woman. It is pitiable to see her sidelong glance at him, that she may find out whether, unobserved, she may cordially receive an old friend of her childhood. Dick might scold her sideways all the evening, if she showed too much warmth.

These and many such matters are little thought of by too many young persons, and hence, the "incom-

patibility," the "unpleasantness" and quarrels, ending too often in separation. The union was formed under the influence of admiration, or self-love, or ambition, or sordid gain, and it was not happy. Ah, Mr. Looker, you may buy gold too dear.

There are cases in which marriages not abstractly wise are yet robbed of their evil in a good degree by prudent friends. A young girl becomes interested in some one, commits herself, and when he comes to ask permission of her parents to address her, every one knows that it is of no use for them to refuse. She will have him whether they like it or not. The parents are reflecting, self-controlled persons. They say to one another, "This is not the wisest choice that poor Mattie has made, but she has made it and we must make the best of it." So he is brought to the house; arrangements are prudently made for them; he is conciliated, influenced, guided. His respect and confidence are secured, so that instead of standing on his insulted dignity and defiantly employing his power, he becomes ambitious to win the esteem and affection of his wife's "folks," so he is lifted up and saved. The relations of young married people can do much to make or mar them.

There is a curious felicity some have in the circumstances of their marriage, which gives them a good "send-off." They do not surprise any one when it is announced. People say it is just the thing. They do not run about the town, telling everybody of the "catch," but they cement the friendship of many years by timely confidences, which say, informally, "I wish you as one of my friends to know it." Their wedding is nice, there is no meanness, and no "splurge." "Her own minister," who has long known her, watched over her, and shares in her hopeful satisfaction, marries her, and his voice trembles a little as he says, "The Lord bless you!" He feels as if giving his own child to another's custody, and the bridegroom knows again from the very tones of the clergyman that he would be bad and base beyond expression if he held lightly that sacred trust. Quietly and naturally the young couple settle down into their new life, forgetting no civilities, taking on no airs, and provoking no criticism. They are beginning as they mean to end. They will not be the "talk of the town," they will never occupy the time of a divorce court.

How to mend matters is a hard problem; but rash, inconsiderate, selfish, wicked marriages are a sore evil in society. The making of such matches is a topic of talk which in itself demoralizes, and the breaking of them, later, with more or less of form, renews the malignant influence. When old Congressman Kiteflyer married Miss Hopper, who was poor, showy, and ambitious to get to the capital, the talk about it corrupted the place. It was a bad play which everybody saw acted on the stage of actual life. He had no real love for anybody, except old Kiteflyer; and she had no true love for him. And when a year or two after, the "old fool" sent her home, and settled with her lawyers how much he should pay, the stench was again over the place. Health officers are much needed to abate nuisances that pollute the air and send poison into the lungs; but who shall drive away the bad gases and noxious smells that blight all delicacy, and poison the gentler feelings of our people?

THE S. S. SUPERINTENDENT AND MINISTER.

The minister should not seek to supersede the superintendent, nor to interfere with his government of the school; but the superintendent and the teachers should ever be in harmony with the preacher, and should consider themselves as but a part of his official staff.

The supervision of the minister should extend particularly to the selection of books for the library, that is to be placed in the hands of the teachers and of the children of the school. It is but seldom that superintendents and teachers, engrossed with the busy cares of life, have full time to examine the multitudinous issues of the press which are sought to be placed in these libraries. Each publisher has a list of his own books, and wishes to sell them. He exchanges with other publishers, and thus may have a very large

variety. He is so occupied with the financial affairs of his establishment that he may not know the precise character of the teachings of the books which he publishes. Without intending to do wrong, he recommends works which ought not to find their way into Sunday schools. A committee is oftentimes appointed by the teachers to purchase a library. It is frequently composed of men who are good and earnest and true; but they are not extensively acquainted with religious literature, and they purchase such works as have pretty titles, are well printed, are recommended by publishers, and, above all, which are of a low price. In this way books of doubtful or erroneous doctrinal teachings, or which sanction unchristian conduct, or works of fiction without either high imagination or beautiful style to recommend them, are placed in the library, and they vitiate rather than improve the taste. The books introduced into the Sunday school should contain such doctrinal or practical teaching as may be in harmony with the Church; otherwise the influence of the Sunday school may not only be of little service, but may even become of positive injury to the interests of the congregation. In this day of light and loose and skeptical publications, no duty is more imperative on the minister than to exercise a watchful supervision over the literature that is purchased by the church, and is placed by the church in the Sunday school library for the use of its children; for the young have a right to regard the teachings of such works as sanctioned by the church.

No matter how great may be the intellectual power and personal influence of the preacher, he cannot accomplish his work unaided and alone. He is the general of an army, but he cannot conquer without soldiers. He must have others to assist him. The duty of a preacher, then, is to study carefully the genius and organization of his church, and to secure all the assistance which that organization can furnish. Whatever officers, whether elders or deacons, trustees or stewards or leaders, may constitute the officary of his church, he is to place himself in intimate relations with each and all of them. His study should be how to employ, to the utmost degree, their talents in church activities, so as to assist in church development and in aggressive work. He should further study how to enlist the entire talent of his church members, old and young, men and women, in spheres of active usefulness. This he should do not only for the assistance which they give him, but for the benefit which results, first to the church, and then to themselves. The true teacher is ever a learner. There is no process by which our learning becomes accurate and methodical so soon as by attempting to communicate it to others; hence every one who is engaged in doing good is also engaged in self-development and culture. In different denominations church organizations vary; but, be the organization what it may, the great object is to develop into perfect Christians the entire membership, and to act upon the world as an attractive and aggregating power which constantly adds to its own magnitude.—*Bishop Simpson.*

WATSON FRENCH'S SERMON.

There are no sermons like those which a man occasionally preaches to himself. The minister never talks to his people from the pulpit as searchingly as he sometimes talks to himself with head bowed on the table in his study. Watson French was not a minister, though. He never even spoke in prayer-meeting. His pastor had long carried him on his heart, and had aimed more than one sermon at him. But sermons seemed to glance off from him, until he turned preacher and took aim at himself. He had been to prayer-meeting one evening where some one had repeated the words of the apostle: "Lest any of you seem to come short." Coming home, he sat down alone in the sitting-room and the text came back to him, kept coming back, no matter how many times he tried to dismiss it from his thoughts, and finally fastened fully upon his attention.

"It must mean that some who call themselves Christians come short of being Christians," he said to