

Woman and the Home

The Marriage Problem

The man Molly married has an income of twelve hundred dollars a year. I furnished their home in a way befitting the wife of a man making five thousand a year. I argued that I had the right to do this, because I was spending my money, not his. I knew that Molly would have to do all but the heaviest of her housework; yet I supplied her with a trousseau as delicate and elaborate, if not so large, as Bertha Wilson's, who married the head of an automobile concern, lives in a Colonial house on the Heights and keeps two servants.

When Walter's earnings did not come up to Molly's trousseau and furniture, she thought he was a failure. He ought to go out and earn more money. Her father knew how to do it! Now she realizes that the fault was not Walter's, but mine. I should have outfitted her and their home in a fashion appropriate to her husband's income. I argued that a girl marries only once, and is entitled to all the lovely things her parents can afford to give her. Now I know that many girls marry twice, because their mothers, acting on my argument, start the first marriage wrong.

Looking back over my life as Molly's mother, I realize that her mistreating for wifehood started before she was born. By nature I was quiet and retiring. I went as a bride from a gentle, refined home circle in a college town to a crude, booming mid-west city. My husband had no time for society, and I had no desire to enter it. Most of the women I met were newly rich. Their mental horizon was bounded by clothes. I regarded their garish homes and their pointless gossip with equal contempt, and took snobbish delight in the simple but subdued furnishings of our five-room cottage. Next to books, my chief delight lay in sewing. Being an expert needlewoman, I could make more beautiful hangings and table linen than they could buy.

Molly's layette was a source of joy to me. Relatives back East sent me bargains in sheer nainsook, lawn and mull, bits of delicate lace, et cetera, on which I worked with infinite pains. Her little slips were hand tucked. Their yokes and cuffs were hand embroidered. Her coarse wicker cradle and bath basket were hidden by billows of silk-lace clouded with Swiss and lace. Had I bought the layette in a city shop it would have cost more than my husband earned while I sewed.

When Molly started to school, we were paying eighteen dollars a month for rent, and I had to run the house and clothe Molly and myself on fifteen dollars a week. But Molly was the best dressed child in her class. My husband never had occasion to accuse me of extravagance. Molly's clothes cost little, because I knew how to buy, sew and embroider, and because turning Molly into a dainty little figure had become an obsession. When my husband was appointed attorney for big corporation interests in our state, Molly was fifteen. We built a new home, and I planned it for and around Molly. The drawing-room would furnish the setting for her coming-out tea, the dining-room a background for her debutante luncheons. I spent more on her little suite of rooms, consisting of a sitting-room, bedroom and bath, than on the drawing-room.

So it happened that Molly, the daughter of a struggling lawyer, curled up in this luxury like a kitten in a tufted basket. She was an adaptable girl, with an appealing personality and a remarkably sweet disposition. She was not exactly beautiful, but so well groomed, so daintily and appropriately dressed, that she was flower-like in her attractiveness. Nothing that I did for Molly was a sacrifice, for I took the same selfish pleasure in outfitting her that a collector takes in denying himself

creature comforts in order to increase his horde of coins, miniatures or porcelain.

When we decided to send Molly to a fashionable eastern finishing school for a year, I gave months to planning and sewing on her clothes. Her smart but inconspicuous frocks were worn over silken skirts, hand-embroidered lingerie and silk stockings. The very simplicity of her wardrobe was the hall-mark of its costliness and genuineness in the eyes of her new friends. When she wrote of week-end visits in rich homes, I felt no anxiety. I knew her clothes as well as her manners would pass muster. The idea that I was doing Molly an injustice in dressing her like the daughter of a millionaire, when her father was making less than ten thousand a year, never entered my head. My husband was considered a coming man. His income would increase. We owned a fine home and we owed nothing. He invested a certain share of his earnings and gave me the rest. If I chose to spend most of my share on beautifying Molly, this was my privilege as her mother.

One fact I overlooked—Molly might not marry a man as rich as her father. And she didn't. When she came home from school, gentle and flower-like as ever, she promptly proceeded to fall in love with Walter Hyde, resident manager of a machinery company for which her father was the attorney. Like her father, Walter was a self-made man, that is, as far as he was made at all. He had started as billing clerk in the company's headquarters five days after graduating from the high school. He was a clean-cut young chap with a promising future, but he was determined to marry Molly on twelve hundred a year. What was more, for the first time in her easy-going, pliable existence, Molly stood firm against me. She turned a deaf ear to my plea that they wait until he was better established.

When I finally yielded and the date was set, I felt a strange exhilaration. Planning Molly's trousseau and furnishing her home promised to be a most interesting experience. Walter talked to me frankly about their future. He had invested his savings in building and loan shares, and through the society, he would buy an attractive eight-room cottage. This he would furnish only in part; but they would add to the fittings gradually after they were married. From his salary of a hundred dollars a month, forty dollars must be laid aside for payments on the house, taxes, insurance, et cetera. Fifty more would be required for current expenses, and the remaining ten Molly should have for furniture.

At that hour I should have been equally frank with Walter. I should have told him just how I had brought up my daughter; that her tailored suits cost as high as fifty dollars; that hand-embroidered blouses such as I made for her would cost in shops from eighteen to twenty-five dollars; that I paid one dollar and twenty-five cents for silk stockings she wore; that the graceful aigrette on her evening hat had cost fifteen dollars; in fact that the simplicity of her dressing which he admired so much cost far more than the more striking styles worn by other girls, which he decried.

Instead I listened in smiling pity for his ignorance on financing a home, agreed that he had planned very well and said that doubtless everything would work out very nicely. Of course Molly should take with her many things which we had given her, the furniture from her own rooms, her rugs, pictures, et cetera. Then there would be their wedding presents. No, by all means, he must not worry. He should just leave everything to me. I did not tell him that I intended to practically furnish their home, nor that after marriage Molly would continue to receive much of her clothing from me as the gifts of an adoring mother. I felt instinctively that Walter would resent such an arrangement, and I was too eager to begin the delightful

task of outfitting the bride to waste time in argument.

I did not take Molly completely into my confidence. I induced her to help select the table and bed linen. Once this was stamped, I set her to work embroidering monograms. And while Walter watched her nimble fingers with adoring eyes, I sat in the library, planning, figuring and reveling in my work. If I consulted them at all, it was always separately, never together. In this way I could play on their affection for each other to win my point.

When I decided to give Molly the baby grand piano from our drawing-room, I convinced Walter that even if he could afford to buy her a new instrument she would find the touch strange. When the question of turning one end of the second floor hall into a little library arose Molly demurred. Walter had said that it could wait. I explained that when she had company and Walter wanted to look over papers alone, he would find the room a necessity. For his sake she agreed to "surprise" him with the fitted room.

When I found I could gain points in this way, I began to answer with great skill the inquiries from relatives and intimate friends on the subject of wedding gifts. No mother ever planned a more profitable campaign for sane, satisfying wedding gifts. I made a complete list of articles to furnish and beautify Molly's new home, all within the means of interested inquirers. I wrote the most diplomatic of letters, invariably suggesting something that I felt sure would cost just a trifle less than the giver had planned to spend.

As a result, Walter woke up to find that his house was furnished and his purse strings had been hardly touched. The little drawing-room in mahogany tones melted into a dining-room of all woodsy-browns and greens. No, he must not worry about that expensive rug. It had been sent by Molly's Uncle Randall, who knew a rug importer. That beautiful old desk? I had picked it up at a second-hand store and had it done over. Aunt Sarah's check had been put into the desk. I did not inform him that I had doubled Sarah's check when settling with the antique dealer. It was all so lovely when everything was in place that he could not be ungracious; so he kissed me dutifully and said that he hoped that Molly had inherited my wonderful abilities as a manager.

Molly's trousseau was the sensation of the season in our set. It was a triumph for my ingenuity, resourcefulness—and management, being made under my supervision by two dressmakers who came to our house by the day. The wedding invitations bore the stamp of a famous New York jeweler. The dainty boxes of wedding cake were monogrammed in gold. A stringed quartet played, and the highest priced singer in our city sang "Oh Promise Me." Molly gave her attendants lavallieres set with real pearls and went off on her honeymoon wearing a broadcloth suit which, with hat, gloves and accessories, cost as much as her husband would earn in a month.

In actual cash Molly's trousseau and wedding were not so extravagant; but they gave the impression of luxury. They established a standard up to which her husband could not possibly live. I spent on her clothes and my share of fitting her house a trifle over twelve hundred dollars. The wedding itself cost over two hundred dollars. It was out of all proportion to Walter's income and my daughter's future mode of living. The man who was to support Molly's home was making one hundred dollars a month, just a little more than my husband was earning when we married. Yet I never stopped to ask what I would have done with a trousseau and a home like Molly's. We—my husband and I—spent an hour choosing a half wool art square for our living-room in colors that would not betray its cheapness. Our most imposing single purchase was a good cooking range. My first dressing table was built from two shoe boxes, covered with dainty chintz and lined with wall paper. My underwear was made of cambric, edged with Hamburg embroidery and trustworthy Torchon lace. My wedding dress was of mull, inset with Val, and I possessed no silk stockings.

To-day I know that Molly and Walter should have started in much the same way—that they were willing to do so if I had not interfered. They should have had furniture and hangings that Walter could have afforded to renew to-day, not when his income equals my husband's. Her trousseau should have included clothing that Walter could have paid for, with perhaps a few extras as gifts, not as necessities. If I had put the money I paid for her Cluny lace lunch cloth into a course in domestic science for her, I would have been wiser. If I had taken the time I spent embroidering her lingerie to teach her how to run a house on a dollar a day I would have invested my hours to better advantage.

The Quality of Flour

In addition to the character of the wheat employed, the method of manufacture is also a most important factor in determining the value of a flour for bread-making. Good workmanship in milling flour is necessary to secure quality, and the good workmanship must be combined with the best of appliances for manufacture. Each flour possesses an individuality that is determined by the character of the wheat and the method of manufacture.

Then, too, good yeast is as necessary to good bread as is good flour. If the yeast is too old or does not contain a sufficient number of active yeast cells, fermentation will be slow and there will be a tendency to prolong the process to such an extent as to soften or injure the physical qualities of the gluten. When this occurs, the gas that is formed is lost from the weakened dough and the loaf is small and of poor texture. A prolonged fermentation period cannot make good the lack of freshness and quality in the yeast. Too little yeast, will, of course, yield a badly raised loaf, but too much yeast is just as objectionable, as the bubbles formed in the gluten of the flour, unable to resist the pressure of the excessive amount of gas, break open, the gas escapes, the dough becomes heavy and soggy. Too much yeast also gives an unpleasant "yeasty" taste to the bread, due partly to the presence of superfluous yeast cells. Even when used in small quantities yeast has a decided influence on the flavor of the bread. The amount of yeast which should be used depends on the strength of the flour. A flour in which gluten is abundant and tenacious can resist a much stronger pressure of gas than one with scant or weak gluten.

Occasionally an insufficient amount of water is used in making the dough. If there is not enough water the gluten fails to develop physically. With strong flours 65 per cent of water or other liquid is necessary to make a good dough. With weak flours 10 per cent or so less water is required. Good yeast and a proper adjustment of the amount of water to the flour used are essentials that are too frequently overlooked in bread-making. A strong flour will stand more mixing, kneading and manipulation than a weak flour. A flour of poor quality and small amount of gluten is easily injured. Another essential is the regulation of the temperature during fermentation. From 75 to 80 degrees Fahrenheit is the best. If the temperature is either too high or too low good bread is not secured. In bread-making the measuring cup and the thermometer should be the guides; the finger is a poor thermometer. Sometimes the yeast is dissolved in water that is taken from the teakettle and warmer than it appears. If it is about 125 degrees the vitality of the yeast is greatly impaired.

It is false economy to use poor flour because it is cheap. The cost of the raw materials for six loaves of bread made from good flour is usually about a cent more than when poor, low-gluten flour is used. When you consider the difference in quality and in food value, however, the strong flour is much the cheaper. Moreover, if the bread is good more is eaten and a saving of more expensive foods is effected. If the flour is strong in gluten it is not necessary to use such large amounts of meat to balance the ration, because the bread is already balanced as to protein content for tissue-repairing and vital purposes.