



Automatic Marriage

THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH remarked some time after his union with Consuelo:

"The Englishwoman is clever, but not energetically so; but no sooner does the American woman find herself in the possession of an original idea than she proceeds to throw precedent upon the rubbish heap and houseclean the whole world by way of getting a clear space in which she may work said idea to death. Activity is the breath of life to her."

The American man stands ready to agree with the unamiable duke, concerning the activity of the American women. But if the idea be worth while, we see no reason why she should not clear space enough to try it out, even if a few precedents have to go to the garret or the rubbish heap. So "Good Luck!" to the Illinois Woman's Congress for presenting a brand new idea to the State Legislature—an Automatic Marriage Bill.

"This has been a man's world long enough," declares The Woman's Congress. "It is time the woman and the child had a chance."

The much discussed bill provides that the birth of a child will operate automatically to marry the father and mother of said child. The Woman's Guild, a less progressive body than The Woman's Congress, will present an alternative measure modelled on the Norwegian Act, which gives a child born out of wedlock its father's name and a share in his possessions. This Act provides support for mother and child, but does not enforce marriage. The world is surely growing better. Where, we ask, could we have found a score of years ago a whole congress of women big enough to turn their back on unjust conventions and brave enough to storm the highest hall of justice in the state in behalf of the woman betrayed and of little nameless children who cannot speak for themselves?

Men have been wont to say that no one is so merciless toward the erring sister as the good woman, but they cannot say it now. We are learning that virtue means more than chastity; it means doing good as well as being good.



Splendid Compliment

ONE OF OUR YOUNG WOMEN WHO, fired with patriotic zeal, was among the first to turn her back upon a sheltered life of ease and take her place among the army of toilers, paid a fine tribute to the working man the other day. A relative was expostulating with her. "That terrible factory is spoiling your beauty and poise, leaving its dust in your fine ladyhood," began the relative. "Coarse work coarsens; you needn't tell me that it doesn't. Look at your hands—a charwoman's hands. Dear! dear! In your soft raiment you were the most feminine girl of my acquaintance, but now—" A severe shake of the head completed the sentence.

"My femininity is in myself, not in my clothes," returned the girl. "It is as much mine in the factory as in the ballroom."

"The air of leisure peculiar to a gentlewoman is no longer yours," sighed the woman.

"I'm glad of it," laughed the girl. "It would be a drawback in the factory. If I hadn't doffed it with my finery, I'd never have won promotion as I've done."

"Another thing, I believe you are due at the factory at seven o'clock," exclaimed the other in agitation. "Don't you realize the risk you run, especially on dark winter mornings? After you leave the car, you have to traverse three blocks possessing a none too savory reputation, and this before the sun is up!"

"But not before the hardy son of toil is up," said the girl, and though she laughed, there was a thrill in her voice, "and on his way to work. His name is legion, and he's so dependable, swinging along beside you, behind and in front of you, that you couldn't, if you tried, feel afraid of either dark or danger. 'Knights of Labour,' I call the men with dinner pails or without them, the men who go out every day to earn a living for their wives and bairns, and with whom the protection of all women is an instinct to be obeyed rather than a duty to be done. He has a

strong arm and a bold heart, has my knight of labour, and with him about, this little scrap of a working woman isn't afraid of those three blocks. She knows she's as safe as though in church. Any one who meddled with her would have to settle with him.

"Now have a cup of tea, dear, and cease worrying about me."

"'Knights of Labour,'" mused the other, reaching out her hand for the cup. "It's an order, a fraternal society, isn't it?"

The girl smiled. "The Knights of Labour I mean are an asset, the richest asset perhaps that this, or any country, can call its own," she said softly—"the man in overalls."



Spring Housecleaning

LOOKING THROUGH MY GRAND MOTHER'S recipe books, I came upon an item pencilled in a clerkly hand at the top of the page which ushered in a new month:

"April, the housecleaning time."

Now, they may have been cleaner and cleverer than the modern woman aims to be, those fine housekeepers of a generation or so ago, but were they happier? Somehow one can't help feeling glad that the institution known familiarly as "the spring housecleaning" is not the formidable thing it was in the days of heavy carpets, elaborate curtains, upholstery, crowded whatnots, feather beds, piece-work quilts, and crocheted tidies everywhere. The window cleaning alone took a lot of time, since getting the window shorn of all its frills was like getting a woman out of a fussy ball gown. The accumulated dust of a twelvemonth had to be shaken from the carpets, after that upstairs, downstairs and in my lady's chamber smelled to heaven of soapsuds, turpentine, and varnish. Nice, big, homy abodes, and we loved to be in them—on a visit—but not when housecleaning was in operation!

The modern house, with its bare modern furnishing and decorating, has robbed housecleaning of its terrors. Hardwood floors are a boon, up-to-date beds and mattresses a blessing. The step-ladder men wash and shine our windows while we are out planning a garden; the vacuum cleaner makes short work of the rugs; and so it goes. No "April, the month of housecleaning," for us. When she comes, this April, with the violet seeds in her hair, when she comes singing, whether we hear her or not, comes singing:

"God's garden is this old-world world,
And I, the fickle vagrant;
I am the gardener He sends
To make it fair and fragrant,"

we can just sit and listen and look the while the young rain washes the last stain of winter's covering from the lily-of-the-valley leaf, or the sun coaxes the crocus bud into flower. And isn't life vivid now? There is a thrill in everything, even in old, tired-out hearts. One is gladder in April or sadder in April than in any other month. It is the poignancy of the springtime.



When the Boy Gets Engaged

THE WISE MOTHER has her little cry all to herself, if she has it at all. To her son she is what she has ever been, the one "always-to-be-depended-on" person in a changing world. Her glow of gladness is second only to his own.

"But if she have no such glow?" you ask. "Shall she play the hypocrite?"

We women, especially if we are a little jealous, are terribly afraid of being hypocrites, aren't we? We like to speak out—and hurt. If the mother does not love her boy well enough to put his happiness so far ahead of her own that she glows because he does, then she needs to sit down with her memories, precious memories—his arrival on that far-off day of youth and sweetness, his first step, the absurd jargon he talked sitting on her knee, his first lesson, the dear queeriness of his appearance when his curls were shorn, and so on down the years—stay with him until she dies.

"I've lost my son," says the pessimistic mother, and weeps. "I've a new daughter," says the optimistic mother, and smiles to find herself so fortunate.



The Family Feud

NOT TERRIBLE THINGS like the feuds of the south, with singing bullets and sudden death, but the kind which goes to determine whether the home atmosphere shall be sunny or clouded. There are persons who think that atmosphere does not matter, that so long as the day's work is done, the lightness or heaviness of the hearts of those who do it does not count.

As well contend that April's breath means nothing to crocus and to hyacinth, that the breath of summer does not give the wild strawberries their fragrance and their sweetness. Oh, yes, atmosphere means much in a garden, but more in a home. The little feuds, the continually recurring jars, keep a cloudy sky and an east wind. It is so easy to be cross, or blue, or to take offence. Hardly a woman of us but can find a grievance if we look for it. It may be a little, no-account one, but it will grow and grow. Nothing will cure it but neglect. Think of it, and it increases in size; forget it, and it dwindles to nothingness. Family feuds are small things, but bitter. There is the one between the husband who wants to stay home and the wife who wants to go out. Some of us have had the discomfort of being treated to the wife's reflections:

"Oh, no, he never considers me! If any other woman were to ask a favour, he would grant it off hand, but I'm only his wife. I don't count," etc.

One is not surprised that the girl of that house is a crosspatch, and the boy subject to sulky fits. It's in the air. And it's all wrong. The little ills of life can only bother us so much as we allow them to.

"Has some one hurt you with a word of spite,
Stirred your hot anger? Do not answer yet.
The winds that malice makes are light, friend, light;
To-day we writhe, to-morrow we forget."



A Garden Classroom

A PAMPHLET ISSUED by our Bureau of Municipal Research makes good reading, especially that portion dealing with the school work and the home work of the nurses. Sanitation, ventilation, and like subjects may be dry, but taken in connection with the bright girls and boys who fill our schoolrooms, they are intensely interesting.

We desire the children to have pure air and wholesome surroundings. They should have these, and if by any reason they are denied them, we desire to know why. We have made education compulsory. Not a freckle-faced boy on the street under fourteen but has to go to school, whether he wants to or not; not a bright-eyed girl but must do the same. Since this is so, we must in justice to all concerned have said school a healthy spot. Fresh air is cheap; so is good water; and with the nurses to teach and enforce cleanliness and hygiene, the children stand a fair chance of doing themselves credit.

We have the word of Miss Paul, Supervisor of School Nurses, that the work of her staff in the home, as well as in the school, is a success. "Parents are co-operating," she says, "in a way that must be productive of much good. To go into our classrooms now is like going into a flower garden—bless their bright faces!—though only a few years ago these children came to school dirty and diseased. Great attention is being paid to the eradication of flat chests, adenoids, poor nutrition, crossed eyes and other defects. The teeth receive special care."

The concluding item is borne out by an incident in the country village schoolhouse we happened to visit of late. The pretty teacher, concluding her little talk on how to care for the teeth, expressed the hope that no single pupil would forget or neglect to follow her instructions to the letter.

"Who will be most benefited?" she demanded, and was going on to explain that virtue would be its own reward, when the meekest lad of the lot broke in with:

"Please, teacher, I know; it's Mr. Mears, the druggist. He won't have even a second-hand tooth brush left in the store. Ma says,"—here came a choking splutter, caused by his sister putting her plump hand over his mouth—"maybe you and him has gone partners, teacher!"

Do you wonder that we joined in teacher's mirth?