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HOW TO BE A HAPPY WIFE.

As we look about our circle of acquaintances we are convinced that marriage is not always the ideal state the novelist would have us think. We are surrounded by mystery. Strange to say, all rules fail. The woman we admire as accomplished and beautiful does not seem to have any stronger hold upon her husband than her plain, common-place sister. The competent house wife whose table is a joy to both eye and palate, eats quite as many husbandless meals as does her slovenly neighbor.

Age does not solve the problem. Many young men have been ridiculously happy with elderly wives in spite of Shakespeare's declaration "Then let thy love be younger than thyself, or thy affection cannot hold the vent."

"An old man's darling" has been a slave, and a young man's slave a treasured darling; while the boy and girl of equal years, who played together, as husband and wife quarrel badly.

What is the secret of the difficulty? I believe it is rooted in the disposition on the part of many girls to regard marriage as a transforming and reforming institution. "Fred will stop drinking when we are married," his little fiancée tells her friends; or, "Ned will not go so often to the Club when he has a home of his own;" or, "Charlie's mother does not understand him, and so he appears cross at times."

There are very few marriage made men. Matrimony does not make or mend the disposition. If Fred will not reform for the sake of his own manhood, no wife can save him. If Fauny does not like tobacco smoke it would be safer for her not to marry the man who loves a good cigar. If Ned's sharp speeches caused his sweetheart many tears, they will blister his wife's cheeks. In spite of what moralists say in regard to studying the man you marry, I believe more trouble is caused by girls not studying themselves. They are more often self-deceived than the victims of any plot on the part of their lovers. They expect too much, idealize too much, and clothe their suitors with attributes they never claimed to possess.

First, then, I would say to the girl who sees upon the horizon, like the prophet of old, the gathering cloud of a man's hand, "Go shut the door of your chamber" and have a good talk with yourself. Are you an ambitious girl, fond of dainty gowns and social prominence? Then hesitate before you marry a young man on a small salary. Would it be fair to him to reproach him in the future because you cannot have the flesh pots of Egypt? You know he is true and honest and will give you what he can. But will he be able to give you enough? Your marrying him will not transform him into a millionaire. If luxury is necessary to your happiness it will be a risk to marry a man with no luxuries to give you.

If self investigation develops the fact that you are very sensitive to criticism, why should you expect to be happy with a man whose grammar is defective, and whose peculiarities of manner excite unfavorable comment. You can never be both a wife and a school mistress. The avocations do not harmonize. Every one, since the days of Achilles, have had their vulnerable spot. What may not irritate another, is, because of your individual weakness, particularly galling to you. Thing of this when choosing a husband, for the man you marry is the man you must live with.

It is one thing to entertain an immaculately-attired caller who brings bonbons in one hand and roses, and quite another to see him off guard with his brothers and sisters in his environment, not the one your parents' culture and success have given you. He does not seem like a stranger in your home, and yet you might never be anything but an alien in his.

You say he will have to adopt your family and friends, and let his own go, and so in time he will think just as you do about domestic and social matters. Granted that he is willing, although very few men are, and you graft him into your family tree, you will find out, when too late, that the grift to all time pertains of the nature of the stock from which it sprung. If your prospective father-in-law is the type of man you detest, ask yourself if it is all impossible that his son may develop the same characteristics when he has reached the same age?

No one realizes the power of association and home training until they are brought in close relations with people who have been educated according to entirely different standards. Your mother is your model, and, in most cases your husband's mother will be his; now if these two authorities represent two widely differing classes of society, are not the chances of domestic harmony lessened? It is an experiment, too, for a girl, country born and bred, to marry a man in a large city; and many a wife, in a beautiful farm house, has been hungry all her days for the bustle of crowded streets.

A homely old proverb says: "For the want of company, welcome trumpery." The girl who accepts Ned because no one else has asked her and she does not want to be the only old maid in the family, turns her marriage into a makeshift. She is conscious at times that she deserves a better fate, but her friends have teased her about him, and almost before she knows it she is his, by the appropriation of public opinion. When she is a few years older and has come to herself she will marvel that she could deliberately work her own undoing. She finds that she needs one of two things; a man strong of will and intellect, able to keep pace with mental development; or liberty to live her life unhampered. She has instead a good natured boyish soul, who is a clog socially, and to whom study of any kind is an infinite weariness; and yet he is just exactly the same as when she married him. She has changed, not he; and as she looks back she knows that she stifled the voice that was trying to warn her. If she had only been content to wait the unfoldings of time and not taken her fate in her own hands. She has wronged two, herself and the man she married, who is not in the least to blame.

A girl who acts the part of wooer is likely to be a miserable wife. It is human nature to lightly value what is lightly won. Thackeray says that, "Any one can marry any man if she makes up her mind to do it." Yet