WHY YOUNG MEN DEFER MARRIAGE.

The September number of the Ladies' Home Journal has a page devoted to considering the all-important question "Why Young Men Defer Marriage." The article goes on to say: It is a vitally important fact, proved alike by statistics and observation, that young men are marrying later in life than did young men thirty years ago; and upon this fact hinges some of the most complex social problems which vex us in these days. In dealing somewhat cursorily with this matter it was intended to borrow all the light which could be had from authentic statistics; but it was found that for some unaccountable reason the census gatherers of the United States did not take a record of the conjugal condition of the people in decennial periods anterior to 1890, and because of this neglect it is impossible to find reliable data for the purposes of comparison. In the Canadian province of Ontario, however, the record in this respect is fairly accurate for a period of thirty or forty years, and it may be safely assumed that the same conditions have operated in that part of the Dominion as in the more congested states of the American Union. Without going into an elaborate array of general figures, which would call for qualification and explanation on account of their source, I may say that a long and careful search of available records plainly reveals the fact which has just been announced. For example, the Register General for Ontario has just sent me an abstract of his record for the past seventeen years, which shows that the marriages of men between twenty and twenty-five years have declined from thirty-nine to thirty-three per cent., while the marriages of men between thirty and thirty-five have increased from eleven to fourteen per cent. within that period. The conclusion indicated by these figures has been fortified by interviews with prominent clergymen of experience, who must be regarded as thoroughly competent witnesses. They were unanimous in the judgment that young men are putting off matrimonial alliances to a much later age than was observed twenty-five years ago, and that the number of bachelors is rapidly multiplying. By bachelors, I mean those men who have reached say thirty years of age, and are comfortably off, but have made no matrimonial engagements.

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The question that naturally arises is: What are the causes which have operated to bring about this serious state of affairs in society? The broad answer to which I am irresistibly led is, that this is one of the prices we pay for a higher civilization. As wealth has been distributed and high class education made general, young men and young women find new obstacles arising in the pathway to marriage.

It is no longer fashionable to begin married life in a humble way and climb up to a better state. Young men know that modern society is prone to measure a girl's start in domestic life by the display at the wedding and the rental which the husband is able to pay for his home. Cases like that of Henry Ward Beecher, marrying on $300 a year and beginning life in two small rooms, are looked upon nowadays as curious reminiscences of a pitiable era in the history of American society. The education which girls in general get unfits them for the sacrifices and efforts which marked Mrs. Beecher's interesting experience fifty years ago.

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The habits of modern young men are antagonistic to that prudence and preparation which make it possible for them to marry at twenty-five. There are many exceptions, of course, but it may be safely said that a vast number of the young men who live in our time fill their spare hours with expensive luxuries. It costs them a great deal to dress, add still more to keep up their social engagements. In a score of ways they accustom themselves to ways of life that leave no margin between income and outgo. This having gone on until they are twenty-five it calls for more resolution than many of them command to begin the sacrifices which accompany the saving of money. Without money they cannot marry. Not a few greatly exaggerate what it should take two sensible young people to begin life on, and hastily concluded that it would be impossible, on an income of $1,000, to start in comfort. So they put off marriage until after thirty, or do not marry at all; and it is well that such men should remain single; we do not need any such weak fibre in the coming generation.

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The results which have followed upon the state of affairs outlined are to be seen elsewhere. I have estimated, taking the available data in Ontario as my guide, that there are to-day in the United States 3,000,000 men, between twenty and thirty years of age, unmarried. This implies, a priori, that there are also 3,000,000 young women out of wedlock, although not necessarily of the same ages; for statistics seem to indicate the cruel conclusion that, when a man past thirty years of age marries he takes a young woman under twenty-five years of age, and not one of his own years. He is apt to select a wife whose habits of life and general ways are not so fixed as are those of a young woman of thirty. Be that as it may, there are to-day in the United States and Canada about 600 young men in every 1,000, having reached the age of thirty, who are single. The conjugal condition of the people in other countries is vastly different. In Russia 373 men and 573 women in every 1,000 who marry are married under twenty years of age, while in England 766 men and 829 women in every 1,000 are married between twenty and thirty. In all countries, but particularly in Russia and France, the marrying ages of women are much below those of the men. In the latter country a close knowledge of the world leads the mothers to bend every energy toward having their daughters married young; while in Russia, it is the predominant domestic instincts of the peasant class which swell the figures of youthful marriages.

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Is there a remedy? Certainly there is one which can be easily and readily applied. Two hundred years ago, guided largely by the Jesuits, the zealous King Louis, of France, made stern laws for the government of this young colony in respect of marriage. He decreed that every father having a son eighteen years of age, or a daughter of fifteen, should be held accountable to the state if they were not married. Complementary to that policy was the provision that, when a young couple were married they should receive a farm, a small house, a cow, two barrels of meat and other articles essential to domestic life in those primitive days, so that there was the fear of a penalty to actuate the parents, and the incentive of reward stimulate the young people. The modern sense of liberty recoils from such enactments; so there is nothing which the Legislature can do in our day to solve this great social problem. But young men can be encouraged to habits of prudence, and young women can be shown the folly of being too proud to begin married life on a small scale.

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The general social engagements which bring young people together in these days depress rather than stimulate the connubial instinct. Such is the scale of comfort and elegance which modern society presents, only too often at ruinous cost, that young men are discouraged from a union involving what they regard as many sacrifices. If this influence is to be neutralized young men must have a more sensible and philosophic view of life than a majority of them seem now to have. Young women, too, must be taught the meaning of the situation as far as their interests are concerned. One of the most serious barriers in the way of a remedy is the very means which an ever-multiplying multitude of women have found of being independent.

Modern society has welcomed common-sense shoes and common-sense forms of dress. It would seem that the time is opportune for a wide-spread outbreak of common-sense marriages. At all events if a change from the present stagnation is to be effected, three things seem to me necessary: First, there must be a popular knowledge of the facts; second, the people at large must think; and third, there must be action

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