

ARE WOMEN TO BLAME?

BY REBECCA HARDING DAVIS, ROSE TERRY COOKE, MARION HARLAND, CATHERINE OWEN, AND AMELIA E. BARR.

Is woman the more to blame for unhappiness in marriage?

Does any contributor to *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* hope to answer that question finally?

Why, Adam and Eve argued it at the very outset of their wretched married life—wretched, because she was sharp and ambitious and he weak and a glutton. Who was to blame for the result? The dispute has been going on ever since, in almost every household, of every age and nation. How can any new word be said about it?

Because, after all, this partnership of marriage between the man and woman has always been the same in every time of the world and every state of civilization; and the man and woman are the same though their skins be white, black, or yellow; whether they are of royal blood or negroes in a Georgia rice-field. Precisely the same qualities in husband or wife bring happiness or misery under a roof in New York or Philadelphia to-day as in that first city which Cain built.

A prince of the house of Hapsburg—rulers for six hundred years—loved another woman better than his wife and, the other day, put a bullet through his brain to rid himself of trouble. The same story was told on the same day of a Dutch puddler in Cincinnati. The Bible tells us how Rebekah, daughter of Laban, was tempted by jewels of gold and fine raiment to marry a man whom she had never seen and did not love, and how she became a tricky, rapacious wife, and brought misery into his house; and each morning's newspaper tells us the story of some lovely American girl who, a year or two ago, was brought out for sale to the highest bidder, who became a greedy, false wife, and who now

furnishes entertainment to the public in a hideous scandal and divorce case.

Solomon, even among his swarm of wives, was rasped to madness by one brilliant woman, whose tongue wagged incessantly; so was Socrates; so was Thomas Carlyle. Kind, genial Sir Walter carried through life the weight of a well-meaning, stolid, priggish wife. The same thing was true of Byron, of Goldsmith—it may be true of my reader.

There is no new lesson to be preached on this subject. You never read a tragedy or comedy on the married life of the dark ages the facts of which you could not duplicate in the next street.

It is the same relation and the same man and woman, after all, and the same rules of life apply to them always!

Give to a husband and wife some genuine love, a habit of honest thinking and acting, a little leisure in their lives, and, above all, reverence for a Power higher than themselves, and there will be happiness between them, whether they live in Congo or Chicago, just as there would have been in the days before the flood.

Whether this kind of marriage is likely to grow out of the present conditions of our American social life is the question which concerns us all just now.

We are told that it will not. Newspaper moralists, clergymen, and, above all, English tourists, incessantly bewail the degraded level of domestic life among us. The Nation, they tell us, is given up to the pursuit of money, in order to spend it in vulgar display. Our young people know nothing of love, the fierce, unreasonable, inexplicable passion which has moved the world since time began. They only covet horses, jewelry, establishments. Young girls learn the value of these things when they are children, and are taught that they must earn them by marriage. They are put in training for a rich match, and they know that they are in training. Hair, figure, skin, voice, dancing, French accent—all these things are of importance to the chances of the *débutante* of making a good match. She is brought out at last like a horse upon the course, with as much *éclat* as is possible to her family. Every step she takes, every triumph, is recorded in the vulgar publicity of the Society columns of the newspapers. If she marries a rich man, she is congratulated in them as having made good running.

Poor young fellows, of course, have no chance of winning these tid-bits of humanity; they usually are bought by rich old men. Besides, the young men will not marry unless they find brides with dower sufficient to provide them with luxuries. After marriage, these young people, hitherto intent only upon selling themselves, suddenly discover that there is such a reality as love—a force that sweeps down all consideration of money, position, honor. Then follow scandals, divorces, disgrace, unutterable shame.

These are some of the ugly facts brought forward by those who believe that our domestic life is as corrupt as are our politics, and that marriage in this country is rapidly becoming only a matter of bargain and sale, ending in wretchedness.

But are they facts?

These statements may be measurably true of a certain fashionable, vulgar set in our large cities, just as they are true of the same class in London, Paris, or Berlin. If a woman makes amusement and luxury the end of life, she will naturally sacrifice everything else to gain the rank or wealth which commands them. Ethel Newcome is sold here for dollars as in England for a title. In these mercenary marriages the wife is more guilty than the husband, because she sinks lower to gain her end. Love and personal honor usually count for more to a woman than to a man.

Unfortunately for our National reputation, the clergymen and foreign critics, who hold the public ear, are most familiar with fashionable city communities, and are apt to mistake the few thousand men and women who compose them for the American people. Outside of Society in the great cities mercenary marriages are rare. The American *per se*, not the dancing man of Murray Hill or the Back Bay, but the Southern planter, the Western railway man, the Pennsylvania tradesman, seldom marries without a hearty, honest throb of love in his heart. He is, at bottom, too honest and hearty a fellow to sell himself. His traits are manly. He reverences women. He flings his money to asylums, hospitals, schools, with a large, free generosity. Not the man surely to make marriage a matter of barter!

But even in the great, obscure, unpublished mass of people to whom he belongs, it is true that the greed for riches, which is debasing and vulgarizing our whole life, makes many marriages unhappy which at first were based on the purest affection. Here,

it seems to me, the men are most in fault. As soon as John is bitten by the madness for money, the first thing he sacrifices to it is the time which he has hitherto given to his wife and children. He rushes away to office or shop from the breakfast-table, spends the day there, is glum and silent at home, and carries his business into his dreams. A wife clings longer to the romance of love than her husband. She does not willingly lose the lover in the man who signs checks for her. Neither is it true that many unhappy marriages are due to the silly extravagance of wives.

Extravagance with the majority of us women is an acquired taste. Most of us have a positive relish for small economies, and enjoy the dime which we have saved more than the dollar we have to spend. It is a little niggling virtue, if it be a virtue; but American women have it—a relic of the days when their only part in the household economy was to save.

I am not at all sure, either, that there are more unhappy marriages than there were fifty years ago. There are more divorces, and divorce-bills drag the secret unhappiness to light. I remember, in the Virginia town in which I passed my childhood, there was one *divorcée*, and so rare was the legal severance of marriage in those days, and so abhorrent to public feeling, that the poor young woman was regarded with horror as though she had been a leper. But were there no wretched marriages among the good people who held her at arms' length? no drunken, brutal husbands? no selfish, nagging wives? Nowadays the lax divorce laws bring out all these secret skeletons to dance in the streets.

In our Western States, the consciousness that divorce is easily possible, no doubt, often makes wives restless and insurgent under petty annoyances. When that is the case, it is certainly the woman who is in fault.

In the South, where divorce is still looked upon as a disgrace, and where religious feeling is more stringent than in any other part of the country, the old-fashioned Domestic woman is still to be found. She is gentle; she has infinite tact; she hates a fuss; she knows the art of managing men. I think that she is not often to blame if her home is unhappy.

In some of the New-England States, where the women outnumber the men six to one, it is the hard, lean-natured man who has the game in his own hands. He knows that when he tires of

the patient, half-fed drudge who has slaved for him so long, he has but to "get a bill" and he is free to woo and marry again. He is not likely to kindle a heartsome blaze upon the domestic altar!

But, upon the whole, I believe that, owing to downright true love, to conscience, and to the sound sense and large good-humor characteristic of the American, the vast majority of marriages in this country are happy.

How can we decide whether the credit of this is due to the husband or the wife?

REBECCA HARDING DAVIS.

It is a trite but very true saying that "it takes two to make a quarrel." And in answering the question which forms the title of this article, I desire to premise in behalf of my sex that, if women are to blame for the unhappiness of marriage, men also have their share of that unpleasant responsibility. But this is not the question of the moment; it is simply a *caveat*; and to be true to the facts in the case it must be allowed that women are often seriously and recklessly in fault when the marriage relation is not only unhappy, but disgraceful.

For, *first*, women often marry from wrong and inexcusable motives, and this first step in a mistaken direction leads them all astray and always downward; nor is the descent easy or agreeable. I do not hold to the sentimental and romantic notion that women should marry only from love, for that capricious passion may fasten itself, as too often it does, on an utterly unworthy person, and when the brief illusion is over, the gay blossoms of imagination and the fire-lights of passion all faded, there is left to the disgusted and disappointed woman only a perpetual and ghastly skeleton, not always in the closet. But I do not believe that a woman should marry without love: the degradation of body and soul implied in such a relation not only makes the bond a galling chain, but alienates from the wife any respect or admiration that a husband should feel for her, and rapidly degrades her character in its integral nature.

When a woman marries for money, she puts herself at once on a level with the class of women who are the lowest order of humanity. That her sale of herself is legalized does not alter its real *morale*. She is actually one of the outcasts of her sex in

heart and soul, however she may try to delude herself with a ceremonial respectability. To a woman who takes this step happiness in marriage is impossible; neither affection nor respect can live in a venal atmosphere, and when these are wanting marriage becomes a dreadful imprisonment for life. The same rule obtains when a woman marries for a home, as that motive is but a modification of the other. Yet how many women sell themselves in both these ways, and then wonder that they are not happy, and therefore revile marriage!

Again, *secondly*, women are unhappy in marriage because they enter into that condition with entirely mistaken views of their relation and responsibility: petted and indulged at home, they expect to be equally indulged and petted by the adoring lover, who in a very brief time becomes the every-day husband, and expects his wife to become, in the language of Scripture, "a help-meet unto him." It would be as easy for an orchid to become a cabbage as for a gay, spoiled girl to become at once a good housewife and an unselfish mother; and the deep and bitter consciousness of this inevitable fact has made many a woman melancholy and fretful—two traits which peculiarly exasperate the average man and make his home a real desert. If our mothers would train their daughters to the ordinary duties of daily life, and instruct them in patience and unselfishness, instead of so-called accomplishments, there would be no need of asking if marriage is a failure.

Thirdly, women make married life unhappy because the average woman is impatient. If things arise in her young experience which are new and painful, she either does battle with them in an ignorant and futile fashion, or yields to tears and despair; she wants "the mills of the gods" to grind with impossible speed, and resents the fact that she must wait months and years for her grist, whatever it may be. She cannot wait for time to allay the waves that beat upon her, or to calm the winds that blow roughly; she has not the sense to reflect that her position is new and strange, and only the attrition of recurrent days can make such a position either easy or agreeable; she resents the thorns on her roses, instead of trying to blunt them, and in her impatient passion pulls up roses and all. Two women cannot live together without patience on both sides; much less can a woman and a man live in peace without this home angel forever interposing its quiet voice.

Fourthly, women are exacting both by nature and education; especially in these latter days when the whole aim of the so-called "weaker" sex seems to be to arrogate to itself the strength, authority, and capacity of man. A woman who desires to be her husband's equal, not only resents his natural place as the head of the family, and affronts his innate mastery, but because she is really, after all, only a woman, she also demands those cares and attentions that the feminine soul considers its right. No woman, in spite of modern opinion and effort to that end, can fill a man's place in the world or at home. The Creator who made them two separate sorts has never undone his work; and his creatures never can undo it. The primitive intent of marriage was not a "partnership" or a state of "equality," but a headship vested in the stronger party to the contract, under which the weaker party should receive affection, protection, and care; yielding due respect and obedience to this God-given authority. In such an association the woman found peace, security, and happiness; and the man was blessed in a home where he was king and priest, loved and obeyed. Here children were welcomed and nurtured into goodly manhood and womanhood; there was order in these families; obedience instead of emancipation; calm instead of tumult; respect in place of revolt and impertinence.

While a woman exacts from her husband every attention and care and caress that she considers her due, while she wants everything in life to yield to her capricious humor, she cannot expect that he will be contented with her demands, or happy either in giving or refusing. Nor if she exacts from him the treatment due to another man, arrogates to herself the position of a mere business partner, and an equal in every point, will she be able to find happiness in so unnatural an attitude. Either mode of exaction is calculated to destroy the beautiful rest and shelter of a real home, a true marriage.

Fifthly, women are inconsiderate. They are not constitutionally as selfish as men, but they find it hard to understand the nature of men, and judge them by their own standard, perhaps never in a life-time discovering that men are ruled by other laws and motives than those which govern women.

That a woman should be unpunctual, extravagant, given to gossip, seems to her a small matter; but to most men punctuality is a necessity of existence; to be late at their place of business,

at an appointment, a railway train, a steamer, deranges their whole scheme of life for the time, and the disregard of woman for this one thing is often the beginning of discomfort in the home. Nor can a man's respect or affection last long for a wife who lavishly squanders the money he works hard to acquire; it has a value in his eyes that is the natural result of his labor to obtain it, and he cannot have patience with the reckless hand that scatters without a thought, for purposes of vanity or pleasure, the golden grains he has gathered one at a time. A milliner's or dressmaker's bill is too apt to be the tiny seed from which springs a perennial thistle by the threshold of home. Nor is it conducive to family happiness to have the conversation in those hours when there is any time for family intercourse, devoted to the faults and follies of mutual friends; the "unruly member" has kindled many a fire that has eaten away "honor, love, obedience, troops of friends."

Lastly, women are almost always jealous. It seems well-nigh impossible for the average woman to believe that her husband can admire another woman without being faithless, at least in heart, to his wife. Nor does she stop here. I have known women acridly jealous of their husbands' affection for their own relatives. I have known instances where a wife was deeply incensed because her husband was devoted to his invalid father, though not at all to her real neglect. Mothers are sometimes jealous of their own children; though more frequently they neglect the father of a child openly and persistently for the child itself, and seem to have no longer any affection for the other parent, so deeply are they absorbed in their mutual offspring. Jealousy is a trait that has a reciprocal influence; a jealous woman is "cruel as the grave"; she can neither awaken nor retain affection, and the man of whom she is jealous considers his own unhappiness and her suspicions ample excuse for indulging in the very aberrations of which he is suspected.

Let women give themselves to the cultivation of their womanly virtues; become patient, considerate, submissive, and gentle; cease to be exacting, extravagant, and jealous; let them consider that marriage is a condition that can be made blessed or cursed according to their use of it, and give their whole hearts to rendering it what it should be; let them take counsel of the wisdom which is from above—for no relation in life has more explicit

direction given for its guidance in Holy Scripture—and act in this supreme and lasting position as Christian women should ;— and marriage would cease to be a failure ; no longer be shunned and sneered at ; and that primal and sacred fiat of the Creator would be fulfilled—“And the Lord God said, It is not good that man should be alone ; I will make him a help-meet for him.”

ROSE TERRY COOKE.

THE whole system of marrying and giving in marriage, as it exists in this country, is founded upon a blunder. But for the sturdy corner-stone of reciprocal affection, absolute ruin must have overtaken it long ago, as the natural result of a compact entered into under false pretences.

From the time the baby-girl is “fie-fied” into unnatural shame if she offers her lips to her boy-sweetheart, until the fateful hour in which the blushing maiden is over-persuaded into setting the wedding-day, women are, notwithstanding all this coy show of bashful unwillingness, trained into the idea that their lives would be awry and unfinished without marriage. The conventional farce deceives nobody—least of all herself and lover ; yet it is religiously played out in the sight of a knowing and grinning public.

I was once at a very amateur Jarley wax-works show, when the exhibitor achieved the solitary hit of the evening by reversing the positions of the “Beautiful Maiden pursued by the Indian” at the terminus of their track, announcing gravely the title of the group, as she set them again in motion.

The change of relative attitudes effected by matrimony is as sudden and thorough, and, but for the pity of it, would be as laughable. The beautiful maiden, hunted for her heart, flies, plaining as dramatically, if not as frantically, as when her scalp is the pursuer’s object. The more reluctant in seeming, the richer the prize. From the instant of introduction to that of departure upon the bridal tour, the character of the chase remains unaltered. Should the girl avow frankly, when her wooer solicits her to marry him, that she had already divined his intentions and would have broken her heart had he not come to the point, he would be shocked and chilled. Even after betrothal, the masculine lover maintains the initiative, submits to his fair one’s caprices,

tempers, doubts, and jealousies with the docile devotion of a whipped spaniel, and does his best to confirm her belief in her divinity-ship and his serfdom. If the feigned flight of modern Daphnes were to end as did hers of old, the laurels nodding across our by-ways and highways would outdo Pope's quincunx grove.

With the preconcerted wheel of the bridal procession from the sacrificial altar begins the new order of things. The alert obsequiousness of the bridegroom slips from him like the calyculate sheath of an opening flower.

He is the Husband !

Courtship was the porch ; Marriage is the house, and he is in possession. Wooing was the caracoling and prancing; the trial spurt in front of the grand stand before the business of the race began. The steady running is altogether another matter.

Without conceding the "growing frequency of unhappy marriages," which is, I believe, the predicate of this symposium, one who knows women cannot but admit that, where the cause of wedded wretchedness is not vice or inconsistency or violent temper, the wife is oftener than not in fault, and mainly by reason of the false views and practice just indicated.

A long course of petting and flattery has fastened two ideas in the girl's mind. She is an angel who is always right. Her lover is a vassal who acknowledges her infallibility. In all their talk of marriage not a hint escapes his lips that change can befall their dream. What would seem to be prosaic calculation as to future ways and possible means is idyllic to the pair. It should have been Colonel Sellers, if it was not, who tied green goggles upon his horse's eyes and fed him with jute for hay. Seen through our betrothed maiden's rose-colored glasses, expense-books and bills read like a promise of Eden and bread-fruit trees. While she lives for Galahad, and Galahad for her—and her only—baked beans are choicer fare than *vol-au-vent*, and calico will have the *frou frou* of silk.

A dozen sentences make her Mrs. Galahad, and, presto ! her lord and owner begins to think and talk of and live for a great many things besides herself and their mutual adoration. To idealize is natural to her. It is an acquired trick—seldom a taste—with him. She keeps on doing it, and he lets lapse the unfamiliar exercise with despatch, if not with neatness. Now that the cut-and-pressed dogmas of managing mammas and pessimis-

tic prudes no longer forbid her to reveal her affection in stintless terms, Galahad listens philosophically. He values—in reason—the love-words and caresses for which he once sued on bended knee, but he is not grateful for what is now wifely duty. At heart she may be tenfold dearer than was the affianced bride. She ought to know that without protestations from him.

In fine, Galahad's creed, that courtship and wedlock are different states, is not that of his wife. This misunderstanding is the key to the series of disagreeable surprises which succeed the wedding-day, increasing and strengthening until the whilom lovers are hopelessly estranged. Galahad enjoyed courting while it was in season. The thought of masquerading in the lover's rôle when the twain have been made one is preposterous. Bread and butter are to be made, rents paid, and something put by for his wife, should "anything happen to him." That "anything" has new dreads for him in view of the hostage he has given to fortune.

At the risk of seeming disloyal to my sex, I must say, being under bonds to "deal as frankly as possible with the subject," that Galahad is nearer right than his sighful spouse who bewails her disillusion in ivy-bush and on house-top. Life is not all green lanes, screened from profane eyes by blossoming hedges, with sympathetic Cynthia overhead, nightingales in the thickets, and clover-scent in the air. Twelve out of the fourteen waking hours of a majority of married people are spent in plodding along

"The level stretches, white with dust,"

of the world's general high-road. The sun scorches, the dust chokes, and the rattle and rush of every-day life deafen and daze the laborers for love's sweet sake.

We seniors help on Our Maiden's delusion by euphoniously senseless twaddle of "joining hands for the minuet of life," and like figures, when, in our middle-aged wisdom, we know marriage to be nothing of the sort.

The exaggeration of sentiment (still following the line of wrong reasoning) that leads the young wife to exact the eager assiduities of the suitor from the married man, drives her fast and hard through the gates and grounds of Doubting Castle into the very presence of Giant Despair. She has lost her Galahad's love, or it was a pretence from the first; he is indifferent to her

person ; careless of her wishes ; he grudges her the clothes she wears, the bread she eats. She remembers the home of her girlhood, as a starving exile the land of his nativity ; the imagination that lured her into marriage intensifies the unhappiness of the irrevocable estate. She believes that her prattle bores the man who used never to be grave in her presence ; her tears and poutings annoy him ; or his imperturbable mien incenses her to the attempt to make him feel something of what she suffers. His talk of profit, risks, and investments is intolerable. He has no right to bring sordid things into the kingdom over which she rules. More women are jealous of their husband's interest in business hobbies, and of their business associates, than of other women.

In all this they are much—I dare venture to say more to blame than men, but Galahad is not quite guiltless. He has excited expectations he does not mean to gratify. It is possible to be rational and truthful even in a love-suit ; to be sober, yet romantic. To himself, Galahad—consciously or unconsciously—discounts his own passionate vows, yet demands implicit credence from the object of them. He should be man enough, and brave enough, not to begin an education in wifehood by making a holiday toy of the girl he loves. The woman with whom he must always play the tender gallant, feeding her vanity into abnormal proportions ; the woman whose appreciation of the values of life is such that she is willing to make his heaviest care the solicitude lest she should touch her delicate foot against a stone,—is not the stuff of which true yoke-fellows are compounded.

Courtship is play ; marriage is work. The sooner women recognize the truth of the definitions, and act upon them, the sooner will the reproach be lifted from the honorable state and condition in which the truest and purest happiness possible in our sin-warped world is to be found—or *made*.

MARION HARLAND.

THERE is a very general opinion that unhappy marriages are on the increase. It is very uncertain whether this is a truth or only an appearance.

Time was when a woman shrank from the disgrace of separation from her husband, and would bear anything rather than re-

veal her domestic woes. A divorce was something hardly to be spoken of as possible.

Nowadays all that is changed. Separations and divorces are familiar to us, and the faults which our mothers would have looked upon as disagreeable, but for which there was no remedy but endurance (and among the wiser ones, perhaps, the endurance was silent), now have a remedy. The old adage, "What can't be cured must be endured," was most likely much oftener on unhappy wedded lips than now. And it is surprising how far the sense that a thing "can't be cured" goes to make it bearable.

But in these days, the feeling which made the idea of separation so distasteful that both men and women avoided thinking of it as a possible solution of their troubles, seems to be dying out. Not, perhaps, with the *élite* of human nature, but with the average man or woman, who may be quite willing to believe that what is done under the sanction of the law cannot be, after all, very wrong. Old-fashioned prejudices are giving way in so many things to modern ideas,—why not in regard to matrimonial difficulties? Dalliance with any thought, however alien to our principles, insensibly begets a feeling of tolerance for it; and so we will suppose that women married to uncongenial husbands, familiarized, by the number of cases they hear of, with the thought that they are not compelled to live a life of endurance, gradually accept separation as a remedy in their own case.

Thus it seems probable that we hear nowadays of a much larger proportion of conjugal troubles than we did twenty years ago, not because there are more unhappy marriages, but because they are not hidden by the dignified reticence that formerly hedged about the family life.

However, the question is not, Are there more unhappy marriages to-day than formerly, but, Who is to blame for those there are—the husband or the wife?

Glib generalizers, who observe superficially, may say: "Oh, the husband, who expects a wife to render him comfortable whether he can give her the means to do it or not, who leaves her without recreation or amusement, and thinks himself a good husband if he remains at home the better part of his evenings."

Or, from another point of view, it is the ignorance, and carelessness, and selfishness of wives, who take with both hands and give nothing in return in the way of home comfort beyond what

the servants, ill-directed and left to themselves, may please to do. If dinner is not ready or is uneatable, it is that "wretched Jane," and madame thinks only of her clothes and her social life.

Both of these views have truth in them, but they apply only to the more frivolous men and women.

What shall we say of those cases where a couple enter on married life with the most earnest resolutions that it shall be in their case a beautiful experience; where both man and woman are ardently devoted to each other, and both deeply conscious of their responsibility for each other's happiness; who enter on their new life with such beautiful aspirations that cynics laugh and shrug, if by any chance they hear of them?

When in two or three years all this fair prospect is blighted, what can be said? The cynics are justified, and when a sad woman seeks relief from a tie she entered upon with such solemn sense of duty, who but the husband can be to blame?

But those who have listened to young wives' griefs, and, even if they have not gone through the agony themselves, have watched the little drama in sadness, knowing whither it tended and, without some powerful intervention of Providence, how certain the tragedy was—these, alas! would say human nature is to blame more than man or woman. Latter-day philosophy would say education, in place of human nature; but I am inclined to think an observation of bird and animal life would show that human nature is animal nature, and education in this case has not much to do with it; instinct everything.

From the nature of men and women it so happens very few love marriages are not a disappointment more or less keen to the woman. In the few cases where there is actually no disappointment, there is either an unusual development of common-sense,—yet it is cruel to say common-sense, when some of the most sensible of women suffer most; but at all events a strength of character not often found,—or in the man a rare vocation for a husband.

It is often said that those couples who marry without any pretence to being deeply in love, but merely from friendship or convenience, provided they respect each other, are generally happier than those who marry for love, and this because so much less was promised, so much less expected, that the thought is never forced on these brides that they are less to the husband than they were to the lover.

This is where much of the trouble lies, as many a mother and sister who have listened to tearful revelations can testify.

Until they are married, the man woos persistently, ardently; he sets the woman on a pedestal and may be said to worship her; her very faults are virtues in his eyes; and the woman, however well she may know that he overestimates her and earnestly strives to make him see her as she is, yet is unspeakably happy in being so beloved; and if she is an affectionate, loving woman, she resolves that, imperfect as she is, he shall never have reason to love her less. Her love is all pent up; the expression of endearment is almost impossible to some timid girl natures. She reserves it all for the future. When they are married, her husband shall know the depth of her love.

Who shall say with what sacred aspirations, what mental vows that nothing shall come in the way of their love, the majority of women go to the altar? (I am almost sure I am right in saying the majority.) Nor are men behind in their hearty determination to be good husbands, and love and cherish the women they have chosen from all others to go through life with them.

Just as true and sincere are these masculine resolutions, though they may be conceived without the fervid premeditation of the woman. With him it is a natural sequence; with her it is not only a natural result, but is to be increased by the earnest cultivation of every virtue calculated to make his happiness.

For months, or a year or two, after the marriage the wife is ideally happy; her husband is as fond and caressing as before their marriage, and now *she* dares to express her affection. Life is very beautiful, but gradually comes trouble. The husband becomes more absorbed in business, less caressing, not less loving; but a woman's nature longs for caresses; she doubts the love without its expression, and although she will recall all she has heard of others and how this thing happens to every wife, her craving heart will not be satisfied; she calls up all her common-sense in vain. Unfortunately she can rarely hide her suffering; she allows reproaches, loving ones, perhaps, to mar the harmony of her intercourse with her husband. At first he reassures her, tells how dear she is, that his love is deeper than ever; possibly he will say his manner has not altered, and be unaware that it has done so. Sure of his own love and sincerity, he

may laugh the matter off, or he may remember some of the omitted attentions and caresses for a few days, and happiness once more reigns. But in nearly all cases the husband wearies. He cannot, nor can his wife's tender remonstrance make him, see that he has completely dropped the means by which he won her. The silent love and care-taking which he feels ought to suffice any reasonable woman, are very different from the incessant proofs of devotion with which he won her love, when every wish and whim were to be gratified at any cost, and he comes to think her unreasonable. Sometimes she is ; and exacting also, but only from her great love ; and her woman's nature is to blame—not the special woman.

Other women who have learned the lesson and settled down to accept the facts can see her folly, and, strange to say, seldom sympathize with her. If, happily, now a little stranger appears, all usually goes well ; the yearning heart which craves to bestow as well as receive caresses has now something on which to lavish fondness. Otherwise, too often the couple drift into unhappy life ; to provoke her husband into more active appreciation, the wife starts some mild flirtation, perhaps, and is confirmed in her idea of his growing indifference by the impossibility of making him jealous.

What the outcome shall be depends much on the man. If he is patient, tender, and slow to anger, time may bring content ; but too often he becomes angry ; he wearies of what he considers non-appreciation, and the end is separation.

I have purposely left untouched the many other causes of marital trouble, because this one, for which no one seems greatly to blame, seems to an observer to overshadow all others and to open the door to every trouble.

Much is said at present about bad housekeeping, extravagance in dress, and inordinate social ambition as causes of domestic unhappiness ; but in the writer's experience, men accept all these faults with infinite amiability ; and in almost every case where the fault is obviously on the man's side, and the wife neglected and unappreciated, she is unselfish and good beyond the average of wives.

I see no remedy for this state of things while man's nature and woman's are just what they are.

CATHERINE OWEN.

A STARTLING question has been asked of men and women—"Is marriage a failure?"—and thousands have answered it as experience, prejudice, or ignorance led them. But while some were crying one thing and some another, the inexorable statistics of divorce put the question of failure—as far as the United States is concerned—beyond argument. For they prove that during the last nineteen years the number of divorces has increased twice as fast as the number of marriages; and that in such States as Maine and Vermont the tie meant to endure "until death part," is prematurely broken once out of every eight times in the divorce court.

Who are to blame—men or women? If the question was a commercial or a political one, women would naturally turn judicial eyes upon men. But it is essentially domestic. The failure has been wrought within homes over which women preside; the treasure lost is that priceless affection of which they are the object and centre. And the world as instinctively blames women in the divorce court as it blames men in the bankruptcy court.

Speaking broadly, women are to blame. The flattery and exaggerated attentions of courtship have on many an evil influence, and when they find that marriage is not a lasting picnic, they feel shorn of half their glory, and more than half their dues. They are not willing that passion should subside into that nobler tenderness which springs from a man's best nature. They have a "good cry" over the dropping of some silly nickname. They want constant assurances of affection, and their husbands walk on eggshells, terrified to wound feelings which take nothing on trust. This is the beginning of many miserable marriages, for a woman must become a "bore" who persistently refuses to believe in the love of her husband unless he is continually asserting it. Such wives are dead-weights on men. Though they be struggling for existence or fighting bankruptcy, they have them to carry on their shoulders, their whims to consider, their trivialities to respond to. So endurance fails and love dies of superflux.

But if weak, gushing wives have much to answer for, perhaps superior ones have more. Who does not know these perfect women, cold and proper as a well-dressed tulip? Their own temperament being generally languid and phlegmatic, the burning passions which send impulsive men into danger and sin are inconceivable to them; and as they have no constitutional ten-

dency either to speculation or carnality, they wonder how men can commercially fail or morally fall. As a general thing, weak, sanguine men marry strong women,—human affairs have this marvellous inclination to re-adjust the balance,—but it is a mistake. Wives of this kind can look with untroubled eyes into the quivering face of a man confessing his fault, and calmly remind him that “sorrow cannot undo evil.”

Babbling women, who, like Antigone, are perpetually calling heaven to witness “what deeds they suffer and at what men’s hands,” are apt finally to go into the divorce courts with their complaints. They have no conjugal reticence; they throw wide their Bluebeard chamber and invite all their acquaintances to come in and see it. And the social sympathy they get is but civil tolerance, quickly passing into impatience and disgust; for whether a woman be right or wrong the world has not time to stop and inquire. It only feels that her example is debasing and her influence noxious, and it makes her suffer a dispassionate and perfectly just ostracism. For it is very seldom that a girl marries in ignorance of her husband’s true character; only she extenuates in a lover what she will not tolerate in a husband. She knew that he had a bad temper, or a disposition to drink, and she “risked” him with her eyes open for the transient *éclat* of a wedding ceremony, or to excite the envy of her acquaintances, or because she feared the stigma of old-maidism. For if she had married him because she loved him, then conjugal honor would have taught her conjugal reticence and conjugal patience, even unto the end.

Equally destructive of married happiness is the woman who offends not in speech, but in discouraging silences. She listens to all her husband’s plans with that silent protest in her eyes which says plainly that she has no faith either in them or in him, and so takes every particle of ambition and hope out of his life. When he was her lover, she praised his singing and laughed at his jokes; now that he is her husband, she freezingly endures the one, and in pitiless silence listens to the other. She does not scold, but there is something infinitely more subduing in the patient closing of her lips and in the calm, deprecatory air which says: “I do not answer you, but I know I am right.” This kind of wife often assumes another mood that is quite aggravating, when, out of sheer obstinacy, she pretends “not to understand.”

Wives ignorant of the high moral duty of domestic service are great misery-makers, and are accountable for a large proportion of matrimonial failures. The days when men stuck to their roast and boiled as firmly as their creed are past. We now understand that food is the *nerve* of our social affections; and that the fervid life we lead demands food which can be assimilated with the least expenditure of vital force. There is an acute domestic disorder called "the temper disease," and a wonderful sympathy exists between this disease and the dining-table. "Much wisdom in olives," said Sancho Panza. "Soup and fish explain half the emotions of life," said Sydney Smith; and certainly upon the quality of our food depends the quality of our nerves, blood, tissues, and muscles. If these are ill-conditioned, the bent of temper, the force of will, the reach of thought, the power of judgment and of control, both at home and abroad, suffer. So, then, the successes of any life are as much commissariat victories as moral and mental ones, and wives who do not take care of their husband's digestion—who think the stock jar and stew-pan beneath their notice—these invite failure of every kind; and deserve it.

Jealousy takes many women into the divorce court, and most of them provoke the very ill they fall to by their moody suspicions. Men may surrender a purse for a cocked pistol, but this method never yet extorted a heart. The best love, like the best wine, flows without pressing; but this axiom of married life jealous women ignore, and so passionately assist the consummation of matrimonial failure. Wives whose craze is for notoriety and excitement, creatures of headachy mornings, of afternoons frittered on gossip or shopping, and nights whirled away in hot rooms, weary out very quickly the love of any sensible man. So also do those wives who have what they call "advanced" ideas—who talk about the animal character of motherhood, the degrading influence of housekeeping, the monotony of home, the slavery of self-sacrifice.

Again, many women will marry, whether God will or not. They risk a man with the sheer thoughtlessness of "the maiden who was married one morning as she went into the garden for parsley to stuff a rabbit." They expect to get along as well as other people, and if they do not, the divorce court is just behind the church; and as for the doubtful *aura* which they must bring

out of it to shadow all their future lives, that is a thing too far off to trouble their speculations.

But more mischievous than all together are those wives who, knowing their husbands' salary to be two thousand dollars a year, insist upon living as if it was twenty thousand. If the women who live beyond their husbands' income would live within it, the divorce courts might dismiss one-half their officials. But they will not. Each one prefers a new spring costume, or some other equally trivial thing, to a happy home. Each one is so anxious for some paltry social *éclat* that she never notices the marks of desperate struggle on her husband's face—the brows that wear a constant plait of tension, the eyelids drooping over eyes full of care, the unconscious plaintiveness of manner which would touch any heart but that of a woman bent on looking as stylish as one acquaintance, and a little more so than another. If the husbands of such women have strength to resist their demands, they save their integrity at the price of their happiness. If they cannot face tears and complainings, they very frequently go to the penitentiary for their wives' millinery, or Christmas presents, or summer extravagances.

Marriages for money, secret and clandestine marriages, add considerably to the miserable total of divorce. But in such cases men are, as a rule, as guilty as women. Indeed, it is not pretended that in all this wrong men are altogether blameless. But every man is *just what some woman has made him*; it may be mother, sister, wife. Every woman a man meets influences him. It is her nature to do so, her genius, her song, flowing out she knows not whither, returning never again. Then, if the feminine influence of a man's childhood be adverse, it is a pitiful thing if his marriage is also a failure. But if he has had a good mother, the chances are that he will choose her a good wife.

The greatest mistake men make is in marrying immature women, girls in their teens, who have all the crudeness and tartness of sour fruit. A tradition of innocence and gentleness hangs about a young girl, but in reality she is the most cruel of human creatures. Her judgments are harsh, her prejudices stiff, her sympathies narrow, and she is full of self-assertion. In a few years the same girl may have mellowed and ripened, have become less conceited and more conciliating, and a man may marry her with hopes of realizing his dream of wife and home.

The present unsatisfactory condition of marriage is not altogether the result of present conditions. A large portion of the blame must be credited to a generation back. The religious education of youth goes to the very foundation of character, and mothers have largely delegated it to any young person who happens to teach a Sunday class; thus resigning the sweetest and strongest part of their influence—that part which, when their children are old men and women, will keep them in the way they should go, or bring them back to it. Sunday-schools for poor neglected children are a heavenly thought, but no Sunday-school can take the place of a good mother, who gathers her children around her knees and, out of the fulness of her love and the worship in her heart, teaches them what is good and what is evil. Better far for a man or a woman to be so taught than to sit at the feet of a Gamaliel.

Women are at present in a restless state of transition. They have broken forth from the citadel of home, where have walked the holy women of all past ages; they are attacking the hoary supremacy of men, and invading the world where men have hitherto toiled and travelled and ruled alone. And as yet they are in their new surroundings but inferior men, doing men's work imperfectly, and neglecting their own to do it. For, trying to unite what has been in absolute separation for 6,000 years is no light undertaking, and there is little wonder if "failure" be written on one side or the other.

Will, then, the woman of the future regard marriage, not as the crown of her life, but merely as an incident in it? a partnership lasting just so long as it is profitable and pleasant? Will love lose its enchantment, and, instead of suffusing life, become only a partial interest among her many graver ones? On the contrary, the woman of the future will probably give to love a more intense and concentrated character. She is stumbling gradually into a knowledge of right values, and when she understands the priceless worth of her "influence" upon the life of all with whom she comes in contact, she will hold life and love in level hands, and no more fritter away love than she would fritter away life.

AMELIA E. BARR.