

MARRIAGE IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR



Brave words these, stirring words! It takes strength and courage to achieve a happy marriage. Love, fairy-tale love, isn't enough. Disillusions must come but adjust yourself to them. Let understanding conquer resentment

Drawings by E. A. GEORGI

says IDA M. TARBELL

THE earlier feminists—those of fifty or seventy-five years ago—bitterly resented the prophecy often heard that once let the “man’s world” be opened to women, as they demanded, and there would follow a revolution in feminine standards of propriety and morals. It just would not—could not—be, they asserted.

I doubt if there is one of them left who does not admit that she was wrong. She and most of those of her own generation may have changed but little on the outside—I am not so sure of what goes on inside!—but they cannot help seeing that we have with us at least two generations in which the changes are even greater than those predicted.

Compare the college woman of today with those of fifty years ago and you will find that conduct, most reprehensible in 1880, is in many quarters the accepted thing today. To be specific, consider smoking. Fifty years ago it was a lawless thing for a young woman to smoke a cigaret, a very rare thing indeed to see an elder woman smoking. I shall never forget my dismay on stumbling into a room of my college boarding hall where our “wildest girl” was thrilling a circle of companions by really smoking a cigaret! Today it would have to be a very unsophisticated young girl indeed who—whether she smoked or not—would give even a second glance to a classmate she caught with a cigaret.

Hundreds of girls today go into our colleges from homes where the mothers always smoked. They have been accustomed to country clubs and restaurants, where at least half of the women, if not more, smoke as regularly and naturally as they drink their after-dinner coffee. The girl herself smokes. The only check on her has been the caution that she not overdo it—perhaps a physician’s counsel.

A difficult situation is created for her and her superiors when she comes to an institution where smoking is forbidden. She and not a few of her mates look upon the ruling as an infringement of personal liberty, a reflection, too, upon their up-bringing which they resent.

The contention between the two groups often becomes acute, but the fact is that the cigaret is winning its way in many important institutions. More than one of the great colleges for women have found it necessary—or expedient—to provide accommodations for students who insist on their right and intention to smoke.

One wonders, as one watches the steady capitulation to

the cigaret, if we are to see a similar capitulation to the cocktail. There is no question but that at least a few of the girls now going into our colleges look on drinking as large numbers look on smoking. They have seen their mothers and their friends serving and drinking cocktails for years.

They go to college and when the chance arrives take a cocktail—perhaps several. I do not see how you can expect anything else from a girl so brought up. Either the college must refuse her absolutely because of the social set from which she has sprung, or they must accept the danger of her breaking the rules. “Many of the girls in this institution drink,” a grim faculty member in one of our great colleges for women told me. She was wrong, I am convinced. But she had been terribly disturbed by her experiences with an occasional girl who did drink.

The early feminists—the little school of Virginia Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin aside—believed emancipation to mean the right to go to college, practice medicine, sell bonds, vote, hold office. It is quite clear today that it includes startling changes in social habits—even the right to follow the man into the smoking room and speak easy—if so inclined.

ARE as great changes to come in moral as in social standards? What does the sizable revolt against what is called the double standard of morality for men and women mean?

As I listen to it, it seems to mean not holding man up to the control and the fidelity which society imposes on woman but allowing the woman to be as free, experimental and gregarious as she seems to believe he always is. The often brilliant, usually serious, direct-minded young women whom I hear discussing the double standard seem to me to believe all women follow one standard—all men another.

Idle to argue that you cannot generalize in this wholesale fashion, that standard has no sex, that they have only to look about to see on all sides men with high standards, women with low ones, to realize that in both men and women there exists, in varying degrees to be sure, the desire for the thing we call purity which is in no sense repression, but a clean reverent attitude towards natural appetites.

What the modern young woman overlooks or seeing, disdains, is the daring dream that has led men and women

to harness their appetites in order to achieve that ultimate quality of manhood and womanhood of which they believe human beings capable. No amount of failure, of misery, of repeated disappointment, has been able to uproot the faith in a finer type of life and character than people have as yet achieved.

MAN, not woman, has led in the fight to preserve this ideal. He has on the whole been honest in admitting his dual nature and his oldest, bravest, toughest job has been to keep his higher nature from being entirely throttled by the lower. He has always recognized that if he was to win out it must be with the help of the woman. He has always set her up as an ideal—a control—a star. He was willing to establish monogamy in order better to realize his ideal. If we ever have a doubt about the fundamental idealism of men, this dream of monogamy—whatever economic, social or practical considerations may have been behind it—should convince us that man would like to make more of himself than he often does.

But with this interpretation I find scant sympathy in young women. It is not man as she believes him to be. They set me down as one who does not know my world; as for them, they recognize their own dual natures and refuse to admit any longer that they are “better” naturally than men—which in itself is all to the good.

Are women today letting men down? It certainly looks so when we see these confident young innocents hurrying to test their romances by liaisons or by companionate marriages.

What we are getting is a doubtful good for women as well as for men, the result being a multitude of young women imitating the sophistication of middle age when twenty years from now they will be imitating the innocence of youth and they will never know the real essence of either.

The willingness to discard standards without knowing the reasons for them—the way they have grown up in the world—their advantages as well as their disadvantages is, of course, only one exhibit of our hasty living, our rushing into experience without reflection or knowledge.

We have a great many women like the heroine of Main Street, who never touched the depths or the heights of the town which she attacked so valiantly. There is grave danger of something of that kind happening to our young women of today—that they miss both (Turn to page 56)