

T W I C E M A R R I E D

CONSERVATIVE pessimists of the present generation declare about one marriage in ten to be happy. Conservative optimists of the same generation are willing to concede one in five. The other four or nine, they say, vary in degree from comfort to misery, and only a per cent. of the miserable ones end in the divorce court. Well, I am willing to be an optimist. I have been twice married, the first time unhappily, the second time happily. Of course I think I know something about it.

Admitting and eliminating the class of people whom, on account of their religious or social convictions, nothing would persuade to seek a divorce, and the other class who speak of obtaining legal relief from an uncongenial marriage as lightly as they would speak of getting a new hat, there is still a large number of people who, entering upon the marriage state with due seriousness and a fitting sense of its responsibilities, fail utterly in their efforts to maintain a home life even reasonably happy or comfortable. I belong to this class. These are the main facts of my experience, given as fairly as I know how to present them.

I married my first husband nine years ago, when I was twenty-four. At twenty-four a girl is generally supposed to "know her own mind," and I thought I knew mine. I believed I was doing the wisest possible thing in the existing circumstances by marrying as I did, and in this belief I was confirmed by my immediate family—my aunt and uncle with whom I made my home after the death of my parents—and my friends.

Trained by Aunt and Uncle

My mother and father died when I was such a tiny girl that I do not remember them at all. My mother's sister, who had no children of her own, took me to raise, and she and my uncle have always been as dear to me as my own parents. They were extremely conscientious, religious people, and aside from the love they felt for me was a sense of duty to the sister who had died. They were constantly seeing in me traits that she or my father had possessed, and were constantly trying to foster or eliminate them.

Because my mother had been undomestic in her tastes, it was supposed that I should have to cultivate domesticity and that I was unpractical. On the other hand, as she had had a beautiful voice, it was supposed that I would be musical or at least artistic. When I developed a knack of playing easily on or "at" the piano, together with a talent for drawing, it was supposed that I was a genius. Then efforts to practicalize me were in some sort abandoned and Aunt and Uncle devoted time and money to making me accomplished without permitting me to do anything professionally. They were both Southerners of the old school and thought that for a woman to go out and earn "money" was more or less a disgrace. The fact that my mother had used her lovely voice in concert singing had always been a trial to remember, and the fact that for the six months previous to her marriage she had been on the stage was something they never mentioned nor, if they could help it, admitted.

Their idea for me was that I should marry, marry young, bring up a large family of children, and that in selecting a husband I must choose one I could respect, look up to, and to whom I should be able to turn over all my property for management. If possible, I must marry a man who was my opposite in temperament; that is, a good business man. I was not supposed to know anything of the world, of business, or of anything else outside of society and books and accomplishments.

Whether I was to be in love with my future husband, whether we were to be congenial, was seldom ever discussed. It was taken as a matter of course. In my aunt's phraseology, "a real lady always loves her husband," and furthermore, since "a woman can do anything with a man," it followed that she could win him to her way of thinking, and they would therefore be congenial.

Aunt and Uncle had always been perfectly happy themselves. They had been so congenial and so well suited in every way that they had probably never stopped to analyze the situation; but believed that all couples, did they but try, could not but be as happy as themselves. My aunt in particular was cruelly hard on women who failed in their married life. Because she had been fortunate herself, she had no mercy on those who made mistakes. Of a neighbor who had got a divorce she always spoke contemptuously in her soft drawing southern voice as "that divorced woman," and the only real quarrel I ever knew her to have with my uncle was once when he procured a divorce (he was a lawyer) for a woman on what my aunt considered insufficient grounds.

Twenty-four and Not Married

When I turned twenty-four and still remained unmarried, I felt, though they would not for the world have said anything to make me feel unhappy, that they were greatly disappointed. They

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Drawing by Joseph Clement Coll

were growing older, they wanted grandnieces and nephews about them, and they wanted to see me settled in life "with a good man" who could "take care" of me. I had been to boarding school, had traveled abroad, and had met numbers of men, nice fellows most of them, and had had several love affairs of more or less depth. All of them had petered out with varying degrees of rapidity, some of them into warm friendships which I am still glad to cherish.

At twenty-four I did not believe in love—for myself. I thought others might experience a grand passion; but that I should not. I was not in the least bitter about this. A little disappointed, it is true; but I was so used to being called a dreamer, and so used to having my dreams called theories not only by my family but my friends, and as theories laughed at, that I had become very philosophical about the matter. Most of my set were married or had moved away. Some of them had married one another and gone to distant cities. It did not seem to me that all of them were ecstatically happy; but Aunt assured me that young people always had to adjust themselves to one another and that it was probable that they were as happy as it is given to anyone to be in this world; that she and Uncle for the first two or three years of their married life—And now see how happy they were!

The happiest couple, apparently, that I knew of were two young people who had married for, as it seemed, the most practical, matter of fact reasons,—she wanted a husband to take care of her; he wanted a wife to make a home for him. They had both admitted this prior to their marriage. They seemed thoroughly contented and congenial. On the other hand, the most miserable of my friends were two who had married for love. About the time of my own marriage the wife died, it was said, of a broken heart.

Coming of the First

At this obviously psychological moment Donald Burton appeared. From the viewpoint of my experience, training, and observation, he was the proper husband for me. He was apparently all business, the essence of practicality. He was big and strong and muscular, appealing in that way to any woman, particularly one who like myself was rather frail of constitution and had never gone in at all for athletics. He rather neglected my society for that of my uncle when he came to call, spending hours in the study, listening to my uncle's theories on political and economic questions. Once, feeling a little aggrieved, I censured him for this, at which he looked startled.

"Does your uncle feel that way too?" he inquired. "I thought you folks all liked a practical man of business; thought you appreciated him."

That sounded like a reproach, and I hastened to apologize. That there was anything unusual in his

speaking thus, I did not stop to consider at the time. Afterward I noticed it.

Almost from the first I felt I should marry him. I was not exactly in love with him, we were not specially congenial; but undeniably his personality, his presence, was very compelling. Even older men listened to him when he talked, whatever they may have thought of his opinions, and instinctively people turned to him to initiate any new plan. Sometimes he failed utterly in what was expected of him; but people continued to expect. He cared nothing for books or for music, and knew nothing about pictures. I had just had some work accepted by a magazine, illustrating a little poem, and was very proud of my achievement. I told him of it. He did not ask to see the magazine; but "How much did they pay you?" he asked.

I had expected to show him the sketch, and was hurt. Perhaps he saw the expression on my face; for he said at once, "You see, I shouldn't know anything about the picture. Men leave such things to women. A man in business has no time for such things. But they like women to like them. I have my business. That is my life. Now, all I need is a home and a wife to love who can make the home beautiful and artistic."

I made myself think the words rang true. That same evening he asked me to marry him, and I accepted him.

I remember waking up next morning with a feeling of contentment,—not ecstatically happy at marrying the one man in the world, but conscious that I was doing what I felt was the sensible thing, the correct thing, the expected thing, to do. I told my aunt and uncle at the breakfast table, and they were both pleased.

"A sensible fellow," said my uncle, "Glad you've done this, niece; but of course I must look him up thoroughly."

He did—or thought he did. He wrote to various people that Donald told him to! Naturally the reports were all favorable—yet Uncle was a shrewd, hard headed lawyer!

Married at Last

Four months later we were married. Meantime, Donald had overwhelmed me with his society. He was at the house morning, noon, and night. His business was such that, as he said, his time was his own, and his employer was lenient with a man about to be married and head over heels in love. Donald was not, however, "head over heels" in love. He was in this as in everything else, heart and soul interested in accomplishing what he set out to do—if the accomplishment did not take too long, promised easy money, and had some attractive features. He had a gift of persuading himself to anything he chose to. He knew it was essential to the success of the

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