

AMERICAN HUSBANDS—AS SUCH

By Virginia Lockard

DESPITE the fact that this world is made up of individuals with individual characteristics, there is an inherent disposition on the part of women as regards men, and men as regards women, to consider the opposite sex as a generic whole and to make sweeping statements regarding that sex, of laudatory or condemnatory character, whenever praise or blame is to be bestowed.

Woman, without respect to persons, is, according to her critics, unstable, fickle, hard to please, subject to change without notice, deceitful, vain, and coy. She is also compassionate, gentle, constant, and a ministering angel. Man, in the opinion of his judges, is by the same token severe, tyrannical, untrustworthy, with decided preferences for having one foot on sea and one on shore as far as sweethearts are concerned, and is also vain and hard to please. He is likewise just, dependable, faithful in love, and belongs to the nobler sex. And yet two extremely popular remarks breathing pessimism at every word are to the effect that "men are all alike" and "women are all alike." Statements more untrue were never perpetrated on a suffering public; for men are not all alike and women are not all alike, both branches of the human family differing among themselves in manners, customs, and law, though for two distinct sets of reasons.

The eternal feminine about which mankind has puzzled itself for centuries springs from a very simple source,—the fact that woman, depending upon man as her natural protector and provider, as he depends or is supposed to depend upon his conception of the Deity, is at the constant disadvantage of having to follow an imperfect standard, the standard of a finite intelligence, not even set by herself,—while man has the incomparable advantage of being, so to speak, in direct communication with Omnipotence, and if the standard he sets for himself as a part of divine revelation varies as his development varies, at least he has the satisfaction of saying something about it. Men dare be what they think they ought to be; women dare be only what they think men think they ought to be. As to what that is, opinions differ.

What a Really Nice Girl Is

NOT very long ago, some one, somewhere, discouraged at hearing so many contradictory reports as to what constituted "a really nice girl," compiled some statistics on the subject. He was very conscientious in his undertaking and gathered his information from as many different sources as he could, and he found very shortly that though it was extremely difficult to discover what "a really nice girl" could do without imperiling her position as such, there was practically no end to the number of things she positively could not do.

For example, "no really nice girl would" go to the theater with a man unchaperoned, lace, wear a switch, put powder on her nose, wear tight shoes, wear a rat, eat dinner down town alone with a man, be engaged more than once, be engaged to more than one man at once, smoke cigarettes, drink a cocktail, do her own work, darn her husband's socks, not darn her husband's socks, get a divorce, live with a husband who was unkind to her, marry before she was twenty-five, kiss a man unless she was engaged to him, kiss any man at all even if she was engaged to him, marry a second time while her first husband was still living, marry a second time even if he was dead, marry a third time under any conditions whatever.

The first impulse of the seeker after knowledge, upon examining his statistics, was one of profound despair. He knew any number of girls he had always regarded as preeminently nice, but according to inventory they were practically all barred! Then all of a sudden he cheered up. He not only cheered up, he became exhilarated. He had made a discovery! He had unraveled the mystery of the eternal feminine! There were millions of "nice girls," as many as there were men to set the standards! And the standards were all different! Which was a part of the major premise of this article.

And a Really Nice Man

ON the face of it, it would be difficult to make out a list of similar protective value for "really nice men"; for the reason that just what a man has to do to drop out of the "really nice" class is, as Bernard Shaw says about matrimony, "a subject that has never yet been thoroughly threshed out." Moreover, the average girl is by no means so vitally interested in such a classification as she is in what constitutes a perfectly good husband, and if she is a wise young woman she knows an untrained eye is not to be en-



tirely trusted in this important matter. Skill comes only with experience; hence, second marriages are usually a success; for a widow, though she may not know exactly what she does want, realizes by a process of elimination what she doesn't want. And that is no small thing to know.

The American man has a pretty widespread reputation for being the best and most indulgent husband in the world, and he deserves his reputation—most of it. The dominant note of our American civilization is Individualism, and the American man not only recognizes himself as an individual, he also recognizes his wife's right to be so considered; he even makes demands upon her along that line, and in consequence lets her have her own and nearly all the rights she wants. And she is the consequent envy of her European sisters.

Still, he is not quite perfect. He is not, in general, so sincere as the Englishman, so gallant as the Italian, or so home loving as the German. As for his taking his womenfolk seriously, there the Frenchman has him beaten to a whisper. Just one thing does the American man take with unalloyed seriousness, toward just one thing does he display perfect gallantry and sincerity, and for just one thing does he pine with homesickness if he is parted from it indefinitely,—business. And that is the reason outside of all question of title that so many American girls marry foreigners. They are seeking the golden fleece of being first, second to nothing, not even business, and sometimes they find the fleece and sometimes they don't. But in any case they lose their chance of being individualistic. The European doesn't look for that in his women.

Admitting, then, that American men differ materially from one another, each being an individual and more or less a law unto himself, they may, nevertheless, for purposes of convenience, be divided into four general groups. Not all members of these groups, when taken in the raw, make acceptable husbands; some of them are not even acceptable friends, which really is saying the same thing twice; but with the exception of the third group they may all, with proper care and under congenial conditions, develop, or be developed into that most satisfactory representative of his class, the right sort of American husband.

The Garden Variety of Man

THE first group in the list may be called the common or garden variety type of man. The common or garden variety may be tall or short, or stout or thin, or young or old, or good looking or homely. In his early youth he looks very much alike, comes twelve a dozen, and is hard to distinguish from himself except by his necktie. He blushes easily, does not, at twenty, think he knows all there is to know in the world, except of course about girls, and he has usually had a good bringing up. He is great fun in a waltz or a waltz and a poor dinner companion.

Because he has had a nice mother and sisters, he

has in the main a very good opinion of women, and spite of the fact of his heart's having been broken once or twice, so that he is a bit cynical and tremendously proud of it, his cynicism is on the extreme surface and he is willing to have his faith renewed at the early convenience of almost any pretty girl. He has ambitions, ideals, and a distinct impression that it is up to him to do the decent thing, pay his debts, and amount to something if he can. He is of a marrying turn of mind, and wants what he calls a "sensible girl" and a family of children.

He loves to talk about himself, and will give advice on all known subjects; but, as he is also willing to be instructed and married to the right girl who understands him and sees his possibilities, the popular proverb as to a woman's being able to do anything she wants to with a man will really apply. Married to the wrong girl, he is apt to remain commonplace and come twelve a dozen to the end of the chapter. He may even turn out badly and go completely to pieces; for the common or garden variety man has not always imagination to cheer him or a sense of humor to keep him going.

The garden variety husband is often a bit trite, a bit tiresome in conversation, is not interested in higher criticism, does not care for Ibsen, does not approve of the problem play, and when he is reading a novel is apt to turn over to the back to see if it turns out well. He is apt to scold if dinner is late, and he doesn't know a director from a kimono, and because he has worked hard all day and is tired he generally prefers sitting in front of the fire, smoking a pipe and reading a magazine, to going places.

But he comes home regularly at six o'clock, it is his own fireside he sits before, he loves his wife because she is his wife, and he spends no time speculating about his chances of being happier had he married some one else, nor in wondering if he couldn't be happier with some one else, even yet. He pays his bills and supports his family and adores his children, and after twenty years of married life he says "my wife" as proudly as on the day he was married. The girl who gets him had better thank her lucky stars and cherish him forever and a day; for under present conditions the garden variety husband is being cultivated into all sorts of things he was never intended to be and doesn't like and doesn't make a success of, and this most satisfactory species is rapidly becoming extinct.

The Epigrammatic Variety

THE second type in this series is the epigrammatic type. The attitude toward life of this species of the genus homo is thoroughly dramatic. He views it as a kaleidoscope, and at the same time as a stage on which he is playing a part. He talks in epigram, lives in epigram, makes love in epigram. His sentences are splotches of color on the poster order; a trolley ride with him is an adventure; dinner down town as exciting as an elopement; to be engaged to him, to live for the nonce in the enchanted country of true romance; to be married to him would seem, in perspective, the land of heart's desire. He is a finished lover, a perfect chum, a kindly friend, an adequate husband. Occasionally he develops into an affinity; but not often. He reads the funny columns of the newspapers; sometimes he writes them himself; and it is no part of his scheme of living to furnish forth in his own person copy for the editor.

The woman in search of an affinity (sometimes she

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