

# Human Documents of Married Life

By Virginia T. Van de Water

Intimate and Human, Intensely Alive, Each Story Presenting a Problem Which Might Occur to Any One of Us at Any Time

## THE TIE THAT BINDS



**O**PPOSITES attract each other," say those who would explain the marriage of two persons totally unlike in taste and temperament. They may attract, but do they hold each other? When the excitement and flush of passion—mistaken for love—has subsided, the two parties to an unconsolidated union remain distinct entities, together but entirely separate.

Of course when people fancy themselves in love they will not believe these facts. With the fine sophistry born of that condition, they think they know their own minds and that they are right and all the skeptical world is wrong.

So it was with Daniel Drayton and Daisy, his wife. Their Christian names were not more unlike than their characters. She was fond of society, caring nothing for intellectual pursuits—a butterfly of a girl. The man, on the other hand, was deep hearted and affectionate, but grave and thoughtful. When released from business, he desired no other recreation than that found in his library. Books were his delight.

His wife was, by nature, a happy little creature, lovely to look at and ready to make friends with her husband's acquaintances in New York, to which city she came as a bride. She had a graceful, almost deferential manner that won for her a ready liking and admiration from all who met her. She was delighted to find herself invited to many places, and would bring cards and invitations to her husband with the joyous enthusiasm of a child.

"Dan!" she would exclaim, "you will go to this dinner-dance, won't you?"

"But I don't dance, Daisy," he demurred on one occasion soon after their marriage.

"But you can sit out dances, and you can always talk when you want to," she added reproachfully.

He smiled affectionately. "I always want to talk to you," he said, "and I can do that to much better advantage in our own house than in a great drawing room full of chattering people for whom I care nothing."

"But you ought to care for them," she insisted. "I do. And I love that kind of thing—society, I mean—and I wish you did. You see, I never had had much of it, for I was at school until last year. And I am interested in knowing all about real life."

Her husband shook his head. "That is not real life, child. Don't fancy that. Society is the thing that people go into to try to make them forget that they have not made the most of the real things, or that they do not appreciate them."

"And what are the real things?" queried the woman.

"True human beings with souls above dress and dances and silly gossip; books that take one out of one's own narrow sphere and fill the brain with big thought," he declared gravely.

"It's queer," commented the wife, "that you care for dull, sober things when I want you to like what I am fond of—pretty clothes and jolly times. As for books, really, Dan, I could live happily all my days without them. I like a novel once in a while, but those dull books you have on your shelves are the limit!"

She raised her eyes to his as she spoke, and he noted with a thrill of admiration how pretty she was. "It is time we were dressing to go to Mrs. Burton's reception, Dan."

He looked at her, appalled. "Mrs. Burton's reception! Is it tonight?"

His wife moved impatiently. "My dear Dan, I reminded you of it this morning and told you not to forget it!"

"Well, I did forget it," was the rueful reply. "Don't let's go. Send some one around with our cards."

The pretty face before him flushed with vexation. "But I want to go," Daisy explained.

In spite of his distaste for the kind of life that his wife loved, Daniel Drayton appreciated that she was too attractive a woman to be allowed to attend evening functions unattended by her husband, and, for the sake of the conventionalities, he formed the habit of acting as her escort to theaters and dinner, to receptions and soirees.

The second winter after their marriage Daisy was pale and languid, and Dan suggested that she consult a physician. This she refused to do, declaring that she was "just tired."

The Christmas holidays, with their attendant festivities, had wearied her, mused her husband. She needed rest and change of air and scene. Such being the case, he acquiesced readily to her proposal that she make a visit to her mother, living in Chicago. The husband urged her to refrain from too much gaiety while absent.

"You know that your social life is waiting here for you when you do return," he reminded her, "so do take care of yourself and get rested while away."

Daisy's letters showed him that she had forgotten or disregarded his advice, for they were full of accounts of the various functions she was attending and the good times she was having. Feeling powerless to interfere any further, the husband shrugged his shoulders and accepted philosophically his present life. But when she had been away for a fortnight he was aroused from his placidity of mind by a special-delivery letter from his mother-in-law. It informed him that Daisy had been taken suddenly ill, that the worst was now over, but that she had asked that he come and take her home as soon as she was well enough to travel. The next paragraph in the letter stunned the reader:

"I am sorry," it ran, "that neither you nor Daisy thought it worth while to inform me of the true condition of affairs. Had you done so I would have guarded the dear girl against such over-exertion as has culminated in her present illness. It followed upon a long evening of dancing. I find it hard to excuse your reticence and hers when I consider that, had we been more careful, I should by next summer have held my first grandbaby in my arms."

The husband gasped and dropped the letter. How could he tell his mother-in-law that he, himself, had not known the truth? Yet, when he knelt beside Daisy's bed and felt her arms about his neck, all resentment died within him.

"Don't be angry, Dan," she sobbed. "Of course he kissed her and told her not to cry. 'But,' he queried, 'didn't you know you should be taking care of yourself? Why didn't you tell me everything, darling?'"

"Because," she murmured, "I knew you would stop my going out, and make me stay stupidly at home for months. And I didn't want to do that yet."

"Didn't you think of the baby that was coming to make us happy, dear?" suggested the husband.

"Yes," she declared, "of course I did! And," her eyes overflowing again with tears, "I planned all about the pretty things I would buy for it—and now that's all over!"

Pity for her evident distress kept the man silent on the subject during the weeks and months that followed. It was this same motive that prevented his uttering any objection when, as soon as she was well again, Daisy returned to the social world of which she liked to feel herself a part. It helped her forget her disappointment, Dan reminded himself.

Yet, in her heart, the wife longed for greater liberty than she possessed. Once she tried to break away from what she felt to be her husband's restraining influence and accepted an invitation without waiting for his final decision upon it. It was on a beautiful spring morning more than two years after her illness that she received an invitation for herself and Dan to spend the week-end at a country place on Long Island.

Daisy's heart beat high with anticipation. Dan had already gone to his office for the day—what about him? He had said last fall that he hated week-end parties, and that the last one of which he was a self-sacrificing part, and at which Daisy had had "a perfect time," was "a miracle of stupidity." He did not play bridge, and would not learn when asked to; he did not dance, he had no small talk, and in the huge house in which they were guests there was, he complained, "nothing worth reading, even if the people had been quiet long enough to allow one to read." No more of that kind of thing for him! Daisy had bitten her lip and said nothing. But today she hoped he had forgotten his decision. To make sure of it, she would call him up at once. His voice at the other end of the wire was so perfunctory and dry that his wife felt little shivers run along her spine. But, summoning her courage, she explained the situation. There was a moment's silence, then her husband's only reply was in the form of a question:

"Well?"

"Oh, Dan, didn't you hear what I told you?" exclaimed the nervous woman. "I said that this morning I got a letter—"

"I heard all that!" interrupted Dan. "But what do you want to know?"

"Why, if you will go, of course!" came the tremulous answer.

The wife knew by her husband's tone that he was exercising all his self-control to speak patiently. "My dear, I really have no time to consider any trifling matter of that kind this morning. I am up to my ears in work at present. We will talk the matter over when I come home tonight. Is there anything of any importance that you wish to speak about just now?"

"Nothing else of any importance!" snapped the wife.

"All right! Good-by!" and he was gone.

For a moment the angry woman held the receiver in her hand, her face flushed, her eyes full of tears. Then she made a sudden resolution and, with a voice that still trembled, called up the number of the friend from whom she had received the alluring invitation. She explained that per-

haps-Dan would be detained in town on business, but that she, herself, would surely come if her hostess would take her alone. Would it be time enough if she let her know Dan's plans tomorrow?

When Dan heard the condition of affairs that night he looked his astonishment. "You accepted an invitation without knowing whether I would go or not!" he exclaimed.

There was a new note of defiance in the wife's tone. "I certainly did," she retorted. "I do not mean to miss the things I enjoy just because of a whim of yours."

"But suppose I do not want to go?" "Then I shall go without you," declared the woman firmly.

There was a dead silence for a minute. Then Daisy went on with: "I would have liked to know, for the sake of courtesy, what I am to tell Mrs. Jackson. Common politeness demands that you accept or decline."

"And uncommon politeness has moved you to leave me out of your arrangements," affirmed her husband, and hers when I consider that, had we been more careful, I should by next summer have held my first grandbaby in my arms."

The wife laughed with forced mirth, then grew grave. "See here, Dan," she urged, "do, for once, look at the matter sanely and, if possible, unselfishly. You like one kind of thing, I like another kind. Why may not each of us enjoy life in our own way? You like to stay at home and read, and I prefer to go out and have a good time. Is not my right to live my life as good as your right to live yours?"

"You mean," asked her husband, "that you want me to say you may accept any invitations without consulting me, and I am at liberty to decline or accept them as I please?"

"Just that."

For a moment the man knew that he felt in his innermost soul a throbbing of relief at the possibility that hereafter he need not go about to all kinds of society affairs with his wife.

His wife's voice checked his musings. "Really, Dan," she was saying tremulously, "when you remember that in a few months I won't be able to go out and have fun, I do not think that you need grudge me the enjoyment of this little outing now."

With a pang of remorse the husband drew her to him. "Forgive me, dear," he pleaded. "I was a brute to you. Of course I will go to the Jacksons' week-end party, and anywhere else you want to go, and you shall have all the good times you want now, for—his voice softening—"when you have a dear little child who needs you, you will not want to go away from home any more."

His wife looked at him gravely. "I am not so sure of that," she said calmly.

And her husband had the wisdom to make no reply.

During the weeks of the following summer when Daisy's physical condition prevented her going into society, Dan set aside, as often as was practicable, his work, his books, and all his personal inclinations in order to minister to her whims and fancies. He walked with her and drove with her, for they had taken a furnished cottage in a quiet country place for the heated term. He knew that she was weary by the monotony of her daily life, for, as she cared little for books, and was not well enough to meet the few city people who were summering in the nearby village, one day was much like another. He wondered sometimes whose fault it all was. One day a man met on the train was talking of marriage, and dropped a sentence that lingered in Daniel Drayton's memory for months afterward.

"Married life," affirmed his new acquaintance, "must have something more than love to hold two people together. A couple who are congenial in life, for, as she cared little for books, and was not well enough to meet the few city people who were summering in the nearby village, one day was much like another. He wondered sometimes whose fault it all was. One day a man met on the train was talking of marriage, and dropped a sentence that lingered in Daniel Drayton's memory for months afterward."

"Why, not?" queried the woman petulantly. "I see no reason why I should take that drive alone."

"And if I am willing to leave at a garage a standing order for a taxi for you whenever you want one, I see no reason why any man need act as an escort to you."

"Fortunately," retorted the wife, "other men have more regard for my comfort and safety than you have."

A hard look came into the man's eyes. "Only last week he had received a letter from his sister, who had been paying a visit in Daisy's former hometown, and it had contained a sentence that had rankled. 'I wonder,' it ran, 'if you ever knew that Daisy was engaged to another man when she met you, and that rumor declares that she did not break off her affair with him until after she had accepted you.'"

Dan's brow darkened with indignation when he read the sentence, but the resentment was against his sister, not Daisy. He did not believe the rumor. Women were jealous; his wife was a popular beauty, his sister an unattractive spinster. But, underneath the suspicion remained, not dead, but smoldering. At his wife's taunt it flashed into a blaze.

"You seem to know a great deal of other men's regard for you," he said significantly. "Apparently you know how to handle several of them at a time, as you did at the time that we roomed together."

To the husband's painful surprise the shaft went straight home. The woman paled slightly, and her eyes widened in startled amazement.

"What do you mean?" she asked quickly.

signed with relief when the clock struck ten, and she said that she was weary now and wanted to go to bed. She heard the sigh and turned on him suspiciously.

"What's the matter? Are you tired of hearing me talk?" she demanded.

"Why, no," he answered mendaciously, "but the heat in town today was very enervating."

Now, alone, he whispered the truth. "Heaven forgive me! I was bored to death!"

He sat for some time trying to appreciate what the condition of affairs meant, how he and his wife would live together through all the coming years, each prying on the other. His soul sickened at the thought. Did Daisy appreciate it as he did?

Her voice calling him from the next room came as an answer to his question. He obeyed her summons promptly, carrying his cigar with him.

"Dan," came the sweet but fretful voice, "won't tomorrow be the first of September?"

"Yes, dear." (That perfunctory "dear"! How hard married couples "work" it!)

"And we will surely go home the fifteenth, won't we?"

"Certainly."

"Thank the Lord!" she murmured. Daniel and Daisy Drayton had been married five years when their son was born. Daisy took the responsibilities of motherhood as she took everything, lightly. She was not to blame, for it was her nature. A full pint-measure is really just as full as is a gallon-measure. The husband used to remind himself of this fact when he was tempted to be impatient with what he called, when angry, her "shallow nature." "Perhaps, after all," he would muse, "she is wiser than I. Things don't hurt her long. As for me—well, I won't let them hurt me. She and I will just have to rub along as other people do. And, thank God, there's the baby to keep life endurable!"

For the dissatisfied man soon found that the knowledge that he had a son to love and live for did much toward making the future bright.

As long as Daisy had her baby and her social pleasures she looked no deeper into conditions. She did not neglect her child as the woman of today terms neglect. She made time each day to play with him, to rock him in her arms and to listen to suggestions from his nurse as to what was needed to make his tasteful wardrobe even more elaborate.

Familiarity with society and obedience to its many claims did not breed contempt of it in Daisy. As she and her husband grew farther apart, she threw herself into the gay life more enthusiastically than ever. As Dan must be at his office all day he need never be pressed into service for afternoon engagements. But he still, with such patience as he could muster, did his duty, to look and come in, as an escort to the evening affairs, except on the one night of the week on which Daisy attended the meeting of the musical club to which she belonged.

To this club she went in a cab, returning in one. She did not mention to her husband that one of the men members often accompanied her to her front door. But one evening, returning home earlier than usual, she suggested that Tom Nash, her escort, come in for a few minutes. Dan, hearing a man's voice in the drawing-room, went to look and came in, as in duty bound, making an enquiry in the brief chat that ensued before the guest took his departure.

The next morning at breakfast the husband remarked, apropos of the conversation of the previous evening, that "Tom Nash carried light guns."

The wife flushed uncomfortably. "I wish you would not criticize my friends," she demurred.

Dan raised his brows in surprise. "Is he a friend of yours?" he queried.

"I thought of him simply as a chance acquaintance."

"He has been of service to me several times," insisted Daisy, too much vexed to consider the admission she was making, "in bringing me home from the club."

Her husband frowned. "I wish," he protested, "that you would not have men bring you home at night."

"Why, not?" queried the woman petulantly. "I see no reason why I should take that drive alone."

"And if I am willing to leave at a garage a standing order for a taxi for you whenever you want one, I see no reason why any man need act as an escort to you."

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"What do you mean?" she asked quickly.

"Only that it is well to be off with the old love before one is on with the new!" scoffed the man. "I happen to know that you kept one man dangling on your string until you had landed another, then dropped number one."

Daisy's eyes flashed. "So you've been listening to gossip about your wife, have you?" she burst forth.

"And may I ask what business it is of yours or of anybody's what I did before I was married?"

"It's a good deal of my business what you did after you were engaged to me," replied her husband, but the woman rallied on, heedless of his remark.

"You taunt me with what you consider the facts, and I'll give you truth as it was!" she declared hotly. "I was at school. Then I met you, and I accepted you, for I knew—or thought"—with cutting emphasis—"that I loved you. And I wrote at once to the other fellow—he was hardly more than a boy—and discarded him. There, that is the truth, and more of it is that I was a fool to do it. He at least was a gentleman!"

With a sob of rage she fled from the room. Her husband stood looking at the door she had slammed behind her. "It's hell!" he muttered between set teeth. "That's what it is, hell!"

Then, with a sudden chill, he was not wounded. Once such a scene with Daisy would have wrung his heart. Now he felt no tenderness of pity for her. Was his love dead? he asked himself. And was hers, too?

After that episode the shams of mutual consideration which each had reared during the past years were of ten down. Daisy liked her ease too well to quarrel unnecessarily, and, as she was more comfortable to be pleasant than unpleasant, she did not, unless already angered, seek cause for quarrel, and her husband followed her lead. But only those who are bound to each other by law and the church know how many inescapable causes of friction occur in the family life.

It is strange how certain traditions hold when for which they first stood is gone, how those who deny the spirit still cling to the form. This is shown in nothing more strongly than in the meaningless nightly kiss exchanged in some households between the uncongenial heads. It amused Dan that Daisy kept up this custom. She, not being of an analytic or introspective nature, retained the habit of pausing each night long enough to drop upon his unresponsive lips the perfunctory percussion that had replaced the wife's kiss. The irony of the situation caused his nature to revolt on a certain night on which, as he had a cold, he had gone to his room early. It was on the evening of the annual dinner of the musical club, to which each member was allowed to bring a guest. As Dan had been the unwilling victim upon several of these occasions, he found himself reconciled to the slight attack of bronchitis which made his remaining at home on this particular night advisable. Daisy declared that she must go if he was well enough to be left, and, she added as an afterthought, if Dan did not mind. Dan did not mind, he assured her, seeing that he was a member of the club, and a happy mood produced by pleasurable anticipation of an evening of gaiety unadorned by the shadow of his compulsory presence. At heart he knew that Daisy would not let a little thing like his illness stand in the way of the jolly dinner at Delmonico's with the set which she enjoyed, and of which he inwardly disapproved. He had voiced this disapproval long ago, but his remarks were met with such outbursts of vehement protest from his wife that he had not, since then, ventured to utter any further criticism on this subject. He did not care enough to court a scene by interfering.

So this evening, after he and his boy, who was now over two years old, had had their accustomed romp, Dan took his solitary dinner, and went to his room. He lay in bed reading when his wife returned from the Delmonico dinner at eleven o'clock and stopped to tell him good night. As she approached him the acrid odor of cigarette smoke reached his nostrils.

"Whew!" he ejaculated, "what a smell of tobacco! Have you had a cigarette?" he demanded suspiciously, for he was so old fashioned that he disapproved of women's smoking and drinking in public places.

"No," was the soft reply, "but all the men were smoking, and I sat near Tom Nash, who had an awfully strong cigar. That's why my hair and dress smell of it."

"Other men do not meet her husband's eyes, and he knew she was evading the truth. To prevent further questioning she bent hurriedly and gave him the usual good night kiss. He laughed roughly.

"And I suppose Tom Nash had been drinking, and the reason your breath smells of liquor is because your lips were so near his!" he mocked.

For a moment the wife was staggered by the cool brutality of the speech, then a wave of anger, made more intense by the champagne she had been drinking, swept away her self-control.

"You brute!" she exclaimed.

"Only your husband, remember," suggested the man coldly.

"That's as hard on me as it is on you!" she retorted.

"You are overexcited, my dear," remarked Drayton, still calmly. "The wine you took at dinner has affected you somewhat. By morning you will be more sane."

"Oh!" she gasped, striking her palms together, "when you talk like that I almost feel as if I could kill you!"

With a yawn the man turned over on his side, with his face from her,

closed his eyes, and settled himself as though to go to sleep.

"Perhaps," he said colorlessly, "that would be about the kindest thing you could do and the simplest solution to this whole damnable business!"

Then he switched on the light at the head of his bed, leaving the woman to find her way across the room and into her own chamber by the gleam of the hall chandelier.

It was a week later that Daniel Drayton, opening his front door with his latch-key on his return from business one night, was arrested by the sound of his wife's voice speaking at the telephone. The instrument was in the rear of the hall and not in sight from the front door, but the words reached the master of the house in that moment in which he instinctively paused:

"Yes, Tom, he's going out at eight-thirty. Come any time after that."

The husband slammed the front door, and his wife, startled, hurried toward him, where he stood under the glaring ceiling light. A glance at his grimly determined countenance told her that her speech had been overheard.

"Dan," she tried to explain, "I was only telling—" but her voice failed her, trailing off into silence, and she sank down, trembling on the hall chair near her. "Well!" she whispered, looking up at her husband.

His voice was so unnatural that she started violently when he spoke, but her eyes did not leave his.

"Daisy," he said, "this is the end! I won't stand this life any longer! I said long ago in anger that it was hell; now I say it in sober truth. It's hell for you as well as for me. You do not love me; I sometimes think you hate me. We are tired of each other. It's got to stop! You may go your way, and I'll go mine."

As he spoke he saw a gleam of hope dawn in the frightened eyes into which he looked. The pale lips trembled a moment as if their owner were about to cry, but she steadied them and spoke quickly, almost eagerly.

"Dan, listen to me. I've been faithful to you."

He smiled drearily. "As if that counted," he said, "in a case like ours! So far you've been what the world calls faithful—I don't say you haven't. But you'd always rather be with other men than with me; you make an appointment with a man on the only evening in weeks on which I happen to have a business engagement, and you telephone him that I'm to be away! How long do you think that kind of thing could go on and either of us keep a spark of respect?"

Still the look of hope in the woman's eyes. The husband saw it with a peculiar thrill and rushed on, his voice rising as his excitement increased.

"We made a mistake in marrying! I'm tired of it, so are you! I say I won't stand for it any longer. Yes, this is the end!"

His wife shrank from him, her eyes still on his face. "When?" she whispered.

"Now!" he exclaimed. "I swear I won't!"

He caught his breath sharply. A childish voice sounded from the landing on the stairs above him.

"Daddy! Daddy!" came the high voice. "Aren't you comin' up?"

The man steeled his voice to answer, though his face was contorted with a spasms of physical pain. "Yes, son," he called hoarsely. "In a minute!"

But the baby voice came again, "Daddy!"

There was a hurrying of feet in the upper hall as the nurse hastened to capture her small charge, who had for the moment escaped her vigilance. The nursery door closed behind the pair. The man dropped upon the low stairs, his face buried in his hands.

"The boy!" he groaned.

His wife sprang up and caught him by the arm excitedly. "You won't let him make any difference!" she exclaimed imploringly. "His life is all before him! Surely we have a right to ours!"

Her husband lifted his head and looked at her, and again she shrank from him, although her hand still clutched his arm. He rose and faced her.

"Listen!" he said sternly. "For the moment I forgot him—God forgive me! I forgot the child. Yours and mine, remember—the child that for our own pleasure we called from no where to suffer in this devilish world; the child for whom we are responsible to man and to God Almighty. Can't you see," he exclaimed fiercely, "that we have no right to punish him for our mistakes?"

But his wife shook her head as if dazed. The man made a hopeless gesture.

"We've got to stand it!" he declared savagely. "If there were only you and I we could do as we pleased. But we've tied, tied, do you hear?—and with a tie made of flesh and blood! He didn't ask to be born, did he? We've got to pretend to live decent lives until he needs us no longer. We can't get away! We can't!"

The woman uttered a weak wail. "And what about me? What about me?"

The man pulled himself roughly from her grasp on his arm, and she sank down again, trembling, upon the chair, still looking up at him.

"You're his mother, that's all I care!" he exclaimed. "And that's why we've got to play the game out till death delivers us!"

He turned and, without another glance at the crouching woman, went heavily up the stairs toward the room in which the child was waiting for him.

## The ONLOOKER

HENRY HOWLAND

## IN AUTUMN-TIME



In autumn-time the good world seems to leave all hate and strife behind; It is a time for pleasant dreams. For clanking pecks and being kind; In softest gold and crimson dressed. Calm Nature seems to pause awhile, To lure her children to her breast And show a reminiscent smile.

In autumn-time the orchards yield The riches they have treasured long; For clanking pecks and being kind; Proclaim a faith still sure and strong! A haze that softens and subdues Lends grace to distant, rugged slopes; The lambs that play beside the ewes Are eloquent of well-won hopes.

In autumn-time the world appears To turn awhile from fretfulness; Contentment comes to banish fears, And love reclaims the pitiless; Scenes that were drear in former days Become enchanted and sublime, And all the peaceful, winding ways Lead heavenward, in autumn-time.

## CANDID OPINION.

One good thing about a church is that one needn't feel ashamed if one is seen going in even at a side door.

Most of the explaining is done by men who act upon their first impulses.

Conscience, like the housebreaker, does most of its work after dark.

If only one fool is born every minute it is evident that fools never die in his infancy.