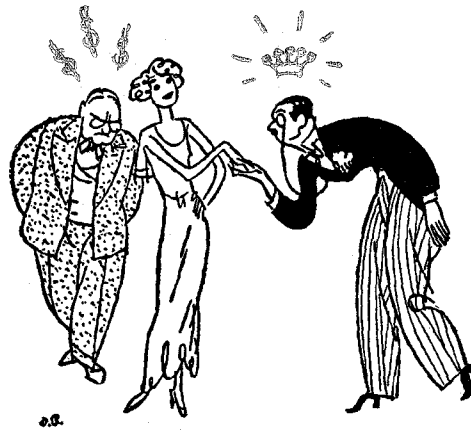


# Dowries for Daughters



*Drawings by Johan Bull*

by **R. LE CLERC PHILLIPS**

**Y**ES, I KNOW. The very idea is repulsive to you. It is to the average man and woman in Anglo-Saxon lands. And yet the custom has existed for countless centuries and is still in vogue among some of the most highly civilized races under the sun. Surely there must be something to be said for a practice so widely prevalent as that of dowries for daughters.

You deny it stoutly. You say that a man must stand on his own feet as you yourself have done. You believe that any form of personal subsidy tends to weaken a man's moral fibers and that the institution of such a social system would in time develop a breed of fortune hunters as effeminate and backboneless as the stage picture of the Continental male. You will have none of it. Your daughter's suitors must love her for herself alone. You married your wife without a penny of dowry, and your daughter must go to her husband as penniless as your wife came to you. Afterward, when you are gone — well, then of course, she will have something because you cannot take your money with you.

But by the time your daughter gets this money it is probable that she will be well on in middle life. She will have passed through the fiery furnace of the economic struggle. She will have suffered, and so will her husband. From their point of view, your money will come to them just a little late.

But, you argue, their moral fibers will have remained intact. Well, perhaps; perhaps. But possibly there will be something else that will

have been a little bit damaged instead.

However, it is not that you are unwilling to do anything at all for your daughter. You pin your faith on education. Education — that's the thing for daughters. If you give your girl a really first-class education, that is as much as she will need in a land that has never developed a class of fortune hunters. In the first place, education is a first-rate investment. If she is educated, a girl can earn good money. Yes; education has a very definite financial value.

In the second place, education is in itself a very desirable thing. Perhaps you are just a little hazy about this second aspect of the question — more so than about its financial aspect — but all the same you are sure that a first-rate education is a splendid thing for girls. So you will give your daughter an education and she can face the world unafraid. And if, by any chance, she fails to marry, she still has her education. Her education, in one word, is the dowry that you are giving her.

## MY DAUGHTER — MY DUCATS!

**S**UCH is the Anglo-Saxon confession of faith in regard to daughters. It all sounds fairly plausible — not very plausible, but still fairly. Indeed, it is quite a presentable surface argument, for it is only when one does a little probing underneath that the flaws and cracks and spots are visible. And they are not a specially pretty sight.

Consider, for instance, the financial value to women of education as that word is understood

by the Anglo-Saxon parent who urges it as the panacea for the problem of his daughters. What, precisely, is its value in terms of dollars and cents?

Now no one is going to deny that a college education is a powerful aid in obtaining a job. One has only to read the newspaper advertisements to realize that the college graduate is in high demand. As to the quality of the job that she is offered, we have to admit that it is mediocre more than anything else. And the most dismal aspect of the case is this: that except in certain rare instances — rarer by far than is popularly supposed — it remains mediocre.

That is to say, there is a certain very definite limit to a woman's earning power. I should say that about sixty dollars a week is the very uttermost height to which the average woman college graduate can ever hope to attain in regard to salary. And relatively few of them receive that. I have been assured by personnel managers in large concerns that the moment a woman receives a salary of three thousand dollars a year, she is no longer in competition with other women: she is in competition with men. And that is a pretty serious outlook for any woman, prate as she may of the ability of her sex to handle all the problems of business and professional life as ably as they are handled by men.

Unhappily, the money limit is not the only one. There is another which is far more deadly. It is the time limit — the age limit. A few weeks ago a woman professionally interested in the employment of college and talented women was discussing with me the prospects of such women in economic life. In the course of her conversation she made what seems to me to be a sensational statement.

"If," she said, "a woman earning her own living happens to find herself without a job at forty years of age, there is only one thing for her to do. She must start something for herself where she will be her own employer. The modern male employer wants young women. Why he prefers youth to solid experience is his own business; but since he pays the piper, he has the right to call the tune. And the most tragic part of the situation is this: the more educated, cultured, and refined the woman of forty is, the harder it is for her to meet the rough-and-tumble of the economic world. The woman of less education and inferior social

background is better equipped for the battle when middle age looms up before her." And she concluded by saying that, after all, marriage is the safest and soundest career for women, no matter what their abilities and their background.

Thus, in giving his daughter the dowry of a good education, the American father has overlooked the fact that, *so far as its financial value is concerned, it is good for only about sixteen years!*

#### EDUCATION FOR SPINSTERHOOD

IT IS POSSIBLE, too, that he is not acquainted with the marriage statistics of the graduates of women's colleges, although they have been cried from the housetops for several years past. He does not realize that the possession of a high degree of education apparently diminishes a woman's chances of marriage in a very startling manner. He has been so engrossed by the consideration of the financial value of education that he has not bothered overmuch to appraise any of its other influences. Consequently, his daughter goes to an expensive college and later gets her job. And then what happens to her? Let me sketch a typical case in a few broad strokes.

Her first job landed, she quickly settles down to it. It is a nice job, a comfortable job, and she enjoys it tremendously. Presently she is offered a better job. She is overjoyed and talks louder than ever about careers for women, and is so engrossed in her work that she scarcely notices that the years are slipping by. Bad times come. She is discharged. But she gets another job, just as good. A few years later the head of the firm retires. There are many changes. New blood comes in. Again she finds herself unemployed. Many years have now gone



by since she first started to earn her own living. She has some difficulty in getting a new position, but ultimately she succeeds. Her salary, however, is somewhat less than she received in her previous job. She is told that she is rather above the age for the kind of work for which her experience has fitted her.

She is intelligent, but she is not gifted. She realizes this by now. And jobs have lost all their early glamour. Sometimes, indeed, she is a little querulous in the office. And with some reason. For her father—that father whose sole dowry to her was an expensive education—has recently died, leaving considerably less money than the family had expected; in fact, just enough to keep her mother and send her youngest brother through college. She has nothing, literally nothing, between herself and the world but her education. *She knows now that it is not enough!* She struggles along, however, because there is nothing else for her to do. Then comes some economic cataclysm. Her employers let her go. Again she is unemployed. Her bank balance does not reach four figures, for her salary has never been very high. And she is forty.

That, as I see the problem, describes the most deadly flaw in the Anglo-Saxon argument against the desirability of dowries for daughters. For the picture I have outlined indicates that money is a better protection for a girl than education can ever be. Education has its advantages, but it is not the best of buffers to place between women and the world they live in. There is something substantial about money—something sound, something corporeal. Do you deny it? And in these days of all days?

No. But now you harp on the money-hunter string. You are afraid of fortune-seeking suitors. If it is known that your daughter will, on her marriage, receive from you a certain lump sum of money, even though it be held in trust with the most stringent stipulations safeguarding the principle, you fear that she will be the victim of some fellow who is attracted by her dowry as much as by herself. And no man, you

argue, is going to live on your daughter.

According to the United States Census of 1920 (the detailed figures of this year not being yet available), there are some 8,346,796 women gainfully employed. Of these, no less than 1,920,281 are married women. That is to say, practically one-fourth of all American women gainfully employed are women who have husbands who, according to the Anglo-Saxon argument, should be supporting their wives and

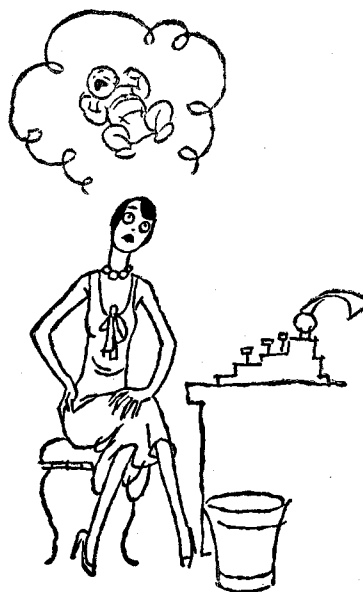
maintaining the home unaided. Put in its bluntest form, this situation means that already at least one-quarter of the married women holding jobs in the United States are subsidizing husbands and homes. They are doing it by means of toil in factory and office.

Why, I ask, is it highly undignified for a man to be subsidized by a dowry but not by his wife's work at the typewriter? Why does it sap the moral fibers of a husband to draw on his wife's dowry in times of grave economic crisis, but leave his character unharmed to share in his wife's weekly pay envelope? Why, in a word, is it un-American to seek a wife with a little ready money, but perfectly innocuous to marry a girl who is going to keep on with her job because any idea of marriage would be quite impossible if she did not?

If there are any distinctions of dignity between these cases, I confess that they are beyond my powers of perception.

#### FEMININE VANITY

**B**UT IT IS not only the Anglo-Saxon parent who possesses pronounced views on the question of dowries. The unmarried Anglo-Saxon woman also has strong opinions on the subject. Their peculiarity is so striking as to merit some attention. Perhaps I can best illustrate the curious attitude of the American and English woman by relating how once, when I was very young, I offered congratulations to an acquaintance, a spinster of thirty-six, on hearing that she had just become engaged to be married. Afterward, my old grandmother



casually remarked that, strictly speaking, one was supposed to tender congratulations on an engagement only to the man. "For," she explained, "it is assumed that it is the man and not the woman who has won the prize."

I do not know whether the excessive hypocrisy of this early Victorian attitude holds good to-day in so far as the matter of engagement congratulations is concerned. (I do know, however, that whenever I hear of the engagement of any spinster acquaintance of thirty-six, I intend to congratulate her on her good fortune with all the gusto at my command.) But there is no doubt that the Anglo-Saxon woman still tends to regard herself as something of a "prize" in relation to marriage and, seeing herself in this light, obstinately refuses to recognize marriage as an institution under which the woman benefits at least — at the very least — as much as the man.

Hence her dislike of the dowry system. For the application of this system presupposes equal benefits for both partners; and the acknowledgement of equal benefits does not admit an attitude of condescension on the part of women. Now the Anglo-Saxon woman, in her youth at least, clings tenaciously to the belief that when a man "wins" her, he is doing well for himself.

There is yet another side to the personal vanity of the Anglo-Saxon woman. Who does not know married women who are convinced, and extremely vocal in broadcasting their conviction, that they have sacrificed a career by marrying? I often wonder if these comfortable married women really understand what a career involves? Has it never struck them that it almost invariably means loneliness once a woman is over thirty?

At the moment of writing I happen to be staying in one of the most successful women's hotels in New York City. About three hundred and fifty women are living in it, their ages ranging from about twenty-two to a few cases of elderliness. But the huge majority are young or youngish. These women all have their independence. Oh, they all want it. They can come and go as they wish, and there is not a soul to keep track of their movements. Some little time ago the hotel staff inaugurated a series of dances. They had to be abandoned almost at the outset because the women guests, with all their independence and careers, knew

no men to invite to them. They stand on their own feet, they pay their way, but they are so lonely that they cannot produce a man apiece for weekly dances! That is the reverse side of the medal of careers.

Careers! I can hear the hollow laughs of the women who have them and have found out exactly what they are worth. They know well that all the talk about the high salaries that the modern woman is reputed to earn is nothing but the phenomenon vulgarly known as "putting up a front." I do not insinuate for an instant that no woman earns a high salary. Many do. But I do say that the proportion is pitifully small and wholly in disaccord with the vast amount of nonsense that has been written about the high earning power of the successful modern woman.

### THE MIRAGE OF CAREERS

AND yet every day the mirage of careers dazzles some ignorant young girl. Yesterday I heard of one who had just broken off her engagement to a promising young man because, so she said, marriage would interfere with her career (stamping cards behind the counter of a public library). The friend who related the incident told me that she had expostulated with the young librarian, saying: "Barbara, do you mean that you really prefer to go on stamping cards to having a home and husband and children?" But Barbara only tossed her head and replied that she refused to be "throttled" by marriage. I fancy that after this young woman has been stamping library cards for ten or fifteen years more, she will deeply regret that she was *not* "throttled" by marriage.





But women have a master who ends by subduing their vanity and dissipating their illusions. His name is Time. The girl who thought herself a matrimonial prize at twenty has changed her views by the time she is thirty-five. She may lie to her friends about her salary, but she does not lie to herself about her value in the matrimonial market. And I believe — I am almost certain — that if she had the money, she would willingly use it as a dowry in order to help establish or maintain a home and a normal family life.

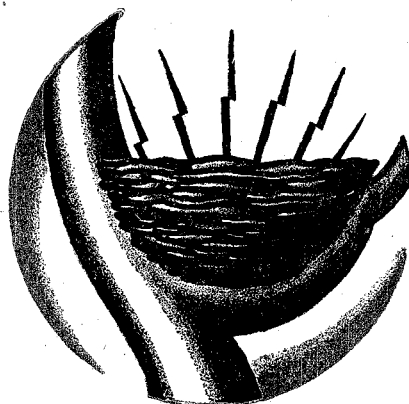
If only she had it! But she does not have it. Her father would not give it to her when she was young. He said that a good education was enough. He still thinks so and explains his daughter's celibacy by telling himself that he supposes "Mary isn't the marrying kind." But Mary *is* the marrying kind, no matter how

much she may try to cover her feelings by declaring that men never meant much to her anyway. (Heavens! The number of women who tell this to one and expect to be believed!)

It is Mary's father who must bear his share of the blame in the matter. He never did a thing — no, not one single thing — to try to establish Mary in life as a woman, as a French father would feel it his sacred duty to do. No, Mary's father only took steps to establish her in life as a secretary, or a librarian, or a social worker, or an advertising writer, or a short story mechanician. Perhaps he excuses himself by saying that later on Mary will have quite a respectable sum of money. When he is gone, of course; for he expects many a year of life ahead of him.

But his money cannot be a dowry when Mary gets it; it will be her old-age pension.

# The Disunited States of Europe



*Drawings by Lloyd Coe*

**by SALVADOR DE MADARIAGA**

**T**HE QUESTION of a European Federation has remained on the international round table ever since M. Briand let it fall there with a gesture half cautious, half negligent; half "I wonder," half "what do I care?" Since he outlined the vague contours of his cloudy thought to a gathering of European delegates at the 1929 Assembly of the League of Nations, he has prepared and distributed a memorandum on his views to which most European nations have already presented their observations. As usual in these cases, the cloud has burst and we

have been blessed with a rain of paper.

Readers of THE FORUM may remember that I devoted to this matter one of my contributions to the Magazine of Controversy ("The United States of Europe," January, 1930). I do not propose to repeat what I then said. But I am in a position to refer again to the subject under a new — and, I believe, an instructive — light owing to the fortunate circumstance that one of the most distinguished American internationalists disagrees with my views and said so in THE FORUM ("The U. S. of Europe," by