

the last analysis, the feeling of the pioneer, the spirit which has made America what she is? And yet fools say that there is no romance in business! I tell you, Jones, the West is the land of the future. There's little enough that any of us can do for the upbuilding of our great nation, but at least we can have the satisfaction of doing our part, as simple, big-hearted business men in bringing about trade expansion and port development and who shall say that we have not thereby served the cause of American prosperity?

You can see by the fellow's expression while he dictates that he's wondering whether some day that letter won't look pretty well in print.

The temptations of the official letter-writer would be similar. After a while it might become difficult for him even to pay his house rent without indulging in a few mighty periods on the patriotic significance (in the last analysis, of course) of the American home, with references to Abraham Lincoln, log cabins, the influence of good mothers, and the flag. Probably, the job would have drawbacks after all, and it is best to discourage an ambitious young man from thinking that he had rather be writer than be President. The President, unfortunately, has to be both.

## TOO MANY HUSBANDS

BY WINIFRED KIRKLAND

**F**ROM my earliest teens the husbands I have never had have caused a good deal of concern to a good many persons. In those distant days female relatives would from time to time shake their heads over me and groan in unison, "I pity your husband!" Those early insinuations of domestic incapacity were not then painful to me, for at that time I thought little about husbands, and cared less; but now that I have attained to tenderer years, I have suffered—and recently—an acute jab to my self-esteem—this at the hands of a personage no less important than our cook. In the

absence of the housekeeping member of the family, I had assumed authority, but my best efforts elicited merely the comment, "You don't care much for house-keeping, does you, miss? It's a good thing you ain't never had a husband!" Somehow I feel it a little hard on my character, which, without undue conceit, I consider to have been on the whole inoffensive, that people should have pitied my husbands both before and after my *not* taking them!

But this spontaneous commiseration is not the worst trouble I've had with spouses. To go back a decade or so in my history, I had the misfortune in early life to graduate, or in the vernacular, to be graduated, from a worthy female college, and afterward to keep on picking degrees, or parts of them, from several other equally worthy, and equally female, colleges. In short, there are four institutions on whose early rolls an enterprising secretary may discover my name, a name that has remained absolutely unchanged from that remote day to this. Now my bitterest complaint is that every year every one of those colleges writes and asks me how many husbands I have acquired since their last date of asking. Oh, of course, they ask me other questions, too, under various circumstantial headings, with directions in smaller print calculated to keep me veracious to the *n*th detail. These learned ladies wish to know not only how many husbands I have had since last April, but also:

No. of books or articles.

1. a. Published. b. Unpublished.

2. a. Original. b. Plagiarized.

No. of natural teeth still in active employment.

No. of motor cars owned, make, and age limit of each.

Church affiliation of maternal grandfather.

Previous matrimonial affiliation of male parent before marriage to present mother.

Contributions to charities, state whether voluntary or conscripted; if in trillions, write commas plainly; if in cents, ditto decimal point.

I do not mean to say that these questions have appeared in any official inquiry that has yet reached me, but I confidently expect them to appear at any moment. In the mere fact that they occur so readily to my pen, they testify to the reduced condition of my mind after having filled out a questionnaire, a condition like that of a small boy's pocket just after it has been turned inside out by a mother with a switch in her hand. Like the small boy, I am both amazed and depressed by the contents produced by the authoritative investigations of my alma mater. But no one item gives me a bitterer sense of guilt than to disappoint her every spring when she, and the other three colleges, make their annual search in my pocket for husbands. Name, race, birth, weight, death, complexion, of husbands, there the heart-racking words stand on the printed cards that come to haunt me at every springtime. It is bad enough to be single, but to have to confess each year to each of four institutions of learning, that I have never had any husbands and never expect to have, is a little more than female flesh should be called upon to bear. And, by the way, I'd like to know if male flesh is called upon to endure the same sort of inquisition. Is plurality of wives so insistently suggested to every loyal alumnus as is plurality of husbands to every conscientious alumna? Does a man-graduate have to tell his college every year how many wives he's had since last April? And does he have to reply to a question still more personal—does his university ask him every spring how many children he hasn't had? Does a man have to reiterate officially every twelve months the agonizing statement that "the children of Alice call Bartram father"? And if a man doesn't have to make that sort of confession, why should I? Considering the number of years they've been asking the same question, I really marvel at the perennial hopefulness of my four colleges as regards the stork, for each always presents to me the laconic inquiry,

"Children?" and beneath it, annually, stand six blanks to be filled in with babies!

Now to my certain knowledge, the questionnaires that come to me from my colleges are made out by women who have never had any more husbands than I, therefore I can't understand their solicitude about mine. Every year the demand for an immediate and exhaustive report on my marriages becomes more emotional and more lyric in expression. If it seems heartless of these others to remind me so often of my lack, it seems still more heartless of me to withhold any information that is so urgently desired. Besides, of course, a stamped envelope is enclosed, and the effect on the average conscience of an unused two-cent stamp is hypnotic. A man who would steal a million dollars from an endowed orphan can't bring himself to waste another man's stamped envelope. To tear off the stamp, soak it free, and use it as one's own is somehow heinous, while to return the whole envelope intact to the sender needs the expenditure of another envelope and another stamp of one's own, and to be coerced to this outlay makes one vaguely resentful; and so in the end one weakly gives in and uses the disquieting object for the purpose for which it was intended, even though that purpose is a questionnaire and even though the questions are about husbands.

If only any of the senders ever read any of their questionnaires when returned, I'd take a short and simple way to rid myself of these constant reminders of my non-existent consorts. But as it is, my imagination plays about their personalities impotently and with a morbid interest, and I catch myself wondering if the shadowy shapes are democrats or republicans, milk-fed or bootleggers, rich or poor, indifferent or nagging, fundamentalists or modernists, dark or light, cheerful or gloomy. I can't follow my natural instinct just to go ahead and forget all about them so long as inquiries about their existence are so incessant.

But I repeat, I could lay these ghosts if only the persons who make questionnaires ever read the answers. They don't because they couldn't, as everybody knows. People make out questionnaires, people send out questionnaires, people answer questionnaires, but if the investigators ever stopped to read the replies, they'd never have time to send out any more of these inquisitional sheets—nor would they wish to! The questionnaire is the last infirmity of the inquiring mind. It is the dying gesture, like the feeble flapping of a fin which indicates that we still want to know and know and know, but may Heaven help us to assimilate! The questionnaire is symptomatic of an enforced pause in our day's occupation like that of the sanguine child who "could still chew, but couldn't swallow."

But if people only did read the questionnaires that are returned at their request, I would manage to give my four investigating colleges a little information that might induce them to drop Mrs. Bluebeard and all her husbands from the *alumnæ* register once and forever! Thus I could continue my maidenly career without being yearly called to account because no one "ever married me, and I don't know why they should." Under that provocative heading, "Husbands, April 1, 1922–April 1, 1923 (a) Number, (b) Name and date, (c) Occupation, (d) Date and manner of removal, (e) Re-

marks, if any. N.B. Give in chronological order," I'd write:

No. of husbands? Ans. 6.

1. Micah Pint, April 2, 1922 — Cubistic poet—May 3, 1922. Non-support by wife.
2. Mortimer C. Kane, May 3 (p.m.)—Fish, all sorts—May 21, 1922. Caught.
3. Ben Weriwether, June 28, 1922—Gentleman Hobo—Sept. 30, 1922. Recurrent disappearance gradually becoming chronic.
4. Isador Swinky, Oct. 1, 1922—Professional patriot-baiter and bomb-thrower—Jan. 17, 1923. Translated into Russia.
5. John C. Rupp, Feb. 1, 1923—His wife—March 2, 1923. Unintentional arsenic administered by wife.
6. Fred Speedlightly, March 4, 1923—Automobile Orator—March 31, 1923. Intentional arsenic administered by wife.

Remarks.

No remarks either made or called for.

I shudder to picture the reception of my flippancy in some office of those cloistered halls still inhabited by people who believe statistics informative, even statistics on wedding bells. But alas, neither in college offices nor in any other, are returned questionnaires ever opened, so that I have no hope of ridding myself of my annual harvest report on husbands, for if I had had six husbands and they had bored me, I could have divorced them, but I see no way of divorcing myself from the husbands I have never had.



## The World and Its Control

BY EDWARD S. MARTIN

THE protracted dispute in Ireland between the men of the Free State and the Irregular Republicans is a lesson to all observers. It is not accurate to call it a dispute; it is rather a mutiny, being the effort of a fanatic minority to force its will on a majority that has all there is of law and order on its side. But whatever one calls it, it is bad enough, and it has been working these many months for the physical, and considerably for the moral, destruction of Ireland.

And all about what? About a form of words; for the Free State agreement gave Ireland self-government and freedom to live. It opened the gate to her, a gate through which she could go to almost any distance her imagination invited. So it looks to us observers, and so it looked to General Smuts. Ireland has everything to hope for, and no serious hindrance to achieving it, except the fallibility of the Irish mind or the persistence of Irish habits as exhibited by the Irregular Republicans, who would destroy the country rather than agree with an agreement.

And that is the way men do far too much, not the Irish alone, but all men. They dispute about possibilities, to the prejudice of the actual chances they have in hand. There are irreconcilables in every country, reaching for the moon of abstract political perfection, and opposed to anything they can get, and resolute in denying the attainable to their fellows. That is the sort of

opposition which has foiled so far the efforts to bring the United States into the League of Nations. It is very much the same sort of fight that Mr. Bryan leads against the theory of evolution, a fight that does not concern the opportunities of men to better their characters and their position either in this life or the next, a mere fight about the origin of man and how he came to be what he is; a fight about something that no human effort can change, and about which men might disagree with as much impunity and harmlessness as they might disagree about a good many things in the creeds of the Churches. Mr. Bryan is for prohibition, for the World Court, for the League of Nations, and against the theory of our descent from monkeys. It matters not to him that no scientists of standing hold that we are descended from monkeys. What they hold is that man has evolved from a primeval ancestor which was probably a relative of the ancestor from which the various monkeys have descended. But even that would not suit Mr. Bryan, who would think it contrary to Scripture, and must have a ready-made man with no evolutionary process behind him.

All that is amusing, but at the same time it is too bad, since the more background that can be provided for man, the more prospect there is of his continued advancement. If he is a ready-made creature, no more no less, it may be argued that he will remain what he