

# The Dilemma of Marriage

EVERY generation has its leading anti-feminist, one who formulates with a new emphasis the age-old complaints against women. So it will continue until women themselves, less acquiescently entrapped, rapacious and thought-dulled, are freed from economic servitude in their relations with men, and attain enough sex nonchalance to intimidate the male heart. In the meantime, how interesting it might prove to compile a volume matching off masculine inconsistencies regarding women. Remy de Gourmont sees them as awkwardly trying to adapt their subterranean intuitions to a language invented and developed by men, while in a recent magazine Mr. Edward Thurber implies that language was developed exclusively by woman, "moulded and cherished" by her for a use. Again, Jonathan Swift, with an electric storm of satire, strips her of her powder and paint, while Max Beerbohm, with the effete, delightful dandyism of the nineties, deftly puts it on again. Science, bringing up the rear in the latest language of the behaviorists, states that both sexes, as infants, react identically to a given stimulus. Only Mr. Shaw, stern moralist that he is, would banish from the face of the earth the entire nefarious business.

Now, the latest evangelist to blow a startled bugle-call in the interests of his sex is Mr. D. H. Lawrence. His method is not one of attack. Like a sensitive miner digging through to the vein of original matter Mr. Lawrence, with his nervous, excited perceptions, sharpened by his emotional frustrations, turns over the rich soil of sex and reveals the hard, inflammable kernel of creation. When he is thus revelatory he is full of a strange and positive poetry. No one has uncovered more searchingly those obscure, poisoning enmities between men and women whose wills are crossed, nor composed and executed such a rich heavy music of the emotions—the music of sex itself, which druggingly compels men and women into the still, sharp death of each other's arms, only to let them part, thwarted or ironically freed. It is when Mr. Lawrence lays down the pen of the artist and dons the surplice of the preacher that one wishes to quarrel with him. What is this new message that threads in scarlet letters in and out of his latest novels? Woman must accept a new kind of mystical subjugation. Men and women are separate, yet woman's receptivity must be reasserted—this time in positive, not negative terms. Man may enter or escape the enchanted circle of sex, woman must remain forever engirdled within it. Like a robe of soft silk pliant to the lines of the figure, she must cede to the male assertion. And her reward—what of that? A tranced peace, a sub-life of strange untroubled beauty, far from the hard,

fleeting world, where cold intellectual concepts, like hailstones driven on a relentless wind, sting between the eyes to thought. Women must find in sex that old unity which for so long has been spun out of the desires of human beings in order to cover over a knowledge of those sharp, unyielding truths which gather about their feet—that familiar old illusion of unity that the strong, the fierce and the defeated laugh to scorn. Suffering, his vulnerability ever freshly assaulted, Mr. Lawrence wishes to attain for himself an intrepidity of separateness. Yet woman he *must* have, absolutely he *must*, so with cunning frightened industry he exorcises her into sex obedience—the modern, investigatory, subtly alive, defiantly free woman.

It is too late! The old illusion is floating rapidly away. Mr. Lawrence must adapt himself. Men are indeed separate, set rigidly in the mould of their egoism, moving always in its little orbit of light. So are women. There is no unity in sex. There is no unity in life. At the very best, there is only an identification of interests, at times an armed neutrality, and rarely a glowing comradeship.

Women are still, to a large extent, secretive, proprietary, jealous, hypocritical in the sex relation, because they have developed these qualities in their economic struggles for shelter and a mate, just as men have developed the same qualities and legitimized them into institutions and codes of honor in their competitive struggles for power in the business, political and professional worlds. But granted an equality of income, and an equal sex emancipation, what still insurmountable barrier exists between men and women in a relationship uncomplicated by children?

The pure sex instinct is always explorative, destructive, aberrant. It is stimulated only through new, and ever newer adventures. In practice it is a game in which each is seeking covertly for advantage, like animals stalking their prey, so that a culmination of the pursuit means a cessation of excitement. The game is over, and with a capture, where no ambushed reserves are suspected, comes a sense of satisfied power to one and humiliation to the other, ending in ennui and misery. Yet if sex were just that and nothing more, life would be simple, indeed.

But side by side with the explorative impulse is the protective or tender impulse. Tenderness, one of the strongest, most beautiful and cunningly perfidious of human emotions! Perhaps the explorative impulse has become suddenly fused with that of tenderness, and the expression of such an ecstasy is an experience of transcendent beauty, as swiftly cutting as pain and as unenduring in the memory. It is an illusion, if one will, but an illusion more potent to move than almost any other in life. But

the frisson itself is stimulated by strangeness; it is indissolubly attached to the explorative impulse, and tenderness, which in its pure state is sacrificial and protective, is inimical to this other impulse, which is furtive and destructive.

What is the result of all this? Men and women are drawn together in the entangling net of sex, drawn together in the glamour of an illusion. They marry. The explorative impulse, always inconstant in its very nature, is soon satisfied and veers away—perhaps in months, perhaps in years. Some couples, thwarted, dismayed, each angrily blaming the other for what is inevitable, drift rapidly into enmity and separation. Others refuse to face the truth and build a small, thought-tight little world, banked about with narcotic devices, where is daily slain with mutual consent the free, inquiring soul of the other. Sometimes jealousy fans the old flame to life, or the strangeness flares out again in unexpected places, but such a strangeness is full of torture and feverish aridity—the torture of a Strindberg—recriminations, rationalizations, sometimes suicide or murder. Far more usual it is, that when the exciting or sensuous quality of love disappears, the human quality of tenderness or affection remains. Gradually men and women become really dependent on each other, and construct a whole chain of delicately binding associations, thus achieving a tolerant attachment. And in some rare instances pity rivets one mate to the other—pity that makes slaves of the strong and tyrants of the weak.

Why, then, we ask, are men and women willing to give up the pursuit of sex, the most thrilling seal of their potency, that hardening of purpose, increasing of excitement, and quickening of fire in the pulse, for this quiet lock-step of habit? It is because almost equally strong in human beings with this adventurous impulse is their desire for security, a haunting, ever-recurring fear of desertion. What

every man and every woman would really like would be a mate who would love with a profound, intelligent, undeviating, unasking love, a love as firmly set as the roots of an oak tree, enduring through sin, abandonment and turpitude of the vilest sort, someone who would smilingly go to the stake for them, and yet who would leave them as free as eccentric lapwings zigzagging cunningly across the fields, to pursue their devious courses. Each would like that in the other, yet each is possessive, jealously watchful, proud and egoistic, and profoundly apprehensive of isolation. Therefore, most people in the state of matrimony inhibit the adventurous sex desire, and make a moral sanction of everyone else doing the same, and in its place they build up thousands of small interests—institutions, clubs, business enterprises.

And so, at last, docilely enshrined in his little heated boxes of rooms he sits—the proud animal man—helplessly pinioned between his own opposing desires. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that most monogamous marriages are compromises based upon mutual illusion, and maintained by fear. This does not mean that there may not be, and are not, enduring and beautiful companionships between men and women, companionships springing shyly from compatibility, and flowering in a thousand shared perceptions, companionships that weather every storm, and emerge mellow and tough in old age, friendships subtle, delicate, intellectually fecund and mature, that scorn the exclusive and sentimental, and ask only a certain speculative attitude toward life, combined with a reasonable honesty toward each other. Yet even with such an adjustment the breathless thrill of the age-old lust for conquest has with many poignant rites been left far behind with the illusions of youth, and at the best, it is but a genial compromise that has been achieved.

ALYSE GREGORY.

## Russia—1923

### III. Industry

**A**GRICULTURE is of dominant importance in Russia; its productivity is the real motive power in the economic life of the country. Furthermore, exports of Russian grain might at any time profoundly influence Europe's economic equilibrium.

In spite of this fact the attention of the Soviet government has until very recently been chiefly turned upon industry—largely because the workers formed a majority of the Bolshevik party's supporters. Nationalized industry, under the administration of the Supreme Council for National Economy and its delegates, has provided the experimental

field in which the Communist theories have been carried out.

That the country has emerged from these experiments impoverished and disorganized is common knowledge. But that the Great War and the civil war had already dealt it a severe blow must not be forgotten. Production throughout Russian industry declined with an uncanny rapidity from the end of 1917 until the beginning of 1921 when the "new economic policy" was adopted. In the spring of 1921, it began to rise again in marked degree.

Although on the whole Russian industry is improving, the improvement is not uniform throughout its different branches. The lighter industries