

MARRIAGE IMPROVED

"I'll tell you what the trouble is—marriage is too easy."

He had just finished reading the article on divorce outrages in Lincoln and elsewhere, in last week's Courier.

There were three of them altogether. The first, the one who had just spoken, was a short man of athletic build. The second was a tallish fellow. The third was a medium-sized, fair man, with a beautiful mustache. The short man and the medium-sized man were members of a profession that sometimes imparts an arrogance to its followers. The tallish man belonged to another profession not so well grounded scientifically as the other, but if anything more arrogant. They were all young. The first was a bachelor. So was the second. So was the third. They were seated in the den of the short man and they were passing a couple of hours as three men will, reading, smoking, talking.

Nobody paid any particular attention to the short man. He finished his cigarette, lighted a fresh one, and continued:

"So far as I am concerned I would have the law make it impossible for the divorced person ever to marry again."

This remark seemed to challenge reply.

The medium-sized man said:

"I would like to know what you know about it, anyway. Here you are, a man who has never been married, presuming to air your views about divorce. If, by any possibility, you should ever succeed in working a confidence game on some trusting young girl and get married, I imagine that you are just the kind of a fellow to want a change after awhile. You might find the sort of a divorce you advocate mighty inconvenient. When you once get started there's no telling where you might stop, and if I were you I wouldn't build any walls till I could be certain I would not want to jump over them."

The tallish man maintained an able silence.

The short man smiled amusedly. He was used to the medium-sized man's chaff. He gave no heed to it.

"I have an idea in this connection," he said after some reflection. Whereat the medium-sized man and the tallish man started. The medium-sized man dropped a book on the floor and crossed his legs. The tallish man picked up a large piece of paper, made a funnel of it and placed it to his ear, trumpet-wise.

The short man puffed twice and continued:

"It has really been a pet hobby of mine for years. Sometimes I have thought it impracticable; I have at last become convinced that it is entirely feasible. Science in these days is taking hold of everything. It has lent its assistance to almost every part of life except the one which most vitally affects the race, which is, after all, the most important."

The medium-sized man asked him if he meant eating.

The tallish man asked him if he meant sleeping.

The short man smiled serenely.

"I mean matrimony, or more properly speaking, marriage. Nearly everything we do nowadays is done with some regard for the fitness of things. We apply the scientific knowledge we have to these things and the result is that we are getting more out of life than we ever did before. But in this one direction, marriage, the condition in which there is so much at stake, there is an indifference to all scientific and ethical considerations, that amounts almost to depravity. Instead of men and women proceeding upon a rational basis, they rush in like so many fools, propelled by emotions, sinister purposes, spite, convenience and the Lord only knows what."

"How would you have them rush in—you who know so much about it?" in-

quired the medium-sized man.

"I wouldn't have them rush in at all. The scheme I have in mind would not allow any rushing. You wouldn't like it, for I have noticed that you are fond of rushing in a desultory way."

The tallish man asked him if he could improve on natural selection.

"That's just it. It wouldn't be natural selection at all, which, as it has been proved to be, is a most unnatural selection. What I would have is a scheme of scientific selection. I would begin right away and have made a complete personal record of every man, woman and child. This record would contain a full and detailed account of the family history of each person, going back several hundred years, if possible. It would give all the traits, characteristics, idiosyncracies, habits, hobbies, etc., of all the ancestors, and particularly of the living person. It would give the ages, occupations, station in life, state of health, etc., of all members of the family—"

"Something like an application for life insurance," facetiously observed the tallish man.

"It would contain all possible information reflecting on the physical and moral life, and this record would be an infallible encyclopedia of character and heredity. There would be a special bureau of government for the purpose of collecting this information and maintaining the system. Suppose a young man desires to get married. Two ways are open to him. He can cast about for some young woman whom he thinks would make him a good wife. Finding such an one he hands in her name, with his own, to one of the secretaries of the bureau. Experts in psychology and the kindred sciences look up the pedigrees of the two people and even make a confirmatory personal examination of the two persons immediately concerned, and if it is found that the characteristics on both sides properly fit together, if there is no hereditary or other bar, then an official license to marry is made out. If the experts find that a marriage between these two persons would be inadvisable, from a scientific standpoint, then the license would be withheld, and the young man would have to try again. Of course, in the case of any considerable hereditary disqualification a marriage would not be possible under any circumstances. But supposing the young man had no choice himself and left the matter entirely to the bureau, which, I think, would be the better way, then he would simply hand in his own name, and the experts would immediately set about to find him a wife who would meet all of the psychological requirements. There couldn't possibly be any mistakes because everything would be done in a scientific manner."

"But how about the young woman in the case you cite," interposed the tallish man. "Would she have any say in the matter? If the young man wanted her and the records happened to be all right on both sides, would she have to consent to a marriage?"

"Certainly," responded the short man. "Else the purpose of the scheme would be defeated. If she declined and had an opportunity to make a choice herself she would probably throw herself away on some fellow with only half a lung, or a candidate with crazy grandparents. Besides, if all the characteristics fitted together, she couldn't logically make any objections."

"I don't think that would prevent her from making objections," said the tallish man.

"Then it would be as fair for one as the other," continued the short man. "She could hand in her name any time and ask for a proper husband. And the man selected by the bureau would have to consent as in the other case. Now just stop to consider the strong points of an arrangement like this. There would be no instances of incompatibility of temper, no married couple like Amelia Rives Chandler and her husband, unable to accommodate themselves to each other; no mis-alliances; no December and May foolishness; no

the food for all such.



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transmission of hereditary taints or blemishes. The race would be clarified of all hereditary diseases; would become strong and healthy, intellectually, morally and physically. Crime would be blotted out. After the few debarred delinquents died there would be no further recurrence of shortcomings in men and women. We would become as a race perfect and life would be worth living. Paradise would be regained."

The medium-sized man gazed with admiration on the short man. "It's a great scheme" he said. "All it needs is to be developed. I would advocate the setting apart of a small section of the country for an experiment station. Government ought to be induced to take the matter up."

The tallish man had been thinking.

"Yes," he said, finally, "it would be a good thing. I think, however, you have overlooked one of the strongest points in the scheme. One of the greatest enemies of the race is the emotions. It is the unrestricted exercise of the emotions that wrinkles our faces, whitens our hair and shortens our lives. In your place the government psychological experts would take the place of the chief emotion, and all the rest would, I believe, gradually disappear in the admirable system you have sketched. Without these emotions and the consequent impairment of tissue and nerves, life would be considerably lengthened."

The plan of scientific selection having been adopted without a dissenting vote and the supply of tobacco being exhausted, the meeting adjourned.

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