

# UNMARRIED HUSBANDS

## BY ONE OF THEM

# A Heart to Heart Confession



AM an Unmarried Husband. For weeks I have been reflecting upon my double-faced position in society. I am married—and yet single. I am single—and yet married. It is only recently that I solved the problem, and that's the answer. I belong to a large and growing army which can only be described as the Legion of Unmarried Husbands.

Since I arrived at this conclusion I have taken pains to analyze the married lives of the men I know best. When we were all single together, we were a happy crowd. But now that we are married, some of us are happy—and the others are not. Why are these latter unhappy? Because, in nearly every instance, they are under the same handieap as myself. They, too, are Unmarried Husbands.

To take my own case first, before I was married I was a regular patron of baseball, except on those afternoons when a tail-ender was in town. Then I usually played golf. In the evening I liked to walk around the city like another King James, but minus the crown and the Scotch. I looked forward to the football season like a bride-elect looks forward to June.

And then I married Ray.

Now Ray is altogether different. Perhaps that's why I said "I will," for they claim that opposites attract each other. If they do, it seems to me that there has been a sort of a raw deal somewhere. At least it proved so in my case.

For myself, I am about as literary as a brindle bull, but Ray is the girl who put "it" in "literature." We hadn't been married long when I saw that we weren't pulling well together. I tried to get Ray to go to the ball games with me, but she was always more interested in books and such things. So I tried to stay home and read, too.

ON Ray's advice I started on Boswell's Johnson. King Bruce's spider quit cold, compared to me. I would read awhile and then my mind would wander off to the game. I could see Evans dusting off the home plate with his little whisk broom. I could see Tiny Tesreau or The Rube rolling over towards the box. Then I'd grit my teeth and read again. But the book could n't hold me a minute. Instead I would be wondering what happened to the first man up, and who was pitching and who was playing short. Then I'd hit the book again. Then I'd swing back to the game. Oh, I tell you, it was certainly some literature.

That's only one angle of it. Ray's friends are nearly all literary. One man even writes book reviews for a grocery trade paper—a regular Sam Crane of literature. But the rest are mostly substitutes and bench-warmers, waiting for a chance to go to the literary bat and make their names famous with a best-selling home run.

To put it mildly, I'm out of it. And every day I'm getting out a little further. For nearly six months I tried to read Boswell's Johnson. At last I simply had to give it up as hopeless. I go to see Griffith's Johnson now, instead. Ray tried the ball game once and, honestly, I'm glad she does n't go any more. She suffered so.

I try to look at the thing from the bright side, and when I start worrying over it, I do my best to breeze it off. But things are clouding over at our house, and they're clouding good and heavy, like it does before a storm. We've hardly got a thing in the world to talk about. I don't care for Ray's friends, and I know she thinks mine are a lot of low-brows and ha-ha boys. As matters are going, pretty soon we shall be too proud to speak to each other at all.

One day I overheard Ray discussing me with one of her friends. "Poor fellow," she said. "He was getting to be perfectly wretched, although, of course,

he tried to hide it from me. But he worried and fretted, until one day I worned it out of him that he was lonely! Isn't that a horrible confession for a wife to make? That her husband was lonely. So as soon as I found he was pining for his baseball and golf and things, I made up my mind that poor old Jimmy should be happy even if he was married—"

But that's the trouble. I'm not happy. I feel I've made a fizzle, and a bad fizzle, out of what should have been the greatest success of my life. When I'm with my wife and her friends, I'm bored and miserable; and when I'm away from her I feel guilty and miserable. That's how I know I'm an Unmarried Husband, two words that don't fit each other, and I'm beginning to see that before long I shall have to cut one of them out. I shall either have to get married or quit being a husband.

So much for my case. Now let me tell you about Seymour who was best man at my wedding.

LIKE myself, he lives in New York, where he has an apartment uptown and an office near the Battery. If he were married, in fact as well as in theory, he would look forward every day to the hour of 6 P. M. As a matter of fact I know he would rather stay at the office at night than go home. And yet he's been blessed with a jolly little wife and the prettiest baby I ever saw.

Seymour is one of those abstracted geniuses; while his wife is built more on the cricket style. I've seen her twittering away, telling of something amusing that happened to her while she was shopping, when all at once she would see that Seymour's attention was a thousand miles away, and the distance increasing every minute. Seymour, you will understand, was thinking of some detail of his business—a new circular letter, or a new selling argument, or something of that sort. As soon as he could, he would excuse himself and write down the ideas that had just flooded in on him. If his wife had guests she could finish her story to them. If there was no one else there she could tell it to Baby.

The business grew on Seymour. He got the million dollar ambition, than which there is nothing more deadly. Also he found that the best place in the world for undistracted reflection is the New York downtown office district at night.

One evening when my wife was away, I went to the Seymours for dinner. "It will be just like Billy," said his wife, "to telephone that he can't come up. Honestly he has n't been home to dinner for a consecutive week this month." Sure enough, Seymour ran true to form that night. His wife had hardly finished speaking when the telephone rang. "Yes," she said, after a long silence, "I hear you." And in the same pleasant voice she continued, "Listen, Billy; I'm going to leave you. It's getting too lonesome up here. I shall take little Joey and go back home." I thought she was jolly, but when I met Seymour a week later and asked after his wife he told me, very gruffly, that she was on a visit home.

"BILLY," I said, you've made a nice mess of it; haven't you? But cheer up; I'm no better off." That did cheer him up a little, and after I had told him about my own case, I could see that he thought he was in a more dignified class than I was.

"Of course," he said, "with me it has been a matter of business necessity—"

"Get back to your base," I told him. "The Big Chief has his eye on you. You know as well as I do that you could hire a couple of clerks to do a lot of that detail work which clutters up your time. The trouble with you is simply this: You like the business game better than you like to be home with your family."

And that's the complete analysis of Billy's case. Some men have a passion for gambling and some for

drinking. Billy has a passion for business. There are thousands like him. And periodically their wives arise and say, "Not so; your family is the most important thing in your life." That's when war's declared.

Kingsley's case is different, partly because his wife is different. She has a temperament—which is simply a longer way of spelling it. Unless I am mistaken she can smoulder a long time without showing it. And then the flame. Again, unless I'm mistaken, she is smouldering already and has been for some time.

WHEN he was single Kingsley had been my chum on an annual shooting trip into Maine, but now that he's married he can't afford to go. He lives on Long Island, about an hour from New York, and last month, when my wife was visiting back home in Indiana, I spent Saturday afternoon and Sunday with Kingsley.

He met me at the station and we walked to his house together. Inside, his wife and an old dog came forward to welcome us. He introduced his wife in the conventional manner, as one might make an introduction at a formal reception, but when it came to the dog, Kingsley's face lighted up like an advertisement for tungsten lamps.

We were in the library about half-past four when Mrs. Kingsley brought in some cake and tea. Kingsley was showing me a new sight on his rifle, and he did n't look up at his wife's entrance. His dog sat by his side, his nose on his master's knee, watching the gun with solemn attention, and Kingsley was cuddling the stock of the rifle against his cheek.

It was then that I saw the smouldering fire in his wife's eyes. When she had gone out, the master of the house drank his tea with an absent-minded air. "Is Walters married yet?" he suddenly asked me. I shook my head, and Kingsley's wistful look, as he turned his attention to the cake, proclaimed him a marcher in the Army of Unmarried Husbands.

What's the matter with Kingsley? As far as I can figure it out, he ought to have married earlier. He must have been thirty-six before he ceased to be a bachelor, and now he's finding it was too late.

HIS habits had been formed, and those habits had made no provision for a Mrs. Kingsley. His rules of conduct had been memorized, and there was n't a single rule about a wife.

Moreover, probably because of the present standard and expense of living, I notice that more and more men are putting off their wedding days until the middle thirties, just as naturally as they used to wait until they were in their twenties. It makes a difference. At twenty-odd, John Jones glows with the wish to make others happy; but at thirty-odd he does n't glow with anything except that the others shall turn around and make him happy. The result is obvious at half a glance. There's a heavy and growing enlistment of Unmarried Husbands.

Teddy Sellew is another type altogether. To put it in a box score, he's married and yet he's never happy unless he is attracting some woman's admiration.

Not for a moment do I mean to say there's any harm in him, but even as flowers must have the air in order to live, so it seems necessary that Sellew must bask in feminine favor.

Now in a bachelor this may be allowable, but in a married man it is just about as permissible as a torchlight procession through a powder magazine.

To give a concrete example, Sellew was at our house one night when some other guests arrived, including a girl from Indianapolis who was on her first visit to New York. She was a pretty girl of about twenty. Sellew keeps his age concealed beneath his hat, but he is probably a little over forty.

When he saw that he (Continued on Page 9)