

Why Wealth Does Not Bring Happiness

An Interesting Study of a Universal Human Illusion---Some Remarkable Instances Where Wealth Brought Misery and Divorce--and Destroyed Happiness and Contentment

THE fact that great wealth is no insurer of domestic happiness is being constantly demonstrated in the divorce courts.

More marriages among the wealthy end in the divorce court, proportionately, than among the middle classes or the poor. In fashionable society the proportion of divorces is as high, if not higher, than on the stage.

The beautiful Elsie Whelen, of Philadelphia, married Robert Goetz, "the richest bachelor in the world." Certainly every luxury must have been hers. They did not satisfy. It is whispered that her real reason for obtaining a divorce was that she grew tired of being "simply rich." She promptly married Henry Clews, Jr., an amateur painter and writer, with an interest in everything artistic.

Mrs. William Miller Graham, of California, had a remarkable career. She was once a waitress and she married her husband when he was a penniless prospector. She struggled through life with him until he acquired a fortune of \$20,000,000 in California oil wells. Mrs. Miller Graham won a brilliant success in English high society and was warmly admired by the late King Edward.

Mrs. Graham enjoyed the luxuries that wealth brought for she built the most beautiful villa at Santa Barbara, called "Belosguardo," with a wonderful theatre attached. But recently she began a divorce suit against her husband. The suit was dropped for the sake of her child, but her lawyer explained that there was no reconciliation.

Equally remarkable was the case of Dr. Joseph A. Blake, one of the most successful of American surgeons, and his wife. Dr. Blake married Miss Catherine Ketchum, a brilliant and attractive woman, who received the honorary degree of M. A. from Yale University in 1909.

Dr. Blake made an income of at least \$100,000 a year. He and his wife occupied two fine houses at 601 and 603 Madison avenue, New York, but proceedings recently introduced showed that for several years Dr. Blake kept his house at 601 locked against his wife.

The public first learned that the two had not been living happily together when Mrs. Blake brought suit for \$1,000,000 against Mrs. Clarence H. Mackay for alienating her husband's affections. This suit was dropped, but Dr. Blake and Mrs. Mackay have since been married in Paris.

A few months ago, Mrs. Kathryn Browne Decker secured a divorce from Henry E. Decker, of the Sheffield-Parnis-Slawson-Decker Co., the big milk organization.

The Deckers were married five years ago. Mrs. Decker was Kathryn Browne, the actress. Although she had achieved more or less success on the stage, it was not until she married Decker that she began to lead a life of luxury and ease.

The Deckers entertained lavishly. Mr. Decker testified that he spent \$25,000 entertaining his wife's friends during the first three years of their married life. Despite it all, however, the Deckers domestic happiness was short lived. A bare three years after the marriage finds Mrs. Decker back on the stage and their charming home life a thing of the past. A few months after her return to professional life she sued for separation and a month or two ago the decree was granted.

Cases of this character are being constantly revealed. Hardly a month passes in which another one is not added to the long list. Why is it?

One of America's most distinguished psychologists and philosophers, Professor George Trumbull Ladd, here explains the basic reasons why wealth does not bring happiness.

The Illusion That Wealth Brings Happiness Explained

By Prof. George Trumbull Ladd,

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AMONG the judgments upon human affairs which have been passed by those who "ought to know best" there are few more nearly unanimous than this: Riches, whether in the acquiring or in the possession, do not bring happiness.

On the contrary, they probably oftener than not, serve to diminish or to destroy the happiness of those who had been happy without them. And yet, if we are to judge the most intimate beliefs of men from the universality and intensity of the conduct which gives them expression—and, surely, "actions speak louder than words"—there is no opinion more nearly unanimous than this: Riches, if not in

the acquiring, at least in the possession, do bring happiness.

Indeed, from the conduct of the multitude in our own land and day one would almost seem forced to conclude that, in the judgment of all but the very few, to get money and so to control the things which money will buy is the only way to get happiness. Here, then, is "The Great Illusion."

Now, the curious thing about all this is that, when in a reflective and confessional mood, the rich men themselves will tell you that riches have not brought them to the happiness they expected from them; often, that they are not at all so happy as they were when they were poor. And those who are not yet ready to make confession, or are still too proud to make it, show plainly by their conduct that in reality the cause is little, if at all, different with them. Yet they, too, and the multitudes of the people, go steadily

or stultily and feverishly on, just as though they were firmly convinced that the experience of the race did not tell the truth; or that they could somehow make themselves exceptions to the universal law. There must be something in human nature, and in its environment, to account for such self-contradictory and irrational behavior as this attitude of the multitude of men toward great wealth seems to indicate.

The reason is this: Incomparably above all the other animals stands man in the variety and unlimited character of his needs and of his ambitions. He has an ever-needy, ever-restless, ever-aspiring soul. Give the most intelligent and ambitious dog a good full meal, and he does not begin to think where the next meal is to come from, or whether he may not some day take a more luxurious one off of a silver platter or a gold plate. For the time he is satisfied; and the satisfactions are going always to be confined

within the circle of the same recurring wants.

But with man the case is not so. He is built so that he can never be satisfied—fully and forever—with what he has and what he is. And here is the source of his rise toward more and more of divine excellence, or the cause of his falling into the devil's own trap. If he chooses for his pursuit, as the really good thing, riches and all that riches can buy, he will never get out of that trap, until he learns the lesson of his illusion: he will be more hopelessly caught, the more he fattens on the bait. And even if he chooses the real goods of life, the things that make more than wealth can, for human happiness, he must cultivate other virtues than right desire and noble ambition, in order to secure a fair measure of happiness.

But let us turn for one moment to the historical study of the growth of avarice and the development of the great illusion in its more modern and exaggerated form. Those who are most industrious, most foreswing, most prudent, most self-restrained, are sure in the long run to acquire in store the greatest accumulations of material good. Other benefits than those of having a supply for their own wants and the wants of those de-



Photo by CAMPBELL STUDIOS

"The beautiful Elsie Whelen, of Philadelphia, who married 'the richest bachelor in the world' could not live happily with him, because she grew tired of being 'simply rich.'"



"The fascinating Mrs. William Miller Graham, of California, originally a waitress, starved for her husband while he was a penniless prospector, but when he made \$20,000,000 she asked for a divorce."

endent on them follow as a matter of course.

They become objects of envy, of flattery, of obsequiousness on the part of others. They become possessed of the power to command the services of their fellows, to carry out their schemes, to defeat their enemies, and to bind to themselves at least a semblance of devoted friendship; or they may discover the more refined pleasures of bestowing largesse, of being the objects of praise and, at least, the semblance of gratitude, by sharing some of their stored goods with others. All these things are pleasant; they all seem chiefly dependent upon the possession and use of wealth—and the more the better.

All modern scientific discoveries, in the growing knowledge of how to increase in magnitude and multiply in variety the advantages which wealth can secure, have operated to enlarge the monotony of the great illusion; so that it sometimes seems as though the sages were all dead, the teachers of morals and religion all asleep; or had themselves all fallen into the trap of the great illusion. But the voice of those who have "tried it on," and their sad experience, if not their sad confession, and the secret judgment of the few remaining wise with the wisdom of Solon and of Jesus, still persists in assuring us that riches do not, and cannot, secure happiness.

But let us now give somewhat more particular attention to our own present condition as viewed in the light of psychology and of history. Why is America so completely, it would appear, under the influence of the great illusion? In the first place, all our economical and material development has favored the overestimate of the value of riches to a most monstrous degree. Sturdy, vigorous, ambitious races have been put in control of incalculable material resources for their rapid development. The Government has on the whole favored rather than successfully opposed these resources being unjustly appropriated, or stolen quite outright, by crafty and unscrupulous individuals or corporations.

Our development of our inheritance of common law from England has as yet provided no safe-guard against these

illicit ways of acquiring wealth. The men who have made these accumulations, although in general by no means men of great mental gifts, have been praised as though they were. And, as has always happened, they have been offered a cup full of every form of deference, amounting to adulation; until, of late, the tide has been turning toward equally unreasonable distrust and hatred of all the wealthy, such as has been the fate of the very rich in all the ages. Let us call all this a *psychological atmosphere*; and since all classes, and especially all our young people, who have had neither the wisdom that comes from experience nor that which comes from expert observation, are constantly breathing this atmosphere, let us find in it the chief cause for the prevalence in America at the present time of "The Great Illusion."

But the deceptive influence of the general persuasion that happiness may be got by attaining wealth, takes many subordinate forms. Sometimes it is chiefly the anticipation of the time when, being rich, one shall be able to gratify all one's appetites. One who is tired of black bread and meat once a week, will surely be happy if he can have meat every day and plum-pudding on Sunday. Perhaps the man thinks he will enjoy champagne more than beer; or, maybe, the actress or the *dansette* more than the wife who married him when he was a common laborer, and she herself a washer-woman or a bar-maid. The wife thinks if she could only wear such dresses as are worn by the wife of her husband's employer, or could get accepted by the social circle in which the lady moves, she should be much the happier. Of all such thoughts, disappointment is pretty sure to be the ultimate result. And it would be much worse for man or woman if it were not so.

Or, in most cases, we will believe that the ambitious rise to a higher level than this. The man wants to have power, or to be successful. But the happiness that comes to oneself, and through oneself to others, in all these ways, is neither dependent on wealth nor secured in securing wealth. One may have it without riches, and one is not sure of it with any amount of riches. And the same thing is true of every one of the indispensable conditions of happiness.

What are those conditions of happiness which it is quite beyond the power of wealth to afford but that may be had in sufficient and, indeed, in large measure without wealth? They are chiefly these three: Appreciation, contentment, resignation. But the art of being happy is not our theme. We are satisfied to do something toward explaining "The Great Illusion."