The Bee's Home Magazine Page

SILK HAT HARRY'S DIVORCE SUIT ⁘ The Judge Can See a Hole Through a Ladder ⁘ Drawn for The Bee by Tad

Married Life the Third Year

Helen, Unable to Bear Warren's Silence, Sends Him a Night Letter.

By MABEL HERBERT URNER.

The envelope held only the check and a blank sheet of paper! The paper was folded about the check so it would not show through. But there was not one word of writing.

And last week it had been the same—just the weekly check and the blank paper. Helen had tried to think then that it was a mistake or that he had been hurried—but now she knew it was deliberate. And to Helen that blank sheet of paper was more terrifying than the most wrathful letter.

So this was to be her punishment! This was Warren's answer to the letter in which she had refused to send Mrs. Morrison away, insisting that she could see no reason why she should not rent the spare room while he was gone. That had been three weeks ago—and not one word had he written her since! Just the two checks with the blank sheets of paper.

It was the first time she had deliberately refused to obey him—and he was punishing her with silence. And to a sensitive, imaginative mind—nothing can be more cruel than silence. There was nothing he could have written over which she would have anguished more. For whatever he might write—at least she could meditate over it.

And was this silence to continue? Was this the way he was to force her to submission? Was she to receive next week's check with a blank sheet of paper—and the week after that? Was he going to keep this up until she wrote that she would do as he wished? Or what was more appalling still—was he never going to write her again—was he never coming back?

Before night Helen had worked herself into a state of feverish anxiety. It was her nature that when she brooded long enough over anything, she lost all sense of proportion. The thing about which she was worrying became distorted and exaggerated and assumed an importance out of all reason. So now she brooded over this blank sheet of paper until the fear of it obsessed her.

She studied every pen stroke on the envelope and the check, trying to get some idea of his mood from his writing. But he always wrote in a bold free hand and the writing on this envelope was the same as on any other.

Oh, if he was only not so far away—if she only dared try to reach him by 'phone. She took down the telephone book to look up the rate to San Francisco. It was not listed, but it would be at least $10, for Kansas City was $7.25. She would call up Central—she wanted to know exactly. Perhaps there would be some special night rate.

Central connected her with "information" and "information" with "long distance" and "long distance" with the chief operator. And he informed her curtly that, "you can't telephone to San Francisco or any part in California."

She hung up the receiver with a sense of shock. So it was impossible to reach him by 'phone. Now he seemed farther away than ever. Yet even if she could—she would not have dared to telephone. Only once had she called him up on "long distance"—the time she was visiting her mother in Missouri, and he had not written for days. But he had been furious and had roared at her never to do such a foolish, extravagant thing again.

But even though she would not have telephoned the fact that she could not—that there were no wires, that whatever her need she could not reach him that way—gave her a desperate sense of his remoteness.

That blank sheet of paper seemed to menace her with a future desolate and destitute. She was consumed by the fear that unless she did something at once to make things "right" he would never return. And this fear weakened her into all her old abjectness. All her plans for independence and for trying to face life alone, if it came to that, fell from her.

She was lashed on by the feverish desire to "do something"—She could no longer await developments. She felt that her whole future and Winifred's was in the balance, and that in some way she must act—and act quickly.

This feverish urgency to action at such moments is something almost every woman has felt. If only she can say I'll do the right thing—she thinks she can bring back to her the man she loves. But it is a most pitiful delusion—for nine times out of ten if she will only do nothing, if she will only wait—the man will come back himself and come with much more respect and admiration than if he was brought back by her contriving.

And so now if Helen could only have waited, if she could only have accepted the blank sheets of paper in silence. If knowing that she was not in fault, she could have waited in dignified inaction—most probably the next week, or at least the week after would have brought her a letter. And it would have gained for her, too, something of respect and of admiration from Warren.

But this was not Helen's nature. She had reached the point where she could no longer wait. She must do some IMMEDIATE thing. And to telegraph was the only thing that would satisfy her demand for immediate action.

A night letter! It was 7 o'clock now, and it would be delivered before morning.

But the hasty search through her desk disclosed no telegraph blanks. Would they have any downstairs? She 'phoned down and the elevator boy brought them up.

"You can send fifty words now at night for the price of ten, can't you?"

"Yes, mam, I think that's it. Want me to ring for a messenger?"

"No, not just yet. I'll call down when I want one."

The yellow telegraph blanks always struck a certain note of terror in Helen's mind. And now having worked herself up to a state of feverish tenseness, they seemed more than ever ominous. She first wrote her message on notepaper, and then copied it carefully on the blank.

"I can't bear your silence. Write. Anything better than blank sheet of paper. Sorry about the roomer, will let her go at once. Will do anything you think best, if only you will write and come back to me soon. Am almost ill with anxiety. Wire me. Letter follows. Helen."

This was just forty-nine words; she had counted them carefully. She knew that all punctuation was left out of telegrams, so she read it over to see if it would be clear without them. Then she called for a messenger and sent it off.

She had satisfied her longing for action. She had yielded to the feverish impulse to reach him quickly. But now hardly had the message gone when she began torturing herself as to the wisdom of having sent it. At least could she not have worded it better?

The paper from which she had copied it still lay on her desk. She read it over again and again. Each time she saw something she would like to change or leave out or put in. Oh, why had she sent it off so quickly? It could not be delivered anyway before morning.

She could have kept it until midnight just as well.

But now she must write the letter. For several moments she sat at the desk nervously tearing tiny shreds from the corner of the green blotter. Then finally she wrote:

"Dear Warren. I have just sent you a night letter. I could not bear it any longer. Your silence—the blank sheet of paper you sent with the check seems to have terrified me. Am sorry I insisted on renting the spare room against your wishes. I will let Mrs. Morrison go at once. Will tell her tomorrow. Perhaps I have been wrong, but I only wanted to make some extra money so I would not be so dependent upon you for everything. I didn't mean to be defiant—you know me well enough to believe that.

"Oh, Warren, can't you come home soon? Will it be very much longer? Can't you see it isn't good for either of us for you to be away so long? You said in your last letter that you weren't anxious to come; that from the tone of our letters lately you didn't think it would be a pleasant homecoming. Warren, you didn't mean that. I know you didn't—you couldn't. Write me, dear, not a stern, harsh letter—but the kind of letter you know I so yearn for. I am not well, am all unstrung—you are making it too hard. Oh, I am crying so I can hardly write.

"HELEN."

It was a pitiful weakening and an abject surrender. And Helen knew that it was both. And yet a woman's love and emotion are in the end usually stronger than her judgment or her pride, or even her self-respect.

The Big Loser.

"How is your son?"

"Don't mention him! I've cast him off."

"Good gracious! What has he done?"

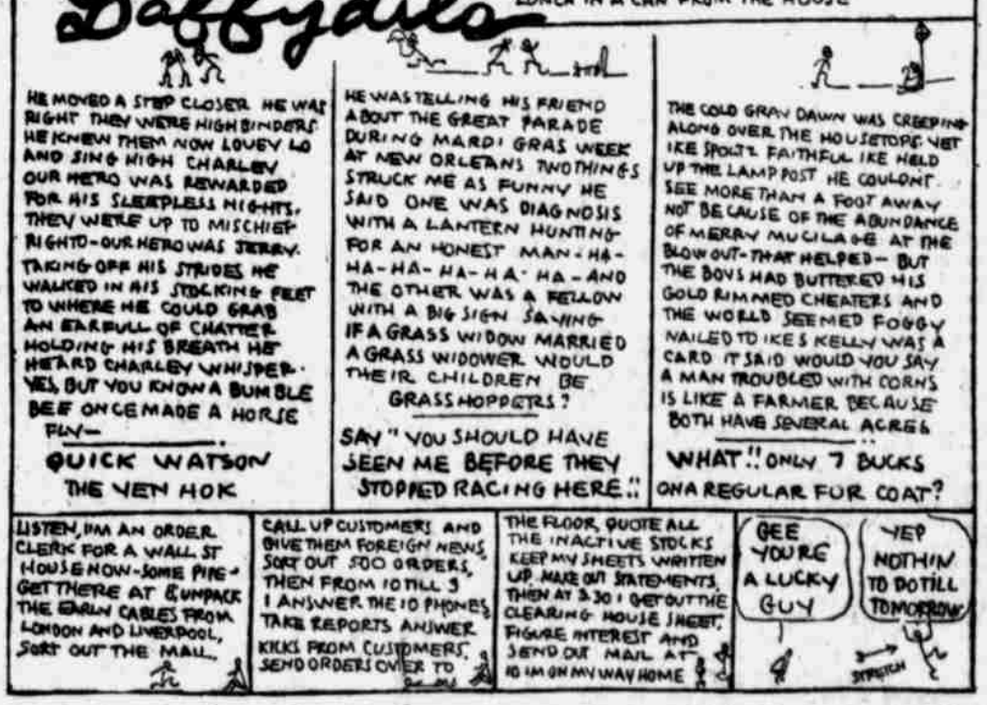
"Done! There's no end to his extravagance."

"Eh, What form does it take? Yacht, automobile, aeroplane?"

"No, chicken farm."—Cleveland Plaindealer.

Daffydils

SAY I KNEW YOUR BOSS WHEN HE PACKED HIS LUNCH IN A CAN FROM THE HOUSE



The College of Courtship

By DOROTHY DIX.

"I see," said the spinster, "that a Boston clergyman advocates some philanthropist starting a properly equipped and endowed college where people can be taught the art of courtship."

"He must be awfully old and unattractive," commented the very pretty girl.

"Why?" inquired the spinster.

"Oh, nothing," replied the very pretty girl, "I only meant that I hadn't noticed any need—I mean, I hadn't observed any lack—no, I don't mean that either. What I was going to say was that if there was anything the matter with the love making now I—er—er—"

"Take your time," urged the spinster, laughing, "make a fresh start at the subject."

"Well, anyway," said the very pretty girl, "it would be horrid being made love to by rule, and having a courtship worked out like a geometric problem, or an algebraic equation, of whatever they call those dreadful things. Fancy a man who had graduated at cupid's college—I suppose that's what they would call the place—making love to you.

"Just as you were beginning to get thrilled a cold chill would strike down your spine as you remembered that he had rehearsed that very scene with some young and charming professoress. And she'd put him wise to the psychological moment to take your hand and just how hard to squeeze it. Ugh."

"I wonder," mused the spinster, "if in the college of courtship they would teach the youth of the land to make love after the old classical romantic school, or the modern quick lunch method? It would be a case of Romeo and the guitar versus Charlie and the golf sticks. Would the professors teach their young charges 'all for love and the world well lost,' or that the marriage of convenience is really the preferred matrimonial risk after all, and that while beauty fades, and sentiment gets the gilding knocked off, a comfortable bank account grows dearer and dearer as the years go by?"

The very pretty girl shook her head. "Fancy how it would work out!" she exclaimed. "Would the teacher say, 'The class in first love will now come up and recite,' or would she say, 'The class in the second stage of the engagement will repeat that kiss, and do it a little slower, and throw a little more warmth into it?'

"Will Mr. Jones be given demerits because he neglected to fall on his knees when he popped the question? Or will Miss Smith be reprimanded because she wasn't coy enough in leading Mr. Brown up to the proposing point?

"I see a great field for usefulness for such a school. And one thing I hope they'll pay special attention to and that is to teach men how to pop the question.

"Most of the men offer themselves to you now with an air that indicates that they know you'll die of joy, and that you'll bless heaven for having bestowed such unparalleled luck upon you. They seem to say by their manner

"'I know there isn't a woman living I couldn't have for the asking, but you are a good little thing, and as near worthy as any one I know, so I'll bestow myself upon you and I hope you are properly grateful for it.'

"Just compare that with the way Romeo did it. I never hear him say, 'Oh, that I were glove upon that hand that I might kiss that cheek,' that I don't think that if I were Juliet I would pitch myself over the balcony to hear him say it over again."

"But you wouldn't," jeered the spinster; "you could not resist saying to him, 'Oh, come off!' Romance doesn't thrive under present conditions. Suppose some modern Leander should swim the Hudson because the ferries had stopped running and he was bound to see his best girl. Would we hold him up as an example and exploit him as a hero? Not much. The people would probably arrest him as he arose dripping from the water, and the newspapers would head their account of the romantic deed 'Another Chump.'"

"Well," said the very pretty girl, "I don't think much of that preacher's idea of a college of courtship. I should be a little suspicious of the man who knew how to make love too glibly. It would look to me as if he had too much practice. Personally I prefer the article in which the man halts, and stutters, and stammers, and threatens to choke on his Adam's apple. And as for its effect on a woman, when she loves a man and he tells her that she's it to him she is going to think that his eloquence has got Patrick Henry discounted, no matter how he has mumbled out his sentiments."

"And no college of courtship can throw any light on how to pick out the right kind of a husband or wife," said the spinster; "nobody knows who is going to suit whom until after they have tried being married—and then the knowledge comes about a couple of years too late to be of any advantage."

"Well," said the married woman, "if they do start a college of love making I hope to goodness they will open a postgraduate course for husbands. I know a lot of them who need to rub up on the art of saying nice things to their wives."

The Untruthful Critic.

August Thomas, guest of honor at a Lotos club dinner in New York, was talking about certain "advanced" dramatists.

"The trouble with these men," said Mr. Thomas, "is that they don't tell the truth. They look at life with cynical morbid eyes. Their view of life, in fact, is about as true as the old bachelor's view of marriage.

"'They say,' growled the old bachelor, 'that marriage is a lottery, but that's a lie; for in a lottery you do have a chance.'"—Detroit Free Press.

Strange Marriage Customs ∴ ∴ By Garrett P. Serviss

I could not finish this subject in The Bee the other day for lack of room. Volumes could be filled with it. Marriage is the completion of all romances, among savages as well as among civilized people, and in nothing is the character of a race so clearly revealed as in its marriage customs.

The biologic, or life law governing marriage is virtually the same everywhere; it is only the customs that differ. The romance of the sexes never fails, whether under the Arctic snows or the equatorial sun. This is also the subject of a highly interesting article on "Who Should Marry?" in Good Housekeeping magazine for March.

Two thousand years ago a Chinese poet wrote, describing the feelings of a wife neglected by her husband:

"The red hibiscus and the reed,
The fragrant flowers of marsh and mead,
All these I gather as I stray,
As though for one now far away
I strive to pierce with straining eyes
The distance that between us lies.
Alas, that hearts which beat as one
Should thus be parted and undone."

And yet by custom Chinese wives are compelled to make vows of submission to their husbands that would raise serious objections among the fairer half of creation in our clime, and in many cases they are not treated much better than slaves.

Curiously enough, it is among savages inhabiting the remote Hervey Islands, in the Pacific ocean, that travelers have found one of the finest exhibitions of even-handed justice between the bride and the bridegroom.

On the marriage day the members of the tribe to which the bride belongs lie down in a long row on the ground and the bridegroom walks proudly upon their backs, while his fellow tribesmen follow on each side of the way cheering and singing songs in his honor. But after the ceremony has been performed, the bride and her people have their innings.

Then the tribesmen of the bridegroom have to lie down, making a pathway from the bride's home to that of her husband, and she walks on their backs.

And if the road is long and there are not enough of the bridegroom's people to complete the pathway, those who have already been passed over by the bride must jump up, run ahead and lie down to be walked upon a second time.

The picture illustrating this strange custom is borrowed from the Rev. Mr. Hutchinson's book on "Marriage Customs."

The custom of carrying off wives by force seems to have died out almost everywhere, but in many places a mock ceremony of a similar nature is practised.

Thus among the Abyssinians the bridegroom seizes his bride in his arms and runs with her through the village street, or the country road, followed by a rout of the bride's friends trying to hold over her the "nuptial canopy," which seems to be a symbol of protection for her in case her life should be unhappy.

But in parts of Africa, as I showed the other day, brides are still captured by being surprised in the woods, or at their work—but probably, in most cases, the surprise is only pretended and no real force is necessary.

The Burmese are very simple in their marriage rites. According to E. D. Cuming, a lacquer tray containing cooked rice is placed on the floor in the bride's house, the bridegroom squats down beside it and eats a mouthful of the rice.

Then the bride sits down beside him and also takes a mouthful. Thereupon they turn and smile at each other, and the head man of the family says: "It is done. They are man and wife."

Several ancient and barbaric wedding customs are described in Letourneau's book on "The Evolution of Marriage," which were characteristic of the feudal system in Europe, but they have practically disappeared as a consequence of the successful uprising of the common people against their oppressors. More and more the poetry and the sacredness of marriage are being everywhere recognized.

The last curious marriage custom that we have room to mention is peculiar to Russia.

After a long ceremony, marked by the frequent exchange of rings between the bride and groom, the priest spreads a silken carpet on the floor.

This is a critical moment, and all the spectators crowd breathlessly forward to watch what follows, for it is traditionally believed that whichever of the couple first gets a foot upon the carpet will be the master of the new household.

At a ceremony of this kind, which the traveler, Dr. Granville, witnessed, it was the bride who first trod the carpet, to the great joy of her friends, and probably to the great future advantage of her less agile mate.

The top picture is of a street scene in an Abyssinian town during a marriage ceremony which relates back to the days when the man forcibly carried off the woman he had picked for his bride.

Today this custom of carrying off brides by force only lives in a mock ceremony of this nature, as shown in the top picture. Here the bridegroom is shown carrying off his bride in his arms, while her friends are endeavoring to keep her covered with the "nuptial canopy."

The lower picture shows a newly married couple in Burma. In that country the marriage ceremony is very simple and in many cases the bride and bridegroom simply eat rice together. The head man of the bride's family then declares them man and wife.

These pictures are reproduced from N. H. Hutchinson's "Marriage Customs of All Lands," by permission of D. Appleton & Co., the publishers.