

M a r r y i n g f o r M o n e y

Of all people in the world it has been left to an American to deliver one of the most trenchant judgments ever passed upon the great god Mammon and his works. "Money often costs too much," said Emerson; he realised that pounds, shillings and pence are not the only currency in human use, and that when we go to buy a gramophone record or a packet of candles we part with something more vital than a mere metal disc in exchange for our purchases. Men, for the most part, see the force of this argument more clearly than women, because they spend their lives in the atmosphere of the market and have their moral noses rubbed all day long in the fact that money is only a token of work satisfactorily done, and that no one gives or gets it for nothing.

Observe the express on upon the face of any noble male handing out the week's house-keeping allowance! He is parting with his heart's blood, and knows it, and is not quite sure at the moment whether he does not repent his bargain. The bundle of pound notes he gives his wife have been bought in their turn by his leisure, his health very likely, and many of his personal inclinations. They represent long hours at the office desk; uncomfortable quarters-of-an-hour standing on or under other people's toes in the tram; dreadful moments when his employer has a look of dismissal in his eye, or when the bank looks coldly on his cheque and refers him to drawer. In exchange he gets what he calculated to get: a home, a wife, children, a wireless set and a canary in the window, or value in kind. These are the real elements of life's system of barter; money is, after all, merely the voucher of the deal, having as much value in itself as the paper upon which we write our cheques.

Women mostly pay for their blessings in currency of a rather different character. They draw large bills upon their health, their nerves, their peace of mind. The typical housewife buys her Sunday joint with a sigh, her new hat with much misgiving; her doctor's bills are paid with sleepless nights and a wrinkle or two. Unused to reckoning such intangible accounts, however, we are still apt to hug to our innocent souls that age-old, delicious fantasy—the fantasy of something for nothing. It is well known that the feminine temperament cannot resist this allurements. The most disillusioned among us will still pause at the remnant counter; and there are few womanly spirits whom it consistently strikes as ridiculous to spend time and bus fares upon reaching a cheaper shopping centre. But in no part of fate's market do women so persistently and light-heartedly expect to get the best of the bargain as in the market of husbands.

The rich young man is indubitably the ideal of Eve; though she may, as a matter of fact, end by marrying the dustman, Miss Brown, who has landed the wealthy Mr. Jones, is a figure of distinctly heightened romance. A subtle tone of respect mingles discreetly with the congratulations which shower upon her. Miss



In the market of Husbands the rich young man is the popular ideal, but Wealth does not always bring the truest balance to the matrimonial scales.

Jones has done well for herself, and everybody may sincerely applaud. Over Miss Green, who is affianced to

love and a cottage, we are inclined to shake our heads. Romantic, but —!



MISS EVIE FOOKES, of New Plymouth.

Phyllis Hoggatt.

*"Romances paint at full length lovers' wooings
But only give a bust of marriages."*

Hence the ultimate fate of the fortunate Miss Brown is apt to slip our attention; we saw her at the wedding through rose-coloured spectacles and do not like her so well in the plain light of a later day. The important question is, however: What does Miss Brown feel about her bargain at that later day? Going upon the sound principle of nothing for nothing, we may safely conclude that she is now engaged in completing the purchase. Marrying for money is to ingenuous woman something like buying on the instalment system—the goods come first, the payments after (and it must be admitted that the payments often appear to last longer than the goods).

Every now and then—more and more often since the war, which made and unmade fortunes in such sweeping fashion—one comes across women with husbands and families in tow, who have, as they gently term it, "suffered a reverse." They appear extremely pathetic, especially in their own eyes, which see more clearly than those of outsiders the contrast between former splendours and the unaccustomed poverty to which they have been brought. Their attitude to life is a weary one, for they always carry about with them the feeling of having been cheated by fate; and it is significant that nearly all of them visit their indignation against fate upon the heads of their unfortunate husbands. Such women are somewhat in the position of the little girl who saved up to buy the coloured vase in the chemist's window, and found subsequently that it was only glass filled with water. Their spouse is not what they took him for: that is a human bank, in their eagerness to obtain which they perhaps overlooked his lack of other qualities attractive in a life partner. They have exchanged themselves for a pig in a poke; small wonder that they bear a certain grudge against the pig!

These are, I venture to suggest, some of the Miss Browns of life, learning, at a time of life when learning comes hard, the paradoxical lesson that money often costs too much. They are greatly to be pitied, not, perhaps, for the reasons for which they usually pity themselves. Financial poverty is a hag who has awkward features, but who can be made serene, even charming, by a mere touch here and there. But spiritual poverty is a spectre, and poverty in love is the death's head itself. It is to this kind of indigence that the wealthy marriage has a nasty habit of condemning women. It is said that money never brings happiness, which I beg to believe is a gross libel upon Providence. Money maketh glad the heart of man; of women no less; it is the most delightful adornment of romance I know. But money so often has to be paid for with one's conception of the true values of life. In the question of marriage, for instance, either love is the *prime* motive, or material con-