

CAN LOVE COME AFTER MARRIAGE?

RESULT OF A PRIZE COMPETITION.

The following is the question which had to be answered. 'What prospect has a girl who marries because she is loved and not because she loves, of falling in love with her husband after marriage?' A few hundred competitors have been good enough to express their views, and we are sorry that we cannot devote, say, half a dozen columns to extracts from many excellent papers. But we must make the best we can of our limited space, and hope that the many whose views were well worth quoting will believe how much we regret probably apparent but certainly not actual want of appreciation.

The two sides are represented with equal ability, so that we have divided the prize between the two competitors who have best represented the views of the two parties. Mrs Hagarhan thinks that:—

'Considering the unity of interests and close companionship of married love, also the necessity of love to the average woman's nature, the chances are strongly in favour of the girl, presumably fancy free, learning to love her husband if he is worthy of respect, and treats her with tact and delicacy.'

Nearly all the best points in the best affirmative papers are summed up in the above. Coming to the other side of the question 'Kathleen,' who is married, says:—

'None; the married state is not conducive to the awakening of love. Love is ideal; married love is intensely prosaic. Where love has not been the actuating impulse that directs before marriage, circumstances do not tend to develop it. Respect, esteem, affection, and that feeling of essentialness which the intimacy of married life gives, may grow and increase. Wise is the woman who accepts these as substitutes, and gives them generously in return for her husband's love.'

'Cérisse,' once again well to the front, writes:—

'That "love begets love" is an accepted aphorism, and in my opinion a girl has every prospect of falling in love with her husband after marriage if (1) her heart is free and her love still hers to give; (2) she starts married life with no feeling of dislike or distaste for her husband, but merely with an indifference; and (3) if the man himself is love-worthy, self-restrained, unselfish, tactful, and endowed with ideas, tastes and a temperament similar to hers.'

We beg leave to differ with 'Cérisse' only on one point, namely, the necessity of a similar temperament. These go a long way in the right direction, but how often one sees real love where there are quite dissimilar temperaments. Many others argue like 'Cérisse' that 'love begets love.'

Quite one of the best papers is that in which 'Rustica,' an appreciated and appreciative friend of *Woman*, says:—

'Marriage is, I consider, so awful a thing, that it is justified only by deepest love on both sides. A girl who marries only because she is loved is hazarding a most

dangerous experiment. For marriage, with all that it entails, will often produce in a woman a feeling of revolt and aversion towards the husband whom she does not love, and a feeling of intolerable humiliation as regards herself, and this, together with the absence of all illusion and romance, so well-nigh impossible in married life, makes the prospect of her falling in love with her husband improbable indeed.'

'Cassandra' will, we are sure, forgive us for remarking that she errs only in saying too much—more than was necessary to answer the question. The following extract from her paper is admirably to the point:—

'Every prospect; provided her husband is unselfishly devoted to her, and she is not in love with any other man. But unselfish devotion must be shown in firmness and in self-control. The great mistake made by men and women alike is in *over-loving*; that is, in boring the loved one with over-demonstrative affection.'

On the other side comes the hard, matter-of-fact, but not to be despised opinion of 'Flora':—

'The prospect a woman has of falling in love with her own husband is a sorry one. Respect, admiration, and even a life's devotion may be given, but love into which we women fall is in its first growth in no way dependent on the man's affection; it is a thing spontaneous, without reason, and never can occur when relations have become prosaic.'

On the other side, Miss Helen Cheston has discovered a strong point here:—

'The girl possessing no love for her husband at marriage has not that dreadful experience of finding that the man she once considered perfection (as all girls who are truly in love do) is after all not faultless.'

And a lady who, writing from the Midlands, asks us not to mention her name but forgets to give a pseudonym, adopts somewhat the same argument.

'Nell' is terribly and emphatically pessimistic. She says, 'None whatever. Marriage is of necessity such a shock to most girls that only a great love can overcome the horror.' 'Experientia Doct' says:—'The average man seldom improves in his conduct to his wife after marriage. Except in novels, I fear few men are "heroes to their valets"—or their wives.' 'The familiarity of married life is a very severe test of love and not a producer of the article,' is Mrs James Turner's view, and Miss M. Hamilton Willis writes: 'Even the deepest love on both sides cannot always stand the test of that "long, long life together, stripped of all romance and distance," but she who starts with mere liking and respect, invariably ends with dislike and contempt.'

Turning to the more cheering side of the question, we find Miss Isabel May believes that: 'The growth of such a girl's love might be slow but its ultimate strength would be greater than had it sprung from passion.' 'A Flock Master's Wife' sums up a good affirmative in: 'Every prospect, if the girl is high principled and possesses a strong sense of the responsibilities which marriage entails and the

man is worthy of her.' 'There is a great deal in the thought of "me" and "ours" which appeals to most women,' says 'Tatters' apropos of the influence of home and common interests. And Mrs Mabel Watson says, 'Provided that her husband is not absolutely repugnant to her, the delicate compliments of a man's devoted love may win the heart of any true woman.' Mrs Kees-Phillips is almost the only competitor who has thought of one important condition, namely, that 'no compulsion should have been used to force the parties into a loveless marriage.' Mrs Bray, replying decidedly in the affirmative, says that if the husband prove worthy of the wife's love and respect, and contribute to her happiness, the feeling of gratitude will engender 'that wifely love which gathers unto itself all that is best in the human affections.'

'Olivia' thus describes the probable result of conditions which have already been quoted from other papers:—

'A little absence, illness, or neglect on his part, a "little rift" within the lute," and her slumbering passion will probably take root—she will awaken, as from a trance, so wonder how she could ever have felt coldly towards him—and to believe she has really loved him all along.'

Of course a number of competitors refer to the silent influence of children in engendering love. But we cannot find that it has occurred to any of those who argue that if love has not come during the process of wooing, it cannot come afterwards, that there are such things as short engagements preceding *mariages de convenance*, during which the girl may not have time to make up her mind; in such cases the wooing has barely begun when the marriage takes place. This is merely a suggestion humbly offered. It is worth noting that they are mostly married women who do not believe in love coming after marriage; the maidens are, as a rule, more sanguine. We must leave our readers to decide between the two parties after reading the opinions we have published.—*Woman*.

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