

Can Wives be Too Unselfish?

MEN ARE SPOILED BY TOO MUCH WORSHIP.

When a man marries, unless he is a prematurely old bachelor, or a crusty widower, he wants a wife who will be his closest companion through life. An old friend of mine, speaking of a certain mutual acquaintance who contemplated matrimony, said:

"Oh, so-and-so doesn't want a wife. He merely wants a cook. Why doesn't he advertise for one?" and she thus summed up in a few words a phase of married life which is far from ideal. For how many girls, during the first few years of their wifehood, raise up a Frankenstein of this nature which is destined to destroy their after happiness. And yet they err with the very best intentions.

The average marriageable maiden looking forward to the wedded state views her future through rose-tinted glasses, and it is often the fondest girl who takes an entirely wrong view of the duties she owes her prospective husband, as well as herself, in this respect.

His comfort shall always be her first and tenderest care; his favourite "weaknesses" studied, and his table prepared with the enthusiasm found only in a young wife; she will be more to him than a mother, and they will grow old together, grateful in each other's love and happiness. These are her reflections and resolves before marriage, and sometimes for long after. And for her part the self-made promises are faithfully kept.

From morning to night, every thought is on George's account. His likes and dislikes are anticipated with that intuition which only a loving woman possesses; early and late she is devising little surprises in her household economy, special dishes contrived with infinite pains because he once expressed a liking for them, and generally pandering to the selfishness inherent in the best of men.

Rather than George should go without a hearty breakfast (provisions having inadvertently run short) the only egg in the house follows the other items upon which he has commenced the day so that he shall not feel stinted. She can go without, and feels a peculiar pleasure in masking the empty state of her own plate in order that he shall breakfast with an easy conscience. At first he resents such innocent deceptions, but presently begins to accept this phase of her homage as his due.

Then the young wife wakens to the fact that George has wedded a sort of glorified cook-housekeeper, but this knowledge only makes her more than ever slave to her infatuation.

The little attentions he showered on her a few short months back have gradually ceased, and, almost unconsciously, she sinks day by day deeper into her self-made servitude. The drudgery of household cares, combined with despairing attempts to win back by culinary feats the affectionate pre-marriage days, prey upon her good looks, and before she is aware of her loss, she is regarded by the man to whom she is mated almost with an equivalent of the respect he bestows upon her charwoman.

The fact that his meals are carefully and punctually prepared, that his wants are anxiously studied, and that he is waited on hand and foot, now touches no grateful chord in his breast. What is she there for but to minister to his comfort?

It sounds a little hard upon a young wife who finds herself in this grievous state, but she has only herself to thank for it. Instead of being in every sense of the word a companion and helpmeet to her husband, she has as inevitably accepted her sphere of action in the kitchen as if she had taken a situation as a hired servant. It is not entirely George's fault. After all, man is but human, and when he finds someone who is prepared to metaphorically blacken his boots, to sink herself mentally and socially, he is naturally too selfish to forbid it.

As she has started, so our unhappy subject must go on. The cares of her home gradually absorb all her day; her leisure is occupied in planning fresh

contrivances for George's comfort; she becomes jaded and faded before her thirties, and he, worse half, accepts all her sacrifices as part of the matrimonial plan.

How different might have been her lot had she adopted a different plan towards her husband from the commencement. A woman can be a good wife and an excellent housekeeper, and still retain a firm hold on her lord's affections. To prepare tasty dainties is by no means the sum total of the duties required of her. She should enter into his life as enthusiastically as she superintends his dinner; interest herself in his pursuits, his friends, his business; be prepared, in short, to be to him a sort of chum, and ready at all times to act as his understudy.

He learns to lean more every day on her judgment, and to consult her in matters requiring tact and skill. Instead of burying herself in her kitchen when he is at home, she is interesting herself in his methods, and so blending her personality with his that they possess "one heart, one soul."

Without appearing to do so, she is always quietly maintaining her right to be treated as an active partner in their little firm, and by these means she retains the affection and admiration of her husband far more effectively than if she were a queen of beauty and a French chef combined.

Any husband can be spoiled by too much hero-worship. Men are so apt to forget to be chivalrous, and while they denounce heartily the selfishness of others, they fail to notice the loving, blind devotion of the sweet little woman who gives up her life to them.

Use Vinegar Sparingly.

Vinegar is one of the common condiments which is useful, perhaps, in small quantities, but certainly injurious if taken too freely. A dinner salad, with two tablespoons of vinegar for six persons, is a good proportion. Vinegar, spices, in fact all substances, which in themselves preserve food materials, hinder digestion. A little acid, a very little, will sometimes prevent rapid, unnatural fermentation in the stomach, giving time for a weak digestion to assert itself. This habit, however, if continued for any length of time, will increase the digestive trouble by constantly aiding rather than strengthening the gastric secretions.

The stomach acid is mild and very easily overpowered by either strong alkalis or acids. Pickles preserved in vinegar are always to be condemned. They create an appetite by irritating the stomach, and, if continued, provoke gastric indigestion. Salads, where but a small quantity of vinegar is used, are the best conveyors of this condiment. Home-made vinegars are strong with acetic acid and have no virtue over good manufactured vinegars except in flavouring. Apple imparts an agreeable aroma, which makes a pleasant and apparently mild flavour. Grape vinegar, made by adding yeast or "mother" to

an uncooked, sweetened grape juice, is excellent, and with a tarragon flavour is one of the best salad seasonings. The sweet pickle has no advantage over the sour one. Sugar, added to vinegar, makes it pass the palate more easily, but both enter the stomach as they originally were—the sugar as sugar, the vinegar as vinegar. There is no combination of neutralization of either. The perfectly natural palate refuses all very hot, bitter, sour or flat foods. But to meet our artificial cravings we overlook this fact and cover or disguise our likings that they may pass unnoticed. We cannot, however, deceive the stomach, and consequently we pay a heavy penalty.



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