

Mirandy on the Happy Married Life.

By DOROTHY DIX.

"Whut's this tale I hears 'bout a man what's offering a \$1000 reward for a man what is satisfied with his wife?" demanded Mirandy of me.

"Oh!" I explained, "an old bachelor who believes that marriage is a failure is offering to give that amount of money to any man that can prove that he is happy, though married."

"The land's sake!" exclaimed Mirandy, "they sholy is gittin' suspicious in these days. It's time enough for a man to find out that he is marked for trouble when he gets married after the wedding, 'stead of his going into matrimony with his eye peeled for danger."

"That's right," I agreed. "But, say, Miss Do'toy," she went on, "whut I wants to know is if a short, fat, humped-shoulder nigger man, whut's had a glory ticket for thirty years, has got a chaunst at that money?"

"Nothing was said in the offer about race, or colour, or previous condition of servitude," I replied.

"Well," she declared, "I'm gwine right home and enter Ike for that \$1000. Yessum, Ike's a shinin' example of a man whut's married and happy—leastways if he ain't happy he's 'traid to say it. They ain't no argufying in our house, 'case I'ae got the floor when it comes to talkin', and I keeps it."

"Shoo! They ain't no trouble in gittin' along with a man, and keepin' him ca'm and satisfied. Husbands comes in different lengths, and different widths and colours, but they's all cut off of the same piece of goods, and they's one rule you can wuk 'em all by."

"You have got to feed 'em, and soft soap 'em, and boss 'em."

"Naw'm, I ain't got no opinion of a woman whut can't manage a husband, 'case it's just as easy as fallin' off of a log."

"Now, when me and Ike got married, Ike was a fine young buck whut was a Jim Dandy, and the way he could cut the pigeon wing and shake his foot in a dance was a caution. He sutnly was a personable man, with a figger that was as slim and straight as a telegraph post, and I ain't blamin' the gals for cuttin' their eyes at him."

"Now, how you reckon I stopped all that foolishness? You reckon I sets down and weeps, and moans, and laments 'bout him runnin' around of nights? Naw'm, I jes ups and fattens him. Yessum, I jest knocked dat fire figure into the middle of next week, and turned it into whut looked like a beer barrel. He ain't got no call to do whut Brer Jenkins calls tripping the light fantastic toe, or hunt up any fun whut's outside of the home limits. All he wants to do is to shuffle over to a cheer

in the chimney corner and smoke his pipe. Naw'm, they ain't no way to keep a man home of an evening like Bill-in' him up so full that he's too stotted to get out. Besides, they's aint nothin' that stops flirtatiousness like fat. You don't see no women glaucin' over their shoulders at the gentlemen with bay windows."

"Den I ain't never been sparin' of the soft soap with Ike. A man's got to have it, and if his wife won't give it to him some other woman will. That's the way I look at it, and as long as I want Ike to bring me home his pay envelope on Saturday night I got to run the axle grease factory, and, moreover, I got to hand out a brand of the goods that will make their soft talk sound like they didn't appreciate him or know a good thing when they saw it."

"When Ma'y Jane Jones tells him that he sho' has got a proud walk, I 'spons that he sutnly does perambulate like a prince. When Elviry Smith fetches him a compliment about his clothes lookin' like a dude, I prognosticate that it's the figger of the man, and not the clothes, and that Ike can make any kind of a hand-me-down suit look like it jest walked out of the tailor shop. Yessum, I sho does put on the soft soap with a heavy hand."

"And there's one more thing that's funny about men. They's like chillen. If you want 'em to love you, you've got to boss 'em. D'ye ever see a henpecked husband that wasn't plumb crazy about the hen that pecked him?"

"Now, when me and Ike was spliced I was so set up about catechin' him that I was ready to break my neck to please him, but the harder I tried the worse I failed. If I stayed at home and cooked and scrubbed he wanted to know why I didn't dress myself up an go' round like Sam Perkins' and Dick Brown's wives did. And when I put on my good clothes and went a-visitin' he lambasted me for gadding the streets 'stead of staying home and attendin' to my business. When I laughed he knocked me for being too gay, and when I didn't laugh he raked me over the coals for sulking."

"At last I see that I couldn't please him anyway, and then I put the shoe on the other foot and let him take his turn at trying to please me, and he's been so much on the jump about that ever since that he ain't never had time to find out whether I pleased him or not."

"And then I ain't hid my light under a bushel. I done told him whut a good wife I was, and how lucky he was to get me, till he done believe it."

"Yessum, it ain't no trouble to manage a man—if you know how."

"And sometimes it's worth the trouble."

Jones is honest in the matter she need have no fears, for the communication to Mrs Smith is what is known by lawyers as a "privileged communication," and she will not be liable to be sued by Sarah unless the statement which she makes about her is not only untrue but also inspired by a malicious motive.

Let us take an instance. Mrs Jones has constantly praised Sarah while she was in her service. She has told her what a good servant she is, and remarked to her friends what a treasure she has got. Sarah, relying on this estimate of her work, has asked for an increase in wages. This has led to trouble. The cordial relations existing between Sarah and Mrs Jones have been broken and Sarah gives notice and applies to Mrs Smith for a new situation. Then Mrs Smith writes to Mrs Jones for a character, and Mrs Jones, anxious to revenge herself on Sarah for the trouble to which she has been put in finding a new servant, writes to say that Sarah is lazy and incompetent. In this instance Sarah would have the right of action against Mrs Jones, because she had said what was not true, and had been actuated by a distinctly malicious motive in saying so.

Let us take another instance in which a lady is sometimes faced by the fear of a libel action in connection with servants. Mrs Robinson and Mrs Brown are next-door neighbours. Mrs Robinson is aware that Jane, who is Mrs Brown's housemaid, entertains largely whenever Mrs Brown is out, and she has seen various members of the forces who serve the State, be they policemen or be they soldiers, issuing at a late hour from the area of Mrs Brown's house. Mrs Robinson decides to write to Mrs Brown on the subject. Mrs Brown believes in Jane and shows her the letter, and Jane brings an action against Mrs Robinson for defamation of character.

The whole question depends on whether the words were written with the honest intention of giving Mrs Brown information of what was going on in her home, or whether the letter was prompted by an idle, gossiping and malicious spirit. If, therefore, Mrs Robinson is simply trying to serve her neighbour in a kindly way as she would wish to be served herself, she is perfectly safe in giving information.

Cases have been known in which servants, unable to obtain character from their late mistresses, have supplied the deficiency by writing a character for themselves. Such an act renders them open to criminal prosecution. It was felt in England about the end of the eighteenth century to be quite correct, in the year 1792, that mistresses should be protected from such frauds. There-

fore a fine of 100 dollars, or in default of payment, imprisonment with hard labour for anything from one month to three, was imposed on any servant who acted in such a dishonest manner. The act comprehends other dishonest acts by servants. Sometimes a servant who has been in a situation, and who has been dismissed without a character, is naturally anxious to hide the fact. She is unable to forge a character, and she thinks that the simplest thing to do would be to say that she has never been in service before. But the law does not allow a dishonest servant to hide her past in this way, and the same penalty awaits her as is stated above.

The legislators felt that in spite of this enactment it would still be very easy for servants to continue their career of deceit. The ordinary household is far too lazy to prosecute a dishonest servant. He may turn her out, big and baggage, but the idea of wasting a day at the police court over her is, as a rule, speedily dismissed. So the worthies who framed this law decided that they must make it more stringent still to bring these erring domestics to justice. You will notice above that the penalty is 100 dollars. Half of that sum is taken by the authorities and the other half is presented to the person who gives the information that leads to the conviction.

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Is It Necessary for a Mistress to Give Her Servant a Character?

SOME USEFUL ADVICE TO DISTRESSED HOUSEKEEPERS.

The servant problem, like the poor, is always with us. Whenever ladies run short of a topic of conversation, if such a thing can be imagined, they invariably turn to the everlasting question of servants.

In view of this it may be as well to put down one or two words of advice dealing with this thorny problem, and bearing particularly on the "character" which usually speeds the parting and accompanies the coming handmaiden.

A servant has no legal right to demand a character from the mistress she is leaving. But if a servant has been faithful in the discharge of her duties, it would be an exceedingly wrongful act on the part of any mistress to refuse to give her in return for her services some acknowledgment which she could show in applying for a fresh situation.

Sometimes, of course, a definite agreement is entered into at the beginning of service between the servant and her mistress, that at the expiration of a certain time a character shall be given,

but apart from such definite arrangement, there is no compulsion whatever on the mistress to do so.

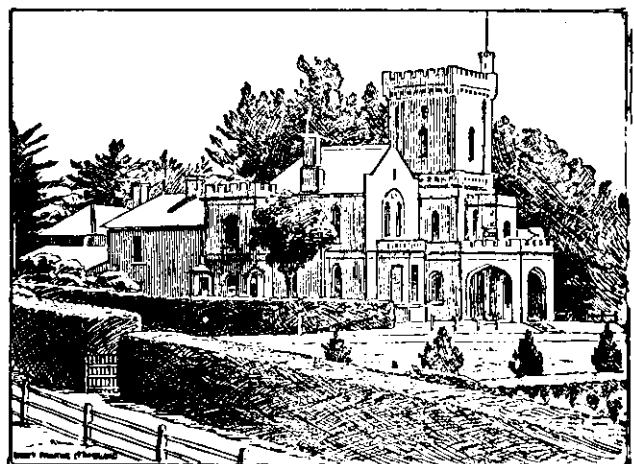
But assuming that a character is given, the mistress must make no statement which she does not believe to be true in order to induce the new mistress to engage the servant. This remark is two-edged. It implies that the mistress must not disparage her servant falsely, but, on the other hand, she must not ascribe to her qualities which she does not possess. If she does, she will be liable to be sued by the mistress she has deceived.

Sometimes a servant is unsatisfactory. Mrs Smith, the possible new mistress, writes to Mrs Jones, the old mistress, and asks her to state what is the character of Sarah. Mrs Jones knows that Sarah is a thoroughly undesirable servant, but she is rather afraid that if she puts down in writing what she really thinks of Sarah, Sarah may get hold of the letter, and possibly bring an action against her for defamation of character. But provided Mrs

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