Would You Rather Love or Be Loved?

We are told that if two people who marry are to be really happy together, equal and mutual love must exist between them. The truth of this assertion is obvious. Marriage indeed only becomes the proper and ideal state when men or women join their lives to one whom they truly love, and who as truly loves them in return.

Without doubt, deep and sincere mutual love characterises most marriages. Even in these practical and prosaic days the majority of men and women recognise the value of true love, and what an influence it has upon the happiness of married life. But Cupid's ways are extremely capricious, and the consequence is that often two people meet and marry whose love is of unequal proportions.

Hence the question, to love or to be loved, which brings greater happiness? Is it better for a woman to marry a man who has honestly given her his whole love, but for whom she has not that same feeling of affection? Or should she marry a man whom she passionately loves, but who, she is well aware, has little more than lukewarm love for herself? It is a question which confronts hundreds of women almost every day, and it is one which they find it extremely difficult to decide.

Shall she marry the one whose tenderness seems in the moments of doubt, which come even to the happiest lovers, merely a response to her own? Or shall she choose rather to give her life to the other man, whose love seems so broad and vast, so deep and tender, that sometimes it actually reminds her of what she feels herself, though not for him?

Doubtless a woman in such circumstances feels that should she marry the latter, she will never forget her love for the other man, and consequently be dishonourable in thought to the one she had married. And if she marries the man whose affection is not equal to her own, there is the fear that marriage would not increase the strength of his love, and, in fact, might diminish it, and thus the happiness of her whole life would be destroyed.

And should it so happen that she is possessed of a little money, she is probably haunted by the fear that he is more concerned about her banking account than about herself. On the other hand, she knows full well that the other man loves her for herself alone. But, alas! her real affection is not for him. Well might she shrink before the serious task of choosing between the most loved and the most loving man.

"Marry neither" would probably be the advice of some people to a girl placed in such a position. Such advice, however, if followed out, would only have the effect of making three people miserable for life, whereas there are excellent possibilities of two being made exceedingly happy.

In choosing between the most loved and the most loving man, the woman who wishes to marry will, in nine cases out of ten, find greatest happiness in accepting the latter, always providing that she has some liking and affection for him. She should be most careful, however, not to allow him to marry her under any false impressions. That is to say, she should explain the exact state of her feelings towards him, and that it is on account of his great love for her that she is quite content to trust her future life and happiness in his hands.

When this is done, the man's love for the woman he marries will invariably make him determined to gradually win the true affection of his wife, until it is equal to that which he has for her. Kindness, tenderness and fidelity will be the three guides to his conduct, and it will indeed be a stubborn heart which is not touched and won by such a man.

A girl need not explain, in accepting the most loving man, that her real affection is bestowed upon another. The former will intuitively understand this, and make up his mind that there shall be no lack of endeavour on his part to supplant this misplaced love with affection for himself.

It is just possible, of course, that the girl who marries the best loved man would by her devotion, constancy and tenderness, strengthen his love until it was as great as her own. But the risk is very great. There would always be doubt in her mind. Even when he was with her, and in his most devoted and tender moods, she would probably find herself watching his varying expressions, and wondering whether some one of the many thoughts she cannot fathom was not being given to another woman.

With Pen and Camera in Japan.

A Japanese house is the simplest thing in the world, says Mr. Douglas Sladen, in his popular book, "Queer Things About Japan." It consists of a post at each corner and a roof. The roof may or may not be covered with enormous blue tiles. It makes little difference in the long run. For if it is not, the first typhoon that comes along transfers it to somebody's garden a quarter of a mile away; and if it is, it may resist the typhoon; but woe betide its inhabitants when the first genuine earthquake happens. They will be caught like sparrows under a sieve, only more so. But the odds are that it will be burnt down before either happens, as the Japanese use very cheap lamps and very nasty petroleum, and are regular children about fires.

A Japanese house is generally all on one floor: in fact, one might say it is all one floor. And in the daytime it is all one room if it is a small house. The number of rooms in it depends on the number of bedrooms the owner requires. They are divided for the night by paper shutters fixed in grooves like the divisions of an old-fashioned workbox. There are no doors or passages. Your bedroom acts as a passage, and when you want a door you slide back the nearest panel. Two sets of shutters go round the outside; the inside set are of paper on the off chance of the owner using them for privacy during the day, and the outside are of wood. These outside shutters cannot be slid in the same promiscuous fashion as the others. Each is held in its place by the next, and the last one is secured with a bolt—of wood. There are many houses which, when secured for the night, would hardly stand a man leaning against them.

Better-class houses are divided into permanent rooms for a foot or two down from the ceiling, by wooden frames filled with plaster to hold the tops of the shutters. Some go so far as having windows, made of glass, too, which is very un-Japanese. The ordinary native is quite satisfied with the light that filters through paper. The houses which have windows generally have walls, too, outside; though they put up the paper shutters inside.

Every self-respecting Japanese house has a guest-chamber, and always in the same corner. There is the recess, which contains the celebrated Tokonoma and Chigaidana, the principal stage property of Japan. The Chigaidana is a sort of chest of cupboards, and is often the only bit of real furniture in the room.

A Japanese room sometimes contains other furniture, but, as a rule, the Japanese is satisfied with the floor, to which he pays extravagant adulation. He uses it for everything, and covers it with mats too good to use. It is a wonder that he does not put them on the ceiling instead; then he would not have to take his boots off to enter his own house.