

from which it would be little less than criminal on her part to try to escape. Then, should her suitor be unable to help her bear her burden or too impatient to wait in love and hope for better times, the best—indeed, the only sensible thing—which she can do is to release him from his engagement. So-called love which has its root in selfishness, however fair seeming it may be, is apt to wither under stress of drought, almost certain to go down before the shock of adversity.

Short engagements are rarely wise, unless in cases where the contracting parties are well acquainted before the engagement is made. To rush into matrimony blindly can scarcely fail to be disastrous. Every now and then city newspapers tell the pitiful story of some abandoned bride—some woman left penniless in a strange hotel by the man to whom she has upon brief acquaintance entrusted her person and her property, much or little. There are many more such instances which never get into print. Every once in a while some

too confiding girl marries a stranger, to find later that the hastily accepted band is a villain or a brute—perhaps worse, is no husband in the eye of the law, since another wife exists with a valid claim.

Yet, too long engagements are usually a mistake. After a certain period, which varies with different men, the love of a man is no longer "a plant which with most cutting grows." On the contrary, if allowed to expend itself neither in blossom nor fruit, it dries up and withers by slow but sure degrees. Most of us can instance long engagements which finally have been broken. Few of us can recall lengthy ones which have been happily consummated. Usually it is the man who grows restive, who insists upon having his wife and his own home, and who, being put off again and again, finally seeks fresh fields and pastures new. A woman should be positively assured of her lover's affection for her before she consents to bind him by an engagement of indefinitely long duration.

Jacob served fourteen years for Rachel and found the time short because of his great love for her, but the case was so exceptional that the story has been handed down to us through the ages.

There are many true tales of lovers who have emigrated to make a home for girls left behind them, and who, returning long years afterwards, have found the girls no longer, but weary, faded women, with their youth and brightness for ever fled. Then, unless the man be of unusual fibre, his strong and virile manhood calls out for youth and beauty, and the old love is whistled down by the wind almost before she understands it has happened. Not one man in a hundred, scarcely one in a thousand, can stand the test of an engagement of twenty, ten, or even five years.

From six to eighteen months is in most cases the proper duration of an engagement. This gives ample time for all necessary preparations on both sides. It also allows ample opportunity for the contracting parties to become thoroughly acquainted with each other.

When the fiancées are boys and girl who have known each other from childhood (much more if the love affair is of recent date), parents and guardians should insist that there shall be no positive engagement until the young folks arrive at the age of discretion. Moreover, although they may know their own minds thoroughly, physicians are agreed that for physical reasons no woman should marry until she is fully twenty years of age. The proper limit for a man is fixed at twenty-five—thirty, they say, is better.

There is a happy pair of prominent people in an eastern city who were sweethearts almost from babyhood. One day, when the maiden was sixteen and the youth twenty, the two took a trip

across the border into a neighbouring State whose marriage laws were less stringent than those of their own. Returning home in the late afternoon they announced their marriage to their respective parents. The paterfamilias held council together and informed the young couple that they had no objection to their marriage at a proper age, but that at present they could not be allowed to live together as man and wife. So the young husband was constrained to finish his course at college of two years more, and the young wife to dwell meanwhile in her father's house and complete her education. When the prescribed period expired the youth's wealthy father took him into partnership, the wedding was fittingly celebrated, and the couple have lived happily ever afterwards.

Hearts as Presents.

Among the many curious presents made from time to time surely that of a human heart, given literally, and not as lovers are wont to bestow, is most extraordinary, but several such instances may be mentioned. Paul Whitehead, a poet of the eighteenth century, felt so grateful to Lord Le Despenser for having been the means of getting him an income of £800 a year that he bequeathed his heart to him as a mark of his gratitude. That nobleman placed this singular legacy in one of the recesses of a mausoleum at his seat at West Wycombe, and the urn containing it bore the following epitaph:—

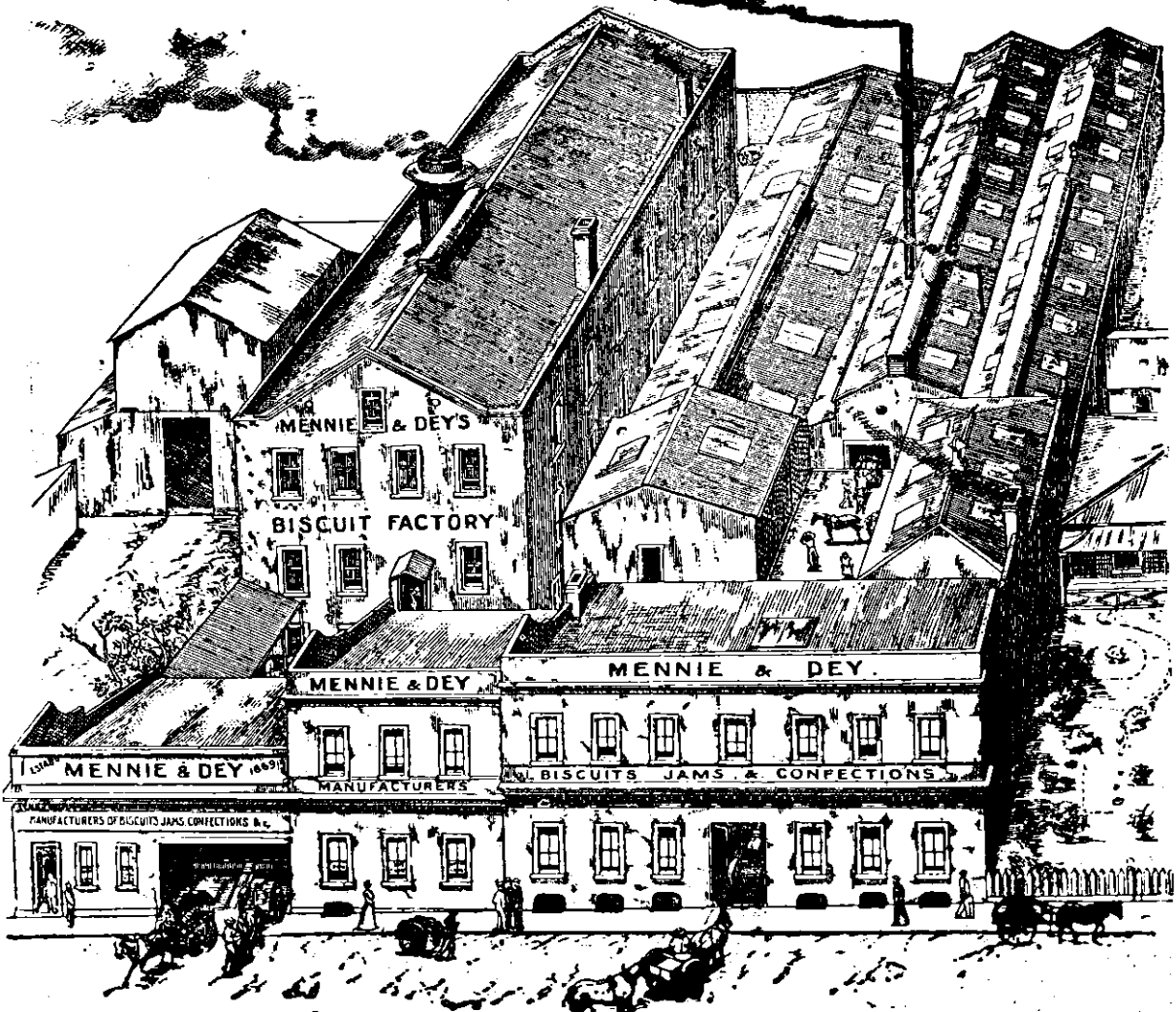
Unhallow'd hands, this may forbear;  
No gems nor Orient spoil  
Lie here conceal'd, but, what's more rare,  
A heart that know's no exile.

The occasion of the depositing of the heart was one of great solemnity, and ex-

*George Gregory.*  
ARTIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER.  
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