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IS MARRIAGE A FAILURE?

BY KATE A. BADLEY.

"You've read all this controverted about marriage, Tom?"

Tom was reading the morning paper at the breakfast table, and like most men under the circumstances did not want to be interrupted. In fact he was not interrupted. He gave an unconscious little "Hm" of inquiry, calculated to gain more time for the interesting paragraph and went on with his reading. Edith's pretty brows gathered themselves into a knot that would be a frown when Tom should look at her. But Tom did not look. Totally oblivious of the growing coldness of both his coffee and his wife he finished his paragraph and began another.

"Tom, I do wish you wouldn't bring that horrid newspaper to the table!" she burst forth at last out of patience. "Its dreadfully impolite! What would you think of me if I should bring a book to the table and read straight through the meal, never even answering your questions?"

"What?" cried Tom, bewildered by this volley of words. "Did you speak to me my dear? I really did not hear you. I beg your pardon." The offending newspaper disappeared under the table.

"That is just what I am complaining about—that you did not hear me," said Edith, somewhat mollified by her husband's frank apology. "Won't you promise to leave it in the other room after this Tom. I scarcely see you except at meal time, and then when you read all the time I don't feel as if I had seen you at all."

"But my dear" said Tom, casting a rueful glance under the table "that is the only time I have to read the news."

"Oh! Edith's eyes were round with overdone astonishment. "Then it is really only a choice between your wife and your newspaper, and the newspaper wins!"

"Now, Edith—" "Stop and think a moment, dear," interrupted his wife. "You know we are not very well—in fact there are some uncharitable people who would call us even poor, if they could see our makeshifts and little proteuses. And yet haven't I made your home a pretty place?"

She looked round with pardonable pride at the handiwork of her dainty fingers, visible in all corners of the little rooms.

Here, a gay lamp mat of odd pieces of silk; there, a rug deftly woven from woolen scraps; in the corner an easel made from an old fish pole of Tom's, with the aid of a little varnish, while on it stood a panel delicately painted, and being neither more nor less than an old pine board with the edges smoothed off to represent a bevel, and with a gilded rope around it to represent a frame.

This was behind the scenes however. To those few fashionables who honored the poor clerk's wife with a calling acquaintance these things appeared as a dainty mat, a rag such as every body was having made at exorbitant prices and an aesthetic easel with a handsome picture in a unique frame. Then they went away and wondered how "that poor Tom Nestor's wife could afford such extravagant things!"

Now Edith's eyes glanced at these and countless other trifles and then back at Tom.

"And much time do you think I have for reading? Do you know that I have not been able to read a word in that new novel that Mrs. Brook lent me, and I must take it back to her tomorrow? I don't regret it dear—not a bit she said brightly, "only if you read your paper at the table anymore I shall bring my novel and read it, every word!"

When she had finished the table was no longer between them; that is to say, Edith was snugly ensconced in Tom's arms while Tom's lips pressed kisses on the top of her curly brown head. And the

newspaper under the table could not so much as rustle a protest.

"But you have not told me yet what your question was about, said Tom at last returning to the original subject with the true thoroughness of the masculine mind that tears down the fairy structure of his present joy to be sure that the foundation is of stone.

"Sure enough! I declare I had forgotten all about it. I only asked you if you had read this nonsense about marriage being a failure."

"I've read what the papers say why do you ask little woman?"

"Well, that's what I wanted to tell you about. You remember Mrs. Simmons called here the other day and asked me to join the society they were just starting—that's the name of the society, you know—so yesterday I went, and, oh! Tom you can't imagine how nice it was! Mrs. Ellsworth said I really ought to be elected President. What's the matter, dear?"

Tom had set her hastily down and risen to his feet. His brows which were not so pretty as Edith's were unmistakably drawn into a frown.

"Edith," he said sharply, "you know how aversa I am and always have been to these reading societies where a lot of fashionable dolls get together to discuss matters of which they have not the faintest comprehensions."

"Reading societies!" "Well debating club then, if that sounds more euphonious to your newly cultivated ear."

Tom was certainly losing his temper. Edith's eyes flashed at the sneer the words conveyed, but she thought it would not do for them to be angry at the same time. I shall have time enough—by and by." Then she laughed outright as the ridiculous story occurred to her of the man who stopped to count a hundred when angry before he spoke. But her laugh died.

"How could I manage it if he should refuse to let me go?" she thought.

"Oh, Tom?" she cried, "you wouldn't be so cruel as to deprive me of this pleasure when I have so few!" Her face disappeared in this sure refuge of womanhood—her handkerchief.

"You may do as you please, Edith," replied Tom coldly, catching up his overcoat as he went to the door. "I have never imposed a restraint upon your actions; but I should think if you have so much time to spare, that you might even manage to finish your novel. With this Parthian doubt he disappeared. As the door closed Edith emerged from behind her handkerchief. Her eyes were full of tears, but her mouth was laughing.

"How like a man!" she said at last. "Now, why couldn't he say to me kindly: 'Edith dear, I know it would be a pleasure to you, but I would rather not have my wife in such constant association with these 'fashionable dolls.' I want to give her to myself. Will you not keep this up as you have so much else for my sake? Now why could not he say that? And then ninety-nine women out of a hundred would have answered fervidly: 'Certainly my darling. Will you have the heart out of my bosom, too.'"

Things did not seem to go right that morning down town. A curly brown head and two tearful eyes kept getting between Tom and the page of figures before him. "I was a brute!" he said to himself after a long inward struggle. "The child shall have her reading club if she likes. I won't say another word against it."

After that decision he felt better, and man-like, having decided the question, he at once forgot all about it, while his wife at home thought of nothing else all the morning, and changed and turned the subject, inserting a word here and an expression there, until by noon she had almost lost the real facts in the case in an ocean of possibilities. She was surprised when noon and Tom came, and nothing further was said about the morning's dispute. Tom was full of a new subject. On his way home he had been stopped by an old friend and addressed in

the following mysterious manner:

"Say, Tom, would you like to go into business for yourself?"

Tom looked at him uncertainly, scarcely believing his ears.

"I don't understand," he said.

"Well, I'll tell you about it. Let's walk on; I'm going your way. You walk don't you? So do I—it's healthier." And cheaper, Tom could have added.

"Well," went on Dr. Chester, who was a man pleased with the sound of his own voice, "these are the facts: Brothwell is managing our business up at Ashland, and he wrote me to-day that he had a smart fellow that I could trust, to go into partnership with him and do the headwork—Brothwell never was much on head business you know—he thought he could make the business pay double what it is doing now. It popped into my head the minute I saw you: 'Here's the man we're looking for.' Come, now, what do you say?"

Tom considered a moment, after he had asked enough questions to thoroughly satisfy himself on all points.

"I'll tell you this afternoon," he said at length. "I will talk it over with my wife."

"What," exclaimed Mr. Chester. "I said I would talk it over with my wife," repeated Tom quietly.

"What do you want to do that for?" grumbled his friend. "Women don't know anything about business, and she'll be sure to raise some nonsensical objection." Tom laughed.

"I've always found, Chester," he said, "that the man who talks things over with his wife makes a great many mistakes less than the man whose wife knows absolutely nothing about his business. It is a dull woman who cannot understand a simple explanation lucidly given. As my wife once said to me: 'Oh, you men say we can't understand business—with the business in capitals—when if you took the pains to tell us once or twice, you would find we could comprehend even such knotty questions as profit and loss. And even supposing they don't, Chester," he went on, unconsciously warming to the subject, "even supposing they don't. It clears a man's ideas wonderfully to have to marshal his arguments to convince his wife. And if he knows she doesn't understand them, why, he's convinced himself, or it may be, shown himself that he was wrong and saved a blunder."

"I never should have thought of it in that light," remarked Mr. Chester dryly. "It might be better if she didn't understand. Well, don't let me destroy any illusion, my boy. Go your own way about it, only let me know this afternoon."

Tom found Edith mending his shirt. Her lips were pressed firmly together in her effort to get the needle through the starched linen, but they softened quickly when he stepped to kiss her, as he had every day through the two years they had been married. It may be that some of our readers do not stop to kiss their wives when they leave and return to them. They may forget it, or they may think that it takes too much time for their business; but if they could know how much brighter the little attention would make the day to the tired wife toiling at home, how many cross words and unhappy thoughts it would save, some of them, I think, would be willing to go without that last muffin or pancake that they ate only because it looked so inviting, to devote the extra moments to the weary partner of their cases.

Edith looked at him wistfully as he sat down. Would he say nothing of the morning, when they had promised each other never, literally, to allow the sun to rise or set upon their displeasure?

Oh, golden rule, following which no lives can be broken or bruised! If he did not speak of it, she must she thought. It seemed to be the woman's place to be the first to acknowledge the wrong. Perhaps she should be satisfied if the man responded to her advances when made.

"They're pretty old, aren't they, dear?" he smiled, looking at the refractory shirt half wistfully.

She smiled back at him gladly. "I was thinking so," she said. "Tom, how much do new shirts cost?"

"Those that I wore in my unhappy bachelor days cost me about \$30 a dozen. I am willing to wear them ready-made now."

Edith thought of the gloves and ribbons, and ruffles and handkerchiefs that she went without, and smiled to herself. A man wants so few things I suppose it is natural that he should be particular about them, she thought.

Then Tom told her of Mr. Chester's proposal. She looked at him with bright eyes and a flushed face. "Of course you told him that you would, Tom," she exclaimed eagerly. "I told him I would talk it over with you and let him know this afternoon," replied Tom. "It would mean more privation for you for a time, dear, and then, I might not be capable of filling the position."

"Capable, Tom! Why, what nonsense you talk. You not capable of—of anything! Perhaps it's just as well that you did not give him an answer this noon; he'll be all the more determined to get you if he thinks you are not anxious for it. But hurry right off after dinner and tell him you have decided to accept his offer, before he gives it to some one else."

No wonder Tom was willing to ask his wife's advice!

How quick the morning's clouds cleared up before the burst of sunshine.

A few words in Tom's ear and he exclaimed, "Don't speak of it, my darling! I was cross—brutally cross, to want to deprive you of any little enjoyment you can have." But he noticed that she did not offer to give up the reading club.

The weeks sped by rapidly. It was not close upon the first of the year when Tom was to enter the new era in his business life.

Edith was, as may be supposed, very busy indeed; and yet Tom, coming home unexpectedly early, had several times found her absent from the little home where he had been picturing her weary with work.

"The reading-club, of course," Tom thought, but asked no questions when she made her appearance, nor did Edith volunteer an explanation; so the little cloud grew as little clouds will when the soft southerly breeze of confidence blows from the North and becomes the storm brewing wind of doubt.

One eventful afternoon Tom came home saying, "Edith, I can have the afternoon if I want it. Now is your time to go through Herbert's art store, if you like. You know you have wanted to go for so long."

"Oh, Tom!" cried Edith disappointedly. "I—I can't. I must go to Mrs. Denton's. Its my last chance to—" She stopped abruptly.

"Very well, Edith," said Tom quietly. "I shall know better than to think next time that I might be of greater importance to you than a crowd of frivolous gossiping women. Probably the club will take me in." With that he walked out of the house, but he did not go to the club. He went back to his desk and went to work furiously trying to crowd out the recollection of two tearful pleading eyes. The whole of his sky was overclouded now, and the clouds were so thick that it did not seem as if the sun could ever pierce through again. It might seem a little thing to one who does not know that little things are more than great things in this queerly constructed world of ours, to Tom it meant that his wife was drifting away from him—had so far drifted already that she could keenly hurt his feelings rather than give up one afternoon of shallow society.

He did not go home as early as usual; he felt almost as if he would rather not go home at all to the house where discord reigned. He left himself in quietly; the house was dark save for a low light up stairs.

Evidently Edith had not returned yet. It was another blow upon his aching heart. "This is a

crisis in our happiness," he thought "I must be firm for her sake as well as for my own."

He lighted a match and turned up the wick of the lamp, which caught the blaze and sent a ruddy light through the dainty paper shade. Then he looked sadly around. Suddenly his eye caught sight of a parcel lying on a chair near the window. A large piece of paper was laid up against it and instinctively he stepped nearer to read the words this is what he read:

"GOOSE!" written in very large letters, "this is the debating club."

He opened the bundle scarcely understanding what it meant. Lay a dozen glossy new shirts marked with his name the work for all these past weeks of his wife's anfring fingers. How she had done it she alone knew—she and Mrs. Denton who had insisted on lending her sewing machine to labor of love. There was a little gurgle of laughter behind him he turned to clasp Edith half laughing half crying in his arms.

"Well did the club decide the momentous question as to whether marriage was or was not a failure?" asked Tom a little later. He could joke about it no more as one will examine the claws of a dead tiger.

"We didn't discuss it, Tom. That was a joke to keep you from suspecting until to-morrow—and then you were so cross you spotted it all, you bad boy! But I think," sitting erect, her cheeks flushed with earnestness, "that no one honestly, in his innermost heart, has a doubt on the question: There are men who will not marry until they find a perfect wife, or if the one they marry turns out to possess a flaw they at once declare marriage a failure. Let them look into their own thoughts and actions and see if they can find enough perfection there to deserve perfection in return. Oh, and women, too!" she added, noting Tom's smile.

"Some of them want a leopard to turn his spots in a week, and have not the patience to smooth the ruts worn deep by the habits of years. But let both begin with love and forbearance, confidence and truthfulness, and happiness will be sure to follow."

"Then, to sum up these convincing arguments based on sad experience," said Tom, "whether marriage is a failure or a gigantic success, depends largely upon who's married."

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IN HIS NAME

A Story for the New Year.

One morning in the autumn of '86 the president of a Pennsylvania college introduced to the Northern students a young man from South Carolina by the name of Rodman Church. He was a bright, handsome fellow, and his warm, genial, nature soon made him friends among the less impulsive Northern boys. Between him and his room-mate, Hugh Cotter, there sprang up one of those close intimacies that are nowhere found so genuine as inside of college walls. Though they were classmates and rivals at that, their little defeats and triumphs served rather to increase than diminish their friendship. So the years passed until they numbered almost four, and then through the meddling of pretended friends, a little misunderstanding between them ripened into the bitterest of feuds. Accusing each other of dishonest dealings, they took rooms as far apart as possible, and for months they passed and repassed each other without so much as a look of recognition.

Though Cotter received the first honor, Rodman's masterpiece of oratory on commencement day led many to believe that his successful rival had used unfair means to obtain the prize. Young Church was so exasperated as to publicly make this assertion, and if it had occurred in the South it is quite probable that the trouble would have culminated in a duel. As it was however the cool-headed Northern student treated the challenge with silent contempt, and the two, who were to have been life long friends, returned to their far separated homes the bitterest of enemies.

Before the return of the anniversary of their graduating day, the fall of Fort Sumter had ushered in the civil war, and true to their convictions of right, the rival students had enlisted on opposite sides of the fraternal strife.

It was on the last day of December, 1862 while Rosecran's forces were falling back before the enemy at Stone River, that a Confederate officer dismounted for the purpose of rendering assistance to a young Union Soldier over whom he came near riding. As he raised him up the blood spurted from a ghastly wound in his side, but it was not the mortal wound that made the officer lay the dying man down so suddenly. In the moment he had seen and recognized the features of one who he believed had wronged him deeply. "Hugh Cotter I hate you," he muttered. "You accused me of dishonesty and then refused to make satisfaction. I vowed then to be revenged and now you are in my power. I would not raise a finger to save you." But the sentence broke off here, for like flash these words darted into his mind: "In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

Rodman Church was now as earnest Christian but that white unconscious face brought back to his recollection many bitter memories. He was turning away when a moan escaped the sufferer's lips. "Can I do it for Jesus' sake?" he asked himself. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. For Jesus' sake," he repeated a loud as he knelt and endeavored to stop the blood: In his name I can and will help even Hugh Cotter," he said as he called an orderly to assist in moving him to a place where he would not be trampled upon.

When the soldier regained consciousness and beheld the dark face bending over him, he trembled violently, for what he could expect from his revengeful enemy, Rodman Church?

"Is there anything that I can do for you?" asked the officer, in a voice that convinced Cotter that his case was desperate.

"Am I going to die?" he inquired. "I think your wound is mortal."

"What can I do for you?" "Send my mother word, and tell her I died like a true soldier."

"I'll write to her," was all that the young officer could say.

Calling a surgeon, he instructed him to do all in his power to save the life of the wounded man.

"No use Captain," was the surgeon's reply. He's booked for another world, and the time has come for chaplains instead of surgeons to work."

"Then call a chaplain, and make him as comfortable as possible," was Church's command as he mounted his horse and galloped away.

"In his name I did it, and in his name I pray God to forgive me and save him," he murmured softly as he joined his men.

That night he fulfilled the promise he had made to his enemy. "For Jesus pleased not himself," he whispered, when he found how hard it was to write such words to that poor, broken-hearted mother, away off in her New England home.

But Hugh Cotter did not die, thanks to his magnanimous enemy, and when the strife was over he found himself back with friends who tenderly nursed him back to life and health.

When the war closed, he made an effort to find his generous foe, but was met with the information that he had been killed in an engagement shortly after he had seen him at Stone River.

The years passed on, prosperous years they proved to Dr. Hugh Cotter, the promise of whose youth had been more than fulfilled.

On New Year's day, 1867, just twenty four years after he had met his enemy on the battle-field of Stone River, he was called to Charleston, South Carolina, on business. It was only a few months after the earthquake, and the strictness was still in a desperate condition.

While gazing intently upon the ruin wrought, a hand was laid upon his shoulder and a strangely faint at once close to his ear said: "The grave does not give us the dead, but surely you are Hugh Cotter."

"That is my name," said the doctor, taking the hand outstretched to him, "and if Rodman Church were alive, I would say that voice belonged to him."

"It seems that we have both been laboring under a mistake, for I am Rodman Church, but I thought you were with God all these years."

"I trust he is with me instead, and has been ever since that New Year's eve so long ago, when 'In his name,' you saved my life, and more than that—for it was those words you whispered that led me to your Savior, and mine, too, now."

The doctor was soon in possession of the sad story of the disappointed man's life. What little he had accumulated had been destroyed in the earthquake and he was now out of employment.

Though reluctant to accept such help, Captain Church agreed to accompany his old rival to his city home where steady work in an honorable position awaited him.

Out of his abundance the doctor insisted on placing a neat little son at the disposal of the unfortunate man's needy family, affirming that it was a debt he had owed ever since that New Year's morning in 1863, when he woke on earth instead of another world, and "In his name" the grateful man accepted the New Year's Gift.—BELLE V. CHISHOLM, in Christian Inquirer.

28 Children and 400 Grandchildren. ALPHARETTA, Ga., Jan. 2.—An incident of the county election here today was the appearance of Valentine A. Abernathy at the polls to exercise his right of suffrage. Mr. Abernathy was 82 years of age last October, having been born on Oct. 8, 1798, in Lincoln County, N. C. He walked fifty miles to town to vote, and then started briskly on his return trip. He came to this State in 1827. He has been married twice and has had born to him twenty eight children, nineteen boys and nine girls, all of whom are living save one girl who died when one month old. He has four hundred grand and great grandchildren. The old man says he feels as snug as he did at the age of twenty-five and has no pains or aches. He takes a lively interest in politics and never misses a vote.