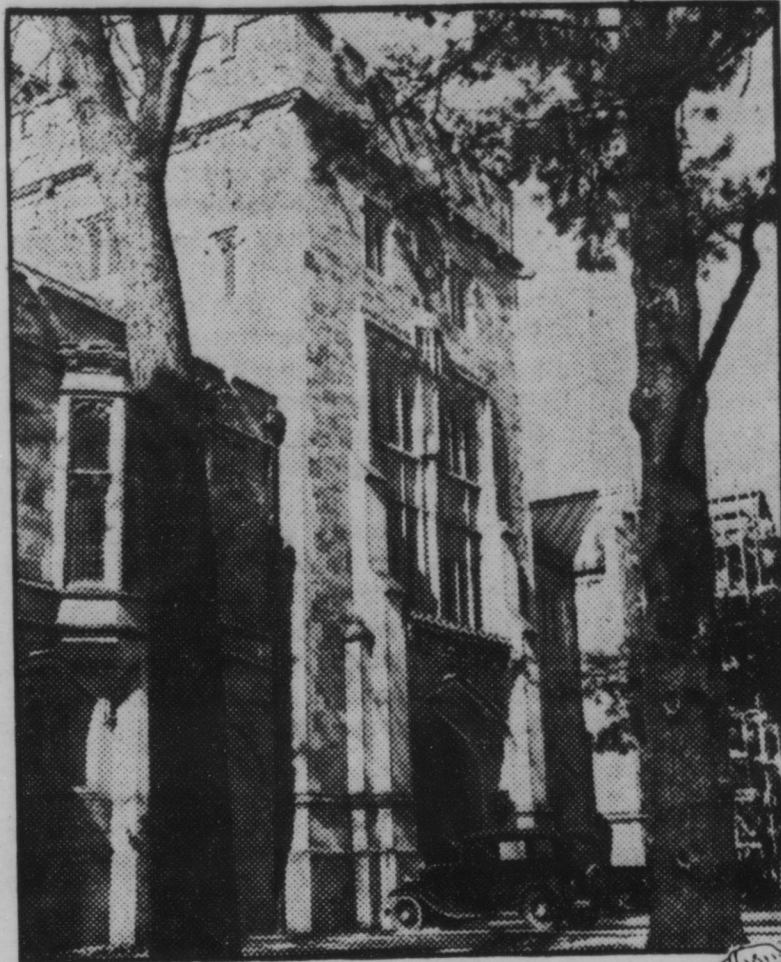


Training "Good Companions" to End the Divorce Evil



Taylor Hall, the main entrance to Vassar College at Poughkeepsie, N. Y.

By Helen Welshimer

A SERIOUS effort to bring about happier marriages and to combat the great American divorce evil at its source has been inaugurated at Vassar College. Young husbands and wives, above all, must be "good companions," the girls are being taught.

The modern sciences of sociology, psychology, and biology are being brought to focus on the problem of how to live together and like it 365 days of the year. Vassar's students are told that they probably won't reach a wooden anniversary, let alone a silver or golden one, unless they choose husbands who share their interests and follow similar moral standards.

The 20th century study of husband choosing, which is taking the young ladies of Poughkeepsie away from the movies and study halls on certain nights, doesn't profess to give the 1200 college girls a yardstick of masculine measurement but it does suggest that the girls should feel fairly well acquainted with themselves before they decide what to do about marriage.

Prof. J. Howard Howson, professor of religion at Vassar and a leader in the college's summer courses on mental hygiene and family life, has been instructing his listeners that the young man who thrills them during a waltz may bore them without rhyme or reason when the music stops. Professor Howson, active in the new instructions, says:

"Companionship is an essential quality for marriage. A man and a woman can't retain any sort of friendship without common interests. They must have enough fundamental values in common to count on each other's instinctive reaction to a new situation. On the superficial side, they must share to a certain degree in sports, reading, and other hobbies. Such a knowledge of a person is not gained intuitively.

"A girl and a man should see each other moving freely in a group of ap-



"But, what," wail the girls, "can we do when we love a guy who doesn't fill the marriage course bill?"

What can we do when we love a guy who doesn't fill the marriage course bill? Answer that one, please!"

All right. Here's the answer! Sit down by the sun-dial or under old Matthew Vassar's portrait and consider all the differences between yourself and the wearer of the Harvard H or the Yale Y—or the postman, the lifeguard, or your roommate's brother. If you belong to the same social group, like the same things and feel pretty much the same about life, then it's all right to be marriage-minded. If you differ very much—well, kiss him and say goodby—it will make a nice memory—and investigate somebody else's status.

Romance and marriage, as it happens, are two distinctly different things, Vassar girls are learning. The cardiac palpitations which denote an affection for one lad may last no longer than the length of a new spring moon. Or they may linger into old age. If they are the result of an interest in someone not suitable for marriage, they will be short-lived, the information goes. Don't hurry into something which doesn't stand the similarity test.

"This question of considering likes and dislikes is tremendously important," Professor Folsom goes on. "A girl should size up herself, first of all, and know what she likes and believes. Then she should meet the man under conditions which show him up. Too often she may know a splendid man but owing to the fact that they see each other only briefly in business, they never grow acquainted."

THE belief that women are taking the main initiative in courtship is denied by Professor Folsom.

"Males still expect to take the initiative in courtship," he advises. "It is less true today, perhaps, since more obvious moves by the girl are tolerated. Still men continue to have a greater tendency to resist entanglements into which women seek to lead them than women have to resist men. The wise girl will recognize this situation and will at least give the man the feeling that he is taking the initiative."

Changing the theme slightly, he continues: "There is no evidence supporting the old idea that opposites make the best life partners. The lasting attraction usually is between similars. Statistics show that those with similar backgrounds are much more likely to marry happily than those with unlike backgrounds and interests."

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proximately the same social status, and in a variety of situations within that group, before a definite decision is made."

The girls are told to know themselves first, and then their men.

PROF. JOSEPH K. FOLSOM, professor of sociology, repeats the same advice when the girls face him in the lecture hall.

"It is especially important that mates be rather similar in aims and objectives," he says. "Values should be much alike. The two people may be different in style, temperament, and methods of obtaining their objectives. The greatest tragedy of married life is the mating of two persons whose values in life are incompatible. This happens most frequently when a mating is brought about through romance without sufficient ac-



Prof. J. Howard Howson (left) and Prof. Joseph K. Folsom, leaders in Vassar's summer courses on mental hygiene and family life.

quaintanceship. There is a lack of social machinery today which would bring young people together and let them become acquainted.

"We need some institution which will replace the old marriage broker. There have been college date bureaus and correspondence leagues but they haven't got very far yet. It is up to the younger generation to find a way of doing it."

"That's all very well," the cry goes up from the campus wailing walls around America, "but if love always went where it is sent we would choose somebody who would be fun forever!"

