

Matrimonial Experiences

I really did not want a wife. How, I, a sober man of forty, came to advertise for one, about a year ago, I have never been able to determine. Perhaps it was Fate that impelled me; more probably it was curiosity and a love of fun.

At any rate, my readers might have seen in the columns of a paper about a year ago, the following advertisement:

MATRIMONY—A professional man, aged twenty-eight, tall and dark, with private income apart from his profession, wishes to meet a young lady with a view to matrimonial alliance. The lady must be bright and intelligent, musical, and accustomed to move in good society, pecuniary gain less a consideration than a happy union. Address, S.S.A., Box 192.

I am ashamed to say that I had no misgivings, nothing but a feeling of amusement and pride, when I saw my composition in the glory of print. As I have confessed, my age is not twenty-eight, but forty, and, as I now confess, my private income is derived from a few gold shares which pay small and intermittent dividends, barely enough to keep me in gloves. But "all is fair in love and in war," I argued mentally and this trifling deviation from truth (or, as we lawyers call it, this "suggestio falsi"), while it would attract moths to the flame, would not for a moment stay the course of true love.

"True love!"—the idea took my fancy, and I laughed like a schoolboy over my little joke, and congratulated myself that I had had the good sense to reverse my initials.

Now, although my venture was conceived in the spirit of levity, it had a very serious issue, and I wish it to be understood that I am relating in sober truth an actual experience—with only such changes of initials and locale as will conceal the identities of the unhappy ladies who jumped at my bait.

I awaited the answers to my advertisement with excitement. They came thick and fast. The first mail on the following morning brought me seven, and by the end of the day I had reached the unlucky number of thirteen. Four came next day, and afterwards they dropped in singly until, a week after my advertisement appeared, the record was closed at twenty-three.

I will say nothing of my feelings on reading these precious letters, each one offering me, a stranger, beauty or youth or accomplishments, or all three. My object is to select from them a few, which may be regarded as a type of all, for the benefit and amusement of my readers. I have, I am sorry to say, no compunction in doing this. The writers cannot be traced, and if any should see the resurrection of a forgotten episode in their lives, some useful lesson may be learnt.

My first letter, which was written in a somewhat masculine hand, was as follows:

Dear Sir: I hope you will not think me wanting in modesty in answering your advertisement. I am naturally very diffident and retiring, but when the happiness of two lives are (sic) at stake, it is no time for false modesty. It almost seems that Nature has designed us for each other! I am exactly your own age; am reputed to be clever and accomplished. I am passionately fond of music, and am at home in any society. I may say that I have been married—for a few brief happy years. This, I hope, will not be a disqualification. I know the sweets and bitters of married life, and my experience of domestic management would be very helpful. I shall be happy to arrange a meeting, and am, Very truly yours,
Bertha M.

A straightforward letter enough. The unconscious admission that our ages were the same amused me. However, I was not quite prepared to become a second string to any lady's bow, and I fear that nature's designs have been frustrated in this case. The next letter was written in a large, unformed hand, with flourishes, intended, no doubt, to impress me. I reproduce it as written:

Mr. S. S. A.—Sir: In answer to your advertisement, I am on the lookout for a gentlemanly Party such as you seem to be. I am tall and stish, and very fond of concerts and theaters. My family is down in the world, and I am earning my living in domestic service; but when father was alive we moved in the best circles in the City. If you walk in Central Park to-morrow afternoon at three you will see a young lady near the Obelisk with a white parasol and pink roses in her hat. It will be me.

Yours respectfully, S. N.
It is needless to say that I never met the young lady with the white parasol in her hat.

My next letter was of a very different type. It was delicately perfumed, and written in a neat hand. It came from New Jersey.

Dear Sir: I hope I am not overstepping maidenly reserve in writing to you. I am so fearful of being thought indelicate that I have taken my dear sister into my confidence, and she quite approves of my writing. I have not for some years thought of love or marriage. I had intended to devote myself to my dear sister, who lives with me; but she is to be married soon to a wealthy stockbroker and will require my devotion no longer. I have been struck by the gentlemanly tone of your advertisement, and my heart goes out to you. I am accounted a good musician; indeed, I always take Sophie and I jointly conduct; and I the music lessons in the school which are familiar with the habits of good society. My dear father was a major in the army. You do not specify any

age. I am no longer quite young. Indeed, I am thirty-nine, but this slight difference in age will not prevent our union being an ideal one. My sister joins me in inviting you to drink tea with us to-morrow afternoon, or, indeed, any afternoon this week.

Very sincerely yours, Amy B.
There seemed to me to be something pathetic in this letter. I felt sorry for the writer, but when a lady confesses to thirty-nine—well, the stock broker and I are never likely to be related.

Letter no. 4 was written in a large, scrawling hand, well sprinkled with blots.

Dear Sir: I have just seen your advertisement in the—, and the thought flashed into my head what jolly fun it would be to marry. Although I am nearly eighteen I am still at boarding school, and I simply hate it. Miss De Foe, the head mistress, is an old cat, and half starves us. I am not going to stand it any longer. Dad has married again, and my stepmother is so spiteful that I would rather run away than live with her. It would be so jolly to marry and get away from it all. Please don't think me forward. I don't mean to be; only I am so sick of things. You seem to me to be dreadfully old. I hope you aren't very serious. They all say I am very pretty; but you can judge for yourself if you will meet me, etc, etc.

I am ashamed to say that I never met Mabel T., and for aught I know she may at this moment be making things lively for her stepmother. I smiled as I pictured her horror at finding that I am forty and bald.

My next letter was from a gushing young thing. It speaks for itself.

Dear Mr. S. S. A.: You won't think me indelicate for answering your advertisement, will you? I adore tall, dark men (are you handsome, too, I wonder?), and should like to be the wife of a professional man. Pa is only in trade, but in a very large way, and I was educated at boarding school where I learned deportment, etc. I am a good French scholar, but, strange to say, I am not musical, although my brothers and sisters are. I may mention that my mother's brother is Mayor of—

But what do all these things matter when two hearts fondly love each other, as I am sure we shall? I am petit and blond (sic), and am considered very pretty; though of course, I cannot judge. Please address P. R. c/o Station O., Brooklyn, as I don't want pa and all of them to know until it is all settled. Won't it be a surprise for them!

Yours lovingly,
Priscilla R.

"Pa and all of them," are still waiting the shock of discovery; "but what do these things matter," so long as I am spared that terrible family concert, with probably the mayor of—joining in?

I should like to give the remaining letters, but what editor would tolerate such an abuse of his columns? One more I must give. Of the rest I may simply say that the writers included a typewriter, a lady's maid, four more widows, one of whom confessed to three former husbands!, three governesses, and a lady who informed me on pink notepaper that she was the niece of a millionaire, but that, conditional on a proper settlement, (oh! my poor gold shares!), she was willing to bestow her hand on me, without having seen me, remember!

I must hasten to the last of my selected letters, which strangely enough was the very last I received.

Dear Sir: I am not ashamed to answer your advertisement, for I think from its tone you are an honorable man, and will not misunderstand my motive. I fear I have very little to offer you that will be acceptable, unless, indeed, you would prefer a loyal wife to one with a rich dowry.

I am, I think, fairly pretty and fairly well educated, but I have few, if any, graces and accomplishments. I have no money; but my mother taught me the arts by which a home may be made comfortable, and I have been nursed in thrift. I would try to make you very happy, and, in any event, I hope you will find a wife worthy of you, and that you will be very happy with her.
Faithfully yours,
Vera M.—

The tone of this letter pleased me very much. There was in it none of the tawdry sentiment or pretence which marked so many of the other letters—and I wondered vaguely how such a girl could answer a matrimonial advertisement.

The more I thought of this anomaly, the more my curiosity was stimulated. I arranged a meeting with her, still I am ashamed to say, out of idle curiosity, and was not surprised to find that she was a singularly modest attractive girl, full of—

"Oh, please do stop, Alfred!" It is my wife who thus rudely interrupts me. She has been peeping over my shoulder. "You will never finish if you begin a catalogue of my virtues. Simply say that the man who came to school remained to pray; that he has got a wife who is much too good for him, considering the mean way in which he deceived her as to his age, and that they were happy ever after."

And so we are! And perhaps, considering all, it's more than I deserve to be.

FEMININE FINESSE.

Amis, it seems to me that you slyly provoke your husband to wrath every morning, said the mother to her newly-married daughter, I'm afraid you do not know what you are doing.

I know exactly what I'm doing, mamma. He goes away angry in the morning and always brings me a nice present in the evening as a peace offering. He would never be so liberal if left to his own way.

DOESN'T APPLY.

I guess that if the truth were known, said the neighborhood gossip, Miss Biglittle is the bone of contention between her father and mother.

Bone? shouted the young man who waits on Miss Biglittle, bone? I should say not. She weighs 145 pounds and is plump as a partridge.



CALLING COSTUME.

An odd and effective gown, suitable for calling and reception, is made of corn-flower blue silk with dark blue velvet lining. The effect of the gown is very much that of a long cloak. The waist fastens a little to one side; there are wide revers and a high flaring collar, and these, with a band around the skirt, are all trimmed with Russian sable. There is a curious combination of coloring in this gown; the collar around the throat is of lilac satin stitched in narrow bands, there is an inside frill of pale lemon velvet, all of which are in sharp contrast to the blue

silk and velvet. The vest and long ends of the sash are embroidered in black chenille and cut jet on white chiffon. The muff matches the gown, and is also trimmed with bands of the sable. The sleeves are very simple, quite small, finished at the waist with flaring cuffs of dark blue velvet and a band of sable. With this gown is worn a toque of uncut velvet, with a double shell ornament holding stiff bows in place in front of a cut jet crown. At the back of the bonnet are three rows of cut jet, with balls of jet falling down on the hair.

THE HOME.

THE SEASONS.

(Spring.)

I arose one morn and from my door
Saw the world all dressed in green;
And I knew in her robe of emerald hue
Small amethysts could be seen.

'Twas like a dream of my childhood hours,
This happy growing time,
That spoke the poetry of youth,
When life itself was rhyme.

(Summer.)

I arose one morn, and beheld the hills
All clad in gorgeous robes,
Of scarlet and saffron, of purple and gold,
And jewels of circles and globes.

'Twas like a dream of more joyous days,
When life seemed a vision rare,
And I thought no earthly blessedness
Could with my own compare.

(Autumn.)

I arose one morn and to the hills
Again had changed attire;
The mantle, brown, bore scarlet gems
In luster most entire.

A vision 'twas of labor done,
Of tasks now at an end;
Ambitions, hopes, now realized,
Their joys or sorrows send.

(Winter.)

I arose one morn, from my window looked,
And the world was white and still,
No lay of plumed songsters heard,
Of robin or whip-poor-will;

But, oh, it was like a dream of peace,
This winding sheet of white—
The still world told of a sweet repose
The end of a stormy night.

God hel pus in our struggles here,
Give us to see the reasons
For all our cares; and wisdom grant
To gladly take life's seasons.

WASH-DAY MADE EASY.

In the exchange column of a recent household journal a lady asks others to send suggestions for lightening the burdens of house-keeping that house-mothers may have more time for rest, reading and the enjoyment of their families.

I wish to speak of "blue Monday," which is considered about the hardest day of the week. Many women wash as their mothers and grandmothers did and take no advantage of the modern improvements. Set tubs are a great help, saving ten minutes time, that is

After the second boiler-full is rubbed out rinse all the clothes and put into the blue-water, stir well with the stick, soosing the garments up and down before the final wringing. Shake the clothes before pinning to the line, that there may be no blue streaks.

In winter a pair of thick white cotton gloves are a great help in hanging out clothes; they protect the hands as well as mittens and are not as clumsy.

Flannels should be washed in hot suds, in which a little ammonia has been stirred. Do not rub soap directly upon the flannels. Rinse in clear water the same temperature and hang where they will dry quickly, pulling and shaking them several times to prevent them fulling. In winter it is best to dry them by the fire.

Colored clothes, stockings, etc., are usually washed in the first rinse water, adding hot water necessary to make it the right temperature. It is much better to rinse these in clear water. Be careful to hang them up, so that they may dry alike and as quickly as possible. A shady, windy place is best for colored clothes.

Shirts should be pinned between two lines, for the air to circulate freely. Clothes stiffened with boiled starch should be thoroughly dried before being sprinkled and the starch will not stick to the irons.

I imagine that I hear some housekeeper sisters say, "Ugh! that is not a clean way to wash." But if you will try it I feel sure that you will continue to. A friend of mine has washed with kerosene and Gold Dust for two years. Her washings are out early, the clothes are white and never smell of kerosene.

If the rinsing is faithfully done there will be no odor. I consider it a great comfort to get the washing, especially the steaming, part of it, out of the way so quickly.—Elizabeth.

EGGS IN TEMPTING WAYS.

Scalloped Eggs and Oysters.—Melt 2 oz fresh butter in a saucepan with salt, pepper, a grate of nutmeg, 1 dessert-spoon minced parsley and 1 teaspoon chives. Cook this mixture well and scald 4 doz oysters in their own liquor and then put the oysters and liquor, which must be strained, into the mixture and give it one boil. Add 5 or 6 hard-boiled eggs sliced. Simmer over a gentle fire for a few moments; then pour this into scallop shells, sprinkle with fine bread crumbs, lay small pieces of butter on the top, brown and serve.

Egg Cutlets.—Boil hard 6 eggs and when cold and shelled, cut them into rather thick slices; dip each slice into beaten egg; roll in bread crumbs seasoned with pepper, salt and minced parsley; fry them a light brown and do not let them lie in the frying pan an instant after they are cooked. Drain them free from fat and place them on a very hot dish, arrange neatly, and pour some boiling gravy over them.

Eggs with Fish.—A nice way of turning cold cooked fish to account. Take about 1 lb of cold cod or any white fish; trim the fish into neat pieces, picking out all the bones. Make about 1-2 pint fish broth and turn it to a sauce. Now choose a fire-proof china baking-dish, arrange the fish in the center, surrounding it with a circle of hard-boiled eggs cut into halves with their cut sides uppermost. Mask the whole with the sauce, dust over with grated cheese and set in the oven until the top is slightly browned.

Baked Eggs.—Butter a dish; cover the bottom with fine bread crumbs and break as many eggs as may be required over them, being careful not to break the yolks. Then sprinkle another layer of crumbs over them; season with pepper and salt; place on a few little pieces of butter and bake 5 minutes in a quick oven.

Eggs a la Creme.—Six eggs, 1 tablespoon flour, 1-2 teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon butter, 1-2 pint milk, pepper to taste. Boil the eggs 15 minutes, remove the shells and cut them in halves crosswise. Slice a little bit off the bottom, to make them stand and put the butter in a frying pan to melt. Add the flour, mix until smooth, add the milk and stir continually until it boils; then add salt and pepper. Stand the eggs on a heated platter; pour the sauce over and around them and serve very hot.

Poached Eggs with Tongue.—Stamp out 6 rounds of bread 3-8 inch thick with a round cutter 2 1-4 inches in diameter. Fry in butter and keep them hot on a wire drainer in the mouth of the oven. Stamp out 6 rounds of cold cooked tongue 1-4 inch thick, and warm these in a thick brown sauce. Poach 6 eggs very carefully; arrange the fried bread on a flat silver dish, put a round of hot tongue upon each; trim and lay a poached egg on the surface of the tongue; cover with the brown sauce and serve.

Egg Kromesies.—Poach 3 eggs in water, a little salted with 1 tablespoon vinegar in it. Drain the eggs, sprinkle them with a little salt, pepper and a dust of nutmeg. Dip them in batter and fry in boiling lard for 1 minute only.

Eggs a la Baldwin.—Boil 5 or 6 eggs until quite hard, and cut the whites into very small pieces. Make a rich thick cream sauce, into which sprinkle a little chopped parsley and a little cayenne and salt. Put in the pieces of white of egg and boil up for 1 minute and have ready the yolks, rubbed through a coarse sieve. Place the white egg mixture in a dish, cover with the yolk and brown slightly and serve.

The Sleeping Bag.
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