

"BOTH SIDES OF THE SHIELD."

IS MARRIAGE A LOTTERY? MARRIAGE IS *NOT* A LOTTERY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED."



SIR JOHN MORE (father of the Chancellor, Sir Thomas) was often heard to say—
 "I would compare the multitude of women which are to be chosen for wives unto a bag of snakes, having among them a single eel. Now, if a man should put his hand into this bag he may chance to light on the eel; but it is a hundred to one he shall be stung by a snake."

Perhaps the lottery theory of marriage was never stated more strongly or with greater cynicism; but is it true? I think not. Indeed, if I had thought otherwise I never would have written "How to be Happy though Married," for the object of that book was to show that if people will take some care in choosing their life-partners, and will, when married, use common sense and obey their best feelings, they will, as a general rule, be happy, even though the estate of marriage is surrounded by cares and difficulties which are only less than those of single life.

"No man ever gained a happy life by chance,
 Or yawned it into being with a wish."

The lottery theory, as generally understood, implies that this statement is not true. According to it happiness or unhappiness in domestic life comes with as little regard to merit or demerit as victory in a game of chance or a prize in a lottery. We think, on the contrary, that, as a rule, those who earn and deserve matrimonial happiness get it.



Of course there are many exceptions, and we all know that no amount of either prudence or goodness can keep away sickness, loss of fortune, and the other changes and chances that so greatly affect happiness. Still, if the right sort of life-partners have been chosen, these things will be taken in the proper spirit, and borne together in a way that increases rather than diminishes love. All depends upon the choice that is made. A prudent one will prevent a man from being stung by a snake, and will give him a goodly eel as his marriage portion.

Of course, young people cannot be expected to choose their partners in life simply from prudential reasons, as if they were setting up a shop together. They fall in love—and quite right, too, for they are following the dictates of Nature. The first time a young man meets a certain young woman he is drawn towards her by a strange, invincible influence. He says to himself—

"I'm not a marrying man, but if I were I might do worse than marry that young lady."

And when he does marry her (we must not take those who say that they are not marrying men too seriously) friends on both sides say—

"Well, I never could see what Mr. So-and-so saw to like in Miss So-and-so."

That is just it; they could not see it, and the young man himself could not see it, but it was Nature speaking to him in his strongest feelings and saying—

"Marry her, for she is the complement—the one who completes or fills up your nature—and you will be happy ever after. Refuse her, for the sake of another with more money or more influential connections, and you will be as miserable as those deserve to be who refuse to hear the voice of God speaking through me."

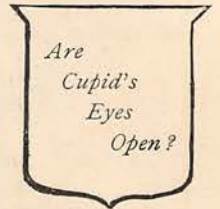
Now, when a young man obeys his *healthy* instincts and marries the young woman whom, in his own interest and in the interest of the human race Nature designed for him, should marriage in his case be called a lottery? If we eat and drink what we like it would be an abuse of words to speak of dinner as a lottery.

The revelation of science in this matter is not doubtful. If Darwin had been asked "Is marriage a lottery?" he would have answered, "It is sexual selection and natural selection, and anything rather than the haphazard thing we understand by a lottery."

But it is said love is blind, and a young man head and ears and eyes in love cannot discover whether the young lady to whom he is drawn has or has not a bad temper, for instance, or any of the other infirmities that make marriages failures. Men were deceivers ever, it is said, and even women can do a little in that way. Indeed, some of them do it so well that those who marry them discover that, like Jacob, they courted one woman and married another. Then we are reminded of the old conundrum: Why are women like bells? Because you do not know what metal they are made of until you ring them; and of Robert Hall's answer to the young man who asked if a certain lady would make a good wife—

"How can I tell? I never lived with her."

To this we answer that love is seldom so blind as it is here represented. Most young men of the period keep a weather eye open, and are by no means very ready to give themselves away. And to those who have a little experience of life, and who do not rush into marriage when mere children, there will appear small notes of character and indications which show, to speak familiarly, which way the wind is blowing. Having, in his "Advice to Young Men," told them that there is no condition of life in which industry in



a wife is not necessary, Cobbett goes on to answer the question—

“How is the purblind lover to ascertain whether she, whose smiles have bereft him of his senses—how is he to judge whether the beloved object will be industrious or lazy?”

In answer to this question he suggests several outward and visible signs, and then goes on to tell of a young man in Philadelphia, who, courting one of three sisters, happened to be on a visit to her when all the three were present, and when one said to the others—

“I wonder where our needle is?”

Upon which he withdrew as soon as was consistent with politeness, resolved never to think more of a girl who possessed a needle only in partnership, and who, it appeared, was not even too well informed where that share was deposited.

When Cobbett gave these hints on choosing a wife he spoke to young men as if they were going to play a game of skill and not of chance—as if they had free wills and were not lottery tickets to be drawn out of a hat by the first woman who cared to try her luck. Chance only means our ignorance of the cause of things, nor do we think that success and failure in marriage is more a matter of chance than success and failure in other departments of the business of life.

A servant-maid told a lady to whom she had applied for a situation that she had a fortnight's character from her last place. With even less knowledge than this of his character a girl will sometimes marry a man.

She does so, in her “salad days,” when she is “green in judgment;” or she wants a home and independence, and so

she rushes into matrimony, not with *the* man, but with the first who asks her. When too late she sees her husband as other people have all along seen him.

Marriage has not brought to her the ease and comfort she counted upon. And perhaps the husband has also been disillusioned. He married a girl only for her pretty face or graceful figure or skill at tennis, or because she flattered him, and now he finds that his bird of paradise is only an indifferent barn-door hen.

Then, when they marry, many people live for themselves just as much as they did when unmarried. They will not study the characters of their life-partners, and accommodate themselves to them. They reckon that they have a right to so much service, care, and tenderness from those who love them, instead of asking how much service, care, and tenderness they can give.

“Love and joy are torches lit from altar-fires of sacrifice,” and it is just because marriage gives continual opportunities for denying and effacing self that it is so blessed. How is it, however, when men and

women who are tied together indulge and exalt self, and instead of giving and taking, in order to pull together comfortably, insist on having their own way?

People who act in these and such like ways are surely not justified in saying that marriage is a lottery. If they had entered any profession or business as carelessly, and practised it with as little common-sense and self-denial, they would have failed quite as much. Our point is that marriage is not more a lottery than other conditions of life. Uncertainty reigns everywhere. We ourselves are the accidents of accidents. If it be true that one look may marry us it is also true that in other departments of life a so-called chance and trifling occurrence may determine a man's career.

“A kiss from my mother,” said West, “made me a painter.”

“A lucky chance,” Thomson tells us in his “Seasons,” “oft decides the fate of mighty monarchs.”

The conclusion to which a broad survey of life brings us is that everything is a lottery, or that nothing is, and that marriage is no exception. For my part I do not think that there is such a thing as chance, but believe that there is “a divinity that shapes our ends,” and that He, as Shakespeare again says (though He is too little consulted in the matter), “is the best Maker of marriages.”

If marriage be a lottery it is only in the sense that marriages are made in heaven.

“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.”

He makes, and as a rule brings together, the right people to marry; but “Mrs. Grundy” seeks out many inventions for separating them. They are not in exactly the same social set, or they have not just as much money as “Society” in her wisdom thinks they ought to have, or they cannot get introduced (and we know that an Englishman cannot rescue a fellow-creature from drowning, much less from the slough of matrimonial despond, if he has not been introduced); or they have not enough opportunities to judge of each other's characters.

All this hinders the action of the marriage of the fittest, and makes matrimony appear to be a game of chance, in which there is no room at all for skill.

And the consequences of this wrong theory, as we hold it to be, are very disastrous. If people think that it is an even chance whether they are happy or miserable in married life they will take no pains to choose rightly their life-partners or try in any way to work out their matrimonial salvation. They will reason as did Macbeth:—

“If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me, without my stir.”

This is especially the case with the thoughtless and uneducated. I knew a man who tossed up a



penny and married a certain woman merely because it came down "heads."

A couple hailing from the Old Kent Road were being married, when the following dialogue took place:—

Parson: "Wilt thou take this woman to be thy wedded wife?"

'Arry: "Yus."

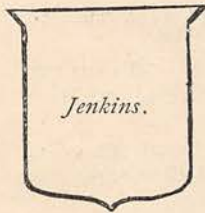
Parson (repeating same again): "Wilt thou," etc.

'Arry (getting impatient): "Yus, I will, and chance it."

This "chance it" shows the feeling about matrimony that prevails in the Old Kent Road and similar places, and it is a feeling which causes that honourable estate to be enterprised and taken in hand unadvisedly and lightly rather than "reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God."

MARRIAGE IS A LOTTERY.

BY G. B. BURGIN, AUTHOR OF "A QUAKER GIRL," "HIS LORDSHIP," ETC.



I SAT in a fair garden by the sea when the discussion of this subject was suggested to me by means of a London missive. Below me, to the left, a little fleet of fishing boats with red-brown sails, floated merrily along in the sunshine—merrily, that is, to persons familiar with the insidious restlessness of the sea—a restlessness which reduces that noble animal, Man, to a limp mass of motionless misery. A little above me, to the right, sullenly worked Jenkins the gardener, whose red-brown, warty nose inharmoniously reflected the hue of the sails below.

"Jenkins," I said questioningly, "you are reputed to have had a wide experience of matrimony. Do you know anything about it?"

Jenkins, glad of an excuse to cease from toil, dropped his scythe and prepared to consider the question, first throwing out a preliminary hint that he was "mortal dry." (The aridity of Jenkins, mentally and bodily, is a never-failing source of shame and wonder to his friends.)

"It is a dry subject, Jenkins, but I want to know in time for this evening's post whether matrimony is a lottery."

"T'all depends upon the people," quoth Jenkins judicially. "It's a lottery when people argify with their learned betters, but t'aint when they dussent. When my new wife argifies with me, I just fetches her a clip on the ear with anything handy, and that finishes the argifying. Now, a gentleman talks back soft-like, and lets his wife come over him, the foolish dodderel"; and Jenkins once more put on the pretence of working with the air of a man who had said all that pertained to the subject.

But he hadn't, the ill-conditioned son of Adam! To "fetch a woman a clip on the ear," à la Jenkins, by way of argument, is like brushing the gold-dust from the heart of a glorious lily, thereby robbing it of all beauty and power of expression.

And yet Jenkins had been married three times, his latest success accepting him for the apparently inadequate reason "he be such a masterful man, be Jenkins."

From Jenkins in the concrete, my thoughts wandered to marriage in the abstract.

Theoretically, marriage is a lifelong union of two people who shall grow together, live together, become one together, walk the thorny paths of life together, bravely helping each other over the rough places, bearing mutual sorrows and mutual weaknesses until they reach the mountain top and stand upon the summit of the sunlit land, comrades yet—comrades who have fought the good fight—comrades who, bathed in the golden glory of the setting sun, feel the painful burden of mortality fall from off their feeble frames, and soar on new-found pinions higher still—together!

That is marriage theoretically, according to some people's idea of it; but, if you interrogate your fellow-creatures, you shall find that most of them regard it as a lottery.

Take, for instance, a pair of great poets. Milton's idea of married happiness was that it ceased to be a lottery when the man did all the talking—a radically wrong conception if he hoped for matrimonial happiness, for no woman with any self-respect will allow herself to be out-talked by a mere man. Even if she is not talking sense (this does sometimes happen), the continuous murmur of her pretty babble is so convincing—to herself—that, like Tennyson's brooklet,

"Men may come, and men may go,"

but she goes on for ever! ever!! ever!!!

Byron, tempestuous human torrent that he was, found marriage a lottery because his wife interrupted him when he was turning out "copy" for Mr. Murray.

"I hope I do not interrupt you, Byron," she said, smilingly, one morning as she entered his study. (It was probably on the occasion he strove to find a rhyme for "intellectual," and achieved "hen-pecked you all.")

"Yes, you do," he said; and added a brutal word fit only for the lips of a còstermonger, thereby convincing her that marriage was a lottery in which she had lost.





The three great reasons why marriage is such a lottery are probably—

- (1) No woman ever thoroughly understands herself.
- (2) No man ever thoroughly understands a woman.
- (3) No woman ever thoroughly understands a man.

Man is supposed to be a reasoning animal. I say "supposed to be," because an acute reasoner rarely marries (he is not so unreasonable), whereas most men marry.

Even women, who notoriously prefer instinct to reason (that is why they also are so unreasonable), unconsciously admit this.

My friend Mr. Zangwill tells the story of a Jew who wanted to be married, but who knocked at the door of the wrong Rabbi.

"What do you want?" asked the woman who came to the door.

"I want to be married by the Rabbi," said the Jew.

"You have made a mistake," replied the woman. "My master does not marry people; he is *only a bringer of consolation to them*," i.e., a preacher of funeral sermons.

The reason women so rarely understand themselves is because they are generally impressionable. Like water, they take their colour from their surroundings. One sunny day, they are bright, mirthful, optimistic; the next day it rains, and they are dissolved in tears, looking back to what might have been, and utterly oblivious of the

"Days that are lost lamenting o'er lost days."

In their sunny mood they have married a man of cheerful temperament, and, now that they are depressed, he loses touch with them, becomes a noisy nuisance whose high spirits are an outrage, whose robust health is an insult to finer-fibred beings. When a temporarily pessimistic woman is tied for life to a permanently optimistic man, she feels that marriage is a lottery.



Reverse the cases, and the experience is the same. If one thinks of the diametrically opposite people who do marry each other, there is a certain point in the Yankee's comment on a buffalo bull which butted at an engine going full speed.

"Wal," said he, gazing upon the scattered fragments of the bison as they rapidly dispersed to the four corners of the universe—"Wal, I reckon to admire your courage, but I despise your judgment."

Of course, it is easy (too easy, alas!) to sneer, and say that the lottery of marriage is all a woman's fault, but it isn't. In nine cases out of ten, a man woos a woman under the profound impression that he has, to use a medical term, "diagnosed" her correctly; whereas

he has done nothing of the sort, but fallen in love with the creature of his own imagination and wedded a woman who ultimately proves to be someone else. He has, innocently enough, committed a moral bigamy; and the rest of his life is spent in a vain attempt to reconcile the dream woman and the real woman to each other, although in most cases, they will not even bow when they meet.

Ornithologically considering matrimony, in the days of their courtship the female bird is attracted to her mate by the splendour of his plumage. Among human beings, this rule is reversed, for the man is attracted by the appearance of the woman. Then the woman, actuated by that desire to please which is one of the most amiable instincts of her sex, unconsciously assimilates the man's ideas and tastes, and gives them forth as her own—he, all the while, unwitting that in time she will "revert" to her former self. With insects, the scientific term for a material approximation to their surroundings is called "simulation," and is adopted by them for safety's sake. Among human beings, however, it is frequently a source of danger and has sometimes a monosyllable prefixed to it which certainly alters the sense.

All men and women are likely to find marriage a lottery because, as Goethe says—

"Love feels, and cannot reason,"

and is often evanescent. If every man who marries were to sit down and calmly consider the chances for or against him in the marriage lottery, he would never marry at all. But he doesn't. He says to himself—

"It is not good for man to be alone. My whole heart is filled with passionate yearning and tumultuous pain and longing for my better, sweeter self. Without her, I cannot attain the glory of my manhood—do the great deeds I mean to do—live the beautiful life I have planned—without her I loathe life and do not know how to live.

"True; there are unhappy marriages. Man and maiden have loved each other before now as I love her, and the 'little rift within the lute' has made the music mute, the world has gone wrong with them, coldness has crept in and sundered all their ways. They have drifted apart in their Garden of Love, the serpent Dissension has reared its brilliant coils between them to hiss forth its volume of venomous hate. But surely our love is proof against such mischance. Surely, we understand each other so well that there can be no lottery in our union.

"Oh, no; we will teach the world it is all wrong; that there is no chance about it. I am not perfect, but she is; I am ugly, but she is beautiful; I am unworthy, but she is all worthy. There can be no risk, I shall always love her, always deem her fair and sweet and good.

"In lieu of going down the hill of life together, as the poets feign—the poor, blind poets who pretend to sing and fancy that old age is the death



of love, who is immortal!—we shall soar on blended pinions to the end, and, when the great Creator of all good takes us unto Himself, welcome Heaven because it will not be strange to us but the beautiful place in which we have already lived our holy lives.”

And so, they chance the lottery, and as time goes on he objects to cold mutton and she wonders why he *will* grow so fat, and their beautiful dreams flee one by one into the land of “Things that Never Last.”

Once upon a time, there was an old Athenian philosopher who said that man and woman were the corresponding halves of a wheel. These halves were set rolling through the universe by the Fates (the Fates were three old women, and therefore bound to make mistakes) until they met and became one. It is several thousand years ago since this marriage lottery began.

Try to conjure up in your mind's eye all that world of whirling wheels knocking against each other, becoming inextricably mixed, and setting everything

wrong. It is stupendous—bewildering—overwhelming! Your own poor little half-wheel is knocked hither and thither, tossed and tumbled, shaken and spun here and there, by these revolving semi-spheres; you are overcome by the dust and the din; and yet you hope to find your other half-sphere, although there is nothing to guide you, no clue by which you can distinguish it as it goes turning blindly about in what I once heard a gifted but somewhat too imaginative poet describe as “rudderless Chaos.” You can only say to yourself:—

“I have another life I long to meet,
Without which life my life is incomplete,
O sweeter self, like me art thou astray,
Striving with all thy heart to find the way
To mine”

But very often it is not to be. Every man must take his chances, and philosophically abide by the result. Your wheel matrimonial is a lottery; and the blind Fates which set it going will sometimes put a spoke in it whether you like it or not.

THE MOTH AND THE STAR.

THE ermine gleams in its royal pride,
The crown is bright on my lord the king;
The music rings through the palace wide,
And laughter hovers on golden wing.
But the laughter dies as the years run down,
The music ceases, the tale is told;
The rust has eaten the shining crown,
The moths devour the ermine-fold.
There shines a star in the summer night,
Over the palace, pure and far;
And the moths, that swarm at the windows bright,
Are trying ever to reach the star.

But the lamps are lit, so fair, so bright,
The star grows pale in the midnight sky,
And the moths are lured by the traitor light,
There in the flames they fall and die.

So the crown is rusted, for all its gold,
The pride of the palace for ever fled;
And close by the eaten ermine-fold
The moths that ate it, themselves are dead.
But the star still shines as the years go by,
No moths can reach it, no rust can stain
For the star is Love, that will never die,
Though men must perish and kingdoms wane.

FREDERIC E. WEATHERLY.

THE ODD ONE.



THERE are nine of us, and I am the odd one. The four eldest are fair and good-looking, and the four youngest are dark and strong. The fair and good-looking ones are brilliant, with a touch of genius; the dark and strong ones are plodding and dependable.

As for me, I am neither fair nor dark, for my eyes are brown and my hair is red; I am by no means strong, and nobody would venture to call me good-looking; I am not in the least brilliant, and nobody ever depends on me for anything. Of those above me in age, two are girls and two are boys, and there are two girls and two boys younger. Tom says that I am neither a girl nor a boy; but I pass as a girl.

I occupy the middle place on the see-saw of family life. I get none of the swinging and none of the falls. Whoever is up and whoever is down, I always keep the same place. I have a name, like the rest of my brothers and sisters, but acquaintances always forget it, and call me “The Odd One.”

I don't wish to grumble or appear discontented, for everybody is very kind to me: that is, as kind as they can be under the circumstances; but it must be acknowledged that circumstances have been very much against me. I emphasise this because if there is any blame anywhere I wish it to be laid upon the circumstances, for I should feel it very unjust to blame any of my friends. An odd one! what can be done with me? Think of it—an odd anything—an odd book, for instance; what do we generally do with it? It doesn't belong to any set. It is so thin and tall, or so thick and short, so bright or so dingy, so entirely