

EDITORIAL : VAN DIE REDAKSIE

MARRIAGE AND ACHIEVEMENT

A successful marriage or a successful career, that is the question. Whether it is nobler to live with one's wife or to serve the community. We have often wondered how the really famous and truly great men and women of the past have managed to maintain a happy or apparently happy family life. Ramon y Cajal worked from 6 o'clock in the morning until late at night and still found time to become a chess master by playing in the local cafés. When did he see his wife? Do great men find time for the small niceties which, to our mind, constitute the truly happy marriage?

It is obviously not possible to solve any of the problems posed by the above questions. Men and women will marry and procreate, whether they be stupid or super-intelligent, famous or obscure, and to try to withhold the right to marriage if a man showed promise of greatness would not only be inhuman but would be utterly impossible. One is not even sure whether bachelorhood is necessarily conducive to increased achievement, and there is reason to believe that the converse might be true. That is not the point we wish to discuss. What interests us is the incredible variation to which ostensibly happy marriages are subject. When is a marriage successful? To some, at the one end of the scale, all that is required is that the wife must keep the house reasonably tidy and must cook food which is not entirely inedible; and then she must go to bed. The motto in such homes seems to be: 'A woman's place is in the wrong'. She must not bother her pretty head with the affairs of men. Hubby will talk to her if and when it suits him. And yet they are happy, in spite of the fact that on such terms millions of years of evolution have passed them by, for that is the way the cave-men lived. Even the growling has not entirely disappeared.

At the other end of the scale we find the couples who can hardly bear to be separated, even for an hour. They live in one another's hair, so to speak. Neither can take the simplest decision without consulting the other and there is the constant atmosphere of a mutual admiration society in the house. Such people are blissfully happy . . . and they drive their friends to drink. Between these two extremes we find a long, sliding scale of possibilities, and in the middle stands what we hope can be regarded as the good norm: the couple who live in mutual respect and love and who communicate in an intelligent fashion, regularly and gladly. But the fact remains that there are many wives who would find such a state of affairs unbearable and who think that such emancipation can only lead to friction. To each his own.

There are two very dangerous situations we wish to point out. The first is that of the achieving man. He is constantly busy, thinking and scheming. If he does not actually bring work home physically, he does so mentally. He only utters when he is giving orders, either to his wife or to his underlings, and he laughs when it is necessary, usually for business reasons. He is not worried about the fact that he and his wife are slowly drifting apart, because he is not even aware of it. His only safeguard is the hope that he married a ninny-hammer. If his wife is intelligent, with a will to live a full life, he is in trouble. She will either build a career for herself and thus prove her own

worth in society, or she will take a lover. If she builds her own career, as like as not it will exclude her husband and they will each go their own way, blissfully unaware that their marriage consists of an entry in a register. Many business partners have a closer relationship.

The very curious thing is that these great men so often need light relaxation and must find somebody, a woman, with whom they can let their hair down and to whom they can talk. Such a person they find, not at home where she is waiting, but in some other pasture; and it is not even true that the forbidden fruit is chosen because of its youthful beauty. Only too often the newly found wailing-wall is considerably less attractive than the wife. Human nature is inexplicable.

The other dangerous situation concerns not the achieving man but the manual worker with the ambition and the intelligence to get on in life. He works in the sun all day and is tanned a honey colour. He is healthy and virile and full of energy, but his income is still small. His wife has a seemingly endless succession of babies and her figure shows the results. In order to help her appearance along she buys herself slippers with pompons and invests in vast quantities of curlers. Because her skin is inclined to wrinkle she fills it out a bit by eating intensively. To this apparition her husband returns every day. Because he is a man with ambition he soon gets promoted, usually to a desk job, and he is thrown into contact with young, attractive secretaries. Heaven help him if he should notice the difference between their mini-skirts and his wife's dresses, for society will never forgive him.

These problems are constantly encountered by the general practitioner. He, just like the minister of the church, must accept his role as family counsellor and fortunately he is still held in sufficient respect to be able to fulfil this very important function. But it would appear that a more outgoing policy is needed. By the time the practitioner is consulted concerning these problems it is far too late, because when the couple concerned have reached the stage where they have become aware of the fact that something is wrong there is usually very little that can be done. Preventive medicine is what is needed. The doctor should constantly be on the look-out for the early signs of the social diseases described above and he should then have the courage to speak out and to warn of the threatening danger. It is true that his efforts will probably often be met with an abusive explanation that he is dealing with honest, God-fearing people and that he must not apply his immoral mores to others. This does not mean that the doctor should not do his duty and warn where warning is needed.

Our Association should take it upon itself to institute regular public lectures on these and similar subjects in order to really fulfil our role as the guardian of the community health, but eventually it will remain the general practitioner who will be able to achieve the most and he must be adequately trained to meet this challenge. Psychiatrists should bear in mind that lectures on these subjects are far more likely to show results than the endless facts about psychoses with which the poor medical students are at present inundated.

ALLEEN IN DIE STAD

„Wer sich der Einsamkeit ergibt, ach, der ist bald allein“
Wilhelm Meister, Goethe.

Die verderflike invloed van die stad op die kuise eenvoud van die plattelander is 'n tema wat reeds gereeld in ons letterkunde en ook in dié van die buiteland voorgekom het. Veral die armoede en ellende wat gedurende die depressie so algemeen was en natuurlik die terugslae wat die herhaalde droogtes van ons land veroorsaak het, is onderwerpe wat die verbeelding van ons skrywers aangryp. Die goeie, opregte boerseun wat in die stad 'n heenkome kom soek omdat sy erfplaas op een of ander wyse in die steek gebly het, en wat dan weens omstandighede volkome buite sy beheer in die verkeerde tipe geselskap beland, is 'n karakter wat ons reeds goed ken. Miskien te goed. Ons wil vir geen oomblik ontken dat daar wel sulke ongelukkiges bestaan nie; juis na die droogtes van die afgelope aantal jare sal daar seker 'n groot aantal families wees wat eertyds welgestelde plaaseienaars was en wat nou 'n sukkelbestaan in een of ander stad moet voer. Maar dit is nie oor hulle wat ons wil skryf nie. Ons wil ons bepaal by die jong mans en vrouens wat uit eie keuse en sonder 'n drukkende las van armoede of dreigende honger na die stede kom om werk te soek of om universitêre opleiding te ontvang. Die welgesteldes en die minder gegoedes, die slimmes en die dommes, die goeies en die slegtes, hulle is ons tema. Nie die voortvluggende uitgeboerde plaasjapie nie.

Kom ons gee op hofflike wyse eerste aandag aan die vrouens. Wat doen 'n jong meisie alleen in 'n groot stad? Ons wil eers die antwoord verskaf alvorens ons die saak bespreek en die ideale probeer skets. 'n Jong nooi—dame klerk, tikster of ontvangsdame, dit kom nie daarop aan nie—sit skuins op haar bed in haar een-kamer woonstel of dergelyke loseerplek en blaai doelloos deur 'n geïllustreerde tydskrif, gewoonlik 'n strokiesprent uitgawe. Sy wag dat iets moet gebeur. Wat dit sal wees weet sy nie presies nie, hoewel sy natuurlik drome koester van 'n breë-skouer Don Juan wat haar van haar voete sal afdans en haar dan jubelend na die altaar sal lei. Maar dit maak nie saak nie; dit hoef nie noodwendig so 'n romantiese iets te wees wat gebeur nie; dit moet net iets wees—enigiets.

Natuurlik is dit die donkerste hoekie van die prentjie. Daar is talle aanvallige nooiens wat intelligent is en wat hul tyd nuttig gebruik, of wat altans juis só aanvallig is dat hulle geen tyd oor het om nuttig te gebruik nie. Ons hoef ons nie oor hierdie gelukkiges te kommer nie. Die feit bly egter staan dat die oorgrote meerderheid skuins op die bed sit en blaai.

Met slegs uitsonderings word jong meisies uit die beste huise geleer om al die korrekte dinge te doen en die aanvaarde norme van die gemeenskap na te kom. Hulle is skoon en sindelik, vriendelik, mooi gemanierd, weet hoe om aan te trek, is versigtig met geld en is pynlik eerlik in hul werk. Al wat ma en pa hulle nooit geleer het nie is om nie intellektuele barbare te wees nie. Daar is maar bitter weinig huishoudings waar die lees van boeke doelbewus aangemoedig word en intelligente gesprekke aan die orde van die dag is. Die rede hiervoor is natuurlik voor die hand liggend: Nòg ma, nòg pa lees self gereeld en

benewens sy werk en sy gholf het pa maar bra min onderwerpe waaroor hy intelligent kan praat. Nou is dit die dogter in die stad wat die spit moet afbyt.

Aanvanklik is dit heerlik om op eie pote te staan in die opwindende atmosfeer van sofistikasie wat daar in alle groot stede heers. Daar is winkelvensters om te bekyk, skynbaar eindelose keuses van rolprente in teenstelling met die eenmaal weeklikse vertoning van klein dorpies, en natuurlik mans. Mans om van te kies en te keur—'n blomtuin van aantreklike jong Apollo's. Die dae is te kort om dit alles behoorlik in te neem. En tog; skynbaar word die dae vinnig langer en na 'n paar maande is hulle byna onuithoubaar lank. Mens kan nie elke aand fliek nie en daar is min dinge wat gouer vervelig raak as om in winkelvensters te kyk as mens nie geld het nie. Vir een of ander rede wil die tallose jong mans die hotel of losieshuis se telefoonnommer nie onthou nie en selfs die aande begin langer en langer word. Die enigste uitweg is om maar skuins op die bed te sit . . . en te wag.

Hierdie ongelukkige jong dames sal enigiets doen om die tyd om te kry en veral om mans te bekom: Hulle sal te veel geld op hul hare uitgee, duur rokke koop, met ingewikkeld diëte hul figure in toom hou en desnoods selfs met promiskuiteit eksperimenteer. Die een ding wat hulle egter om die dood nie sal doen nie is om te lees en hul verstand te verbeter. Hul eensaamheid sal hulle aan enigiets toeskryf vanaf pudies tot die weersomstandighede, maar dit sal nooit tot hulle deurdring dat die meisies wat die room van die beskikbare mans so om hulle oppik dit regkry omdat daardie mans graag 'n nooi wil hê wat ietsie meer weet en oor iets anders kan gesels as Rooi Jan se nuutste eskapades of die jongste brokkie kantoor skinderstories. Kunsuitstallings of biblioteke is nie vir hulle aanvaarbare ontmoetingsplekke nie. Kultuur, wat hierdie dogters betref, lê opgesluit in die Espresso-masjiene in die koffie-lokale.

Nou die jong mans. Met lang, blondgebleikte hare en breë skouers kom hulle uit die see gestap, of liever gestrompel, want 'n branderplank is swaar. Dit is die gelukkiges, diegene wat by die see woon of die geld of geleentheid het om 'n sodanige sport gereeld te beoefen, maar daar is helaas talle ander wat nie die voorregte het nie. Die jong mans wat hul militêre opleiding moet deurmaak, byvoorbeeld. Goeie jong seuns met energie en deursettingsvermoë wat hulle dan moet gebruik om Sondagmiddag deur die strate te drentel omdat daar in ons land niks, absoluut niks is wat hulle kan doen nie. Nee, daar is nie niks nie; hulle kan die jong meisies gaan haal wat skuins op die bed sit en saam met hulle deur die strate drentel. En as almal se voete uiteindelik seer is kan hulle na die meisie se kamer gaan omdat vrouens nie deur die sersant in die kamp ontvang word nie. Hulle moet na die meisie se kamer gaan omdat georganiseerde sport op Sondag nie moreel aanvaarbaar is nie.

Intensiewe maatskaplike werk is nodig in die stede en dit word reeds gedoen, maar op die oomblik is dit toegespits op die uitgesaktes en die armes van gees. Dringende aandag is nodig vir die middel groep, want hulle is die werklike eensames.