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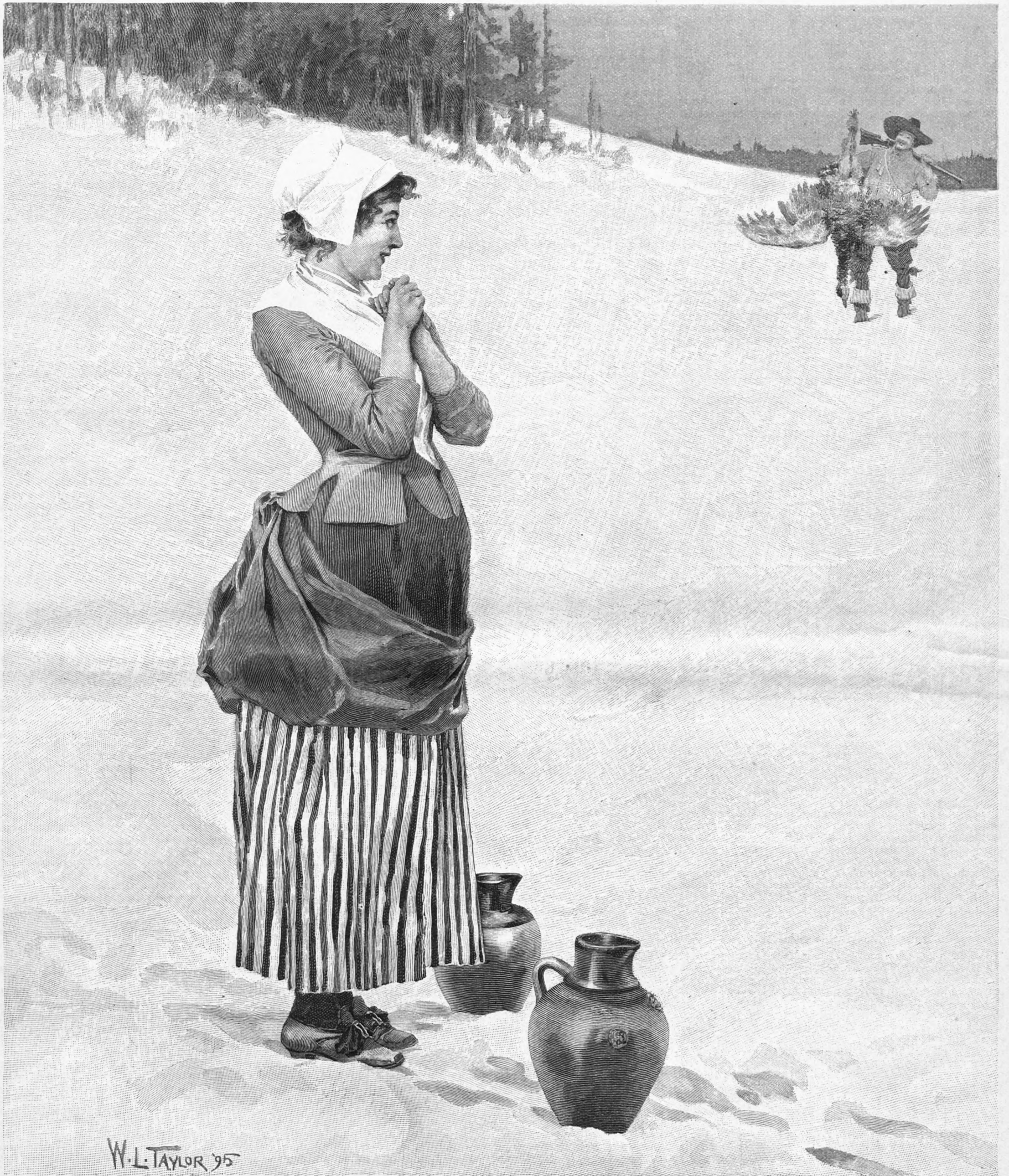
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THANKSGIVING-TIME IN THE COLONIES

Drawn by W. L. Taylor

“Times are hard in the Colonies,” writes Mr. Taylor concerning the theme of his illustration, “and there is sorry prospect of a feast on Thanksgiving. The little maid has gone to the spring with her water-jugs. It is early winter, and the landscape around about her is cold and cheerless. It is with a heavy heart that she thinks of the home and the plenty far over the sea. From the dense forest a figure appears, and she sees it is some one from her own settlement. Her lover? Who knows? He holds up a great, wild turkey, for which he has hunted long and hard, and braved the Indians in the forest. Feast and plenty for to-morrow!”

THE YOUNG MAN AND MARRIAGE

By Rev. Charles H. Parkhurst, D. D.

MY PRESENT article has to do with a delicate matter, and one which, therefore, needs all the more to be handled firmly and without evasion. Marriage is a man's normal condition. Plato has a suggestive dialogue in which he represents the individual as having been originally complete in himself, but as having been subsequently slit into sections, so teaching us that the matrimonial impulse is simply the longing with which the fragments go about searching for their disjointed counterparts. This is probably more graphic than it is anatomically accurate, but serves its purpose in emphasizing the ingrainedness of the connubial impulse, and makes marriage an essential ingredient of life. Plato, however, had been anticipated by one who touched still closer to the marrow of the matter, and who wrote with more of authority. Almost the first move made in Adam's behalf was to supply him with the necessary consort; and this it is distinctly stated was not done in exclusive regard to the necessities of Adam, but in pursuance of the wider principle that it is not good for man to be alone—which is, after all, but the Biblical statement of the Platonic idea that a man is only a vulgar fraction till he has discovered his correlate.

NATURE'S INTENTION IS GOD'S LAW

THERE is no difficulty in understanding what Nature's intention is in this matter. It denotes a great deal in general that she means that a man should adopt a particular course, and it denotes a great deal more in particular that she means that a man should not play the game of life or fight the battle of life alone. Nature's intention is God's law, and as such it is imprudent to ignore it, and as such I would go farther and say that it is criminal to disobey it. It is not intended by this to imply that there may not, in particular instances, be insuperable impediments to marriage which would absolve from matrimonial obligation. I am only trying to make distinct the truth that marriage is our normal estate, that God has legislated marriage as a law of life, and that the man who deals with that law, either indifferently or contemptuously, does so at his peril, and comes very closely upon the ground of disobedience to Divine requirement, for it must always be remembered that the personal ability to do as we like carries with it no slightest guarantee of moral right to do as we like. Nature is a part of the unwritten word of God.

MAN IS NOT A FINISHED UNIT

THE idea that the marriage question is one that a young man can afford to treat with indifference would become possible only on the assumption that each man is in himself a finished unit. But each man is not in himself a finished unit. The individual regularly lacks certain qualities essential to a completed personality. A male taken by himself is simply an attempt, just as a female taken by herself is simply an attempt. An old bachelor is constantly suggestive of what he has just missed of becoming. So is an old maid. It is for this reason that we need to emphasize and foster the qualities which belong exclusively to the two sexes respectively, making manliness to mean the most possible, and making womanliness to mean the most possible; not dragging the distinctive qualities of either over upon the ground of the other.

Every young man knows that it is just the thoroughness and vigor of his own distinctive and manly propensities that create in him the healthiest longing for an alliance with the opposite sex. This is on the principle that the larger any half the more conspicuous becomes its need of being completed by some companion half. It is on this account that a young man is almost never matrimonially drawn toward a manish woman. It adds to what he already has, without supplying that which he lacks. This is not charging woman with characterlessness, but asserting that if she is a woman in the best sense of the term she will have a character of her own distinct from that of man, and which man will need to draw into association with himself in order that by the coalition of the two there may be constituted a single personality that is more than either and the product of both.

EDITOR'S NOTE—The tenth of a series of articles by Dr. Parkhurst addressed to young men, which began in the JOURNAL of February, 1896.

A WIFE IS NOT A PIECE OF BRIC-À-BRAC

IT IS always a question as to how much real use there is in counseling a young man in regard to matrimonial questions. He will probably not take deep interest in such matters till he meets his destiny, and when he does meet it prudential considerations will be likely to weigh about as much with him as logic would with a cyclone. However, the idea that a wife is not bric-à-brac, but a solid utility, is a good one to have planted in a young man's mind, and once well lodged there it is to be hoped that it will exert, at least, a degree of pressure when the critical moment arrives. I do not believe there is a much nicer thing this side of Heaven than falling in love, but there is nothing in that to prevent getting into a good, safe and intelligent position from which to let the "fall" come. I was exceedingly interested a while ago at being approached by a young acquaintance of mine who wanted to consult me on the marriage question. He had completed his college course and was about graduating from the seminary. He was nothing if not sincere and conscientious. "And now," said he, "I suppose I ought to get married." There was a certain grimness in his way of approaching the matter that affected me curiously, although I had a suspicion that he was using his philosophy to disguise a shy shred of sentiment; and the fact that he married within a comparatively short time lets me imagine that he had already been seriously exposed when he came to me for advice. Nevertheless, there was in his bearing toward the question a feature of composure, and a disposition to take the honest dimensions of the situation that augured well for his matrimonial future. He married the girl he loved, but the solid sense with which he sized up the real meaning of marriage prevented his making a fool of himself.

GETTING MATRIMONIALY PLANTED

A LARGE percentage of what in these connections is ordinarily called love is about as safe a guide in the choice of a companion as a firefly would be trust-worthy illumination in the intricacies of a deep forest on a dark night. I am well aware that it is much easier to reason about these things in the abstract than it is to keep one's head cool and one's temperature regulated in a season of severe exposure; but so much of the success or failure of a young man's after life depends on the way in which he gets matrimonially planted that it seems well worth while to pre-empt the ground with as much rational consideration as possible. If a man has accustomed himself to canvass the ground with some seriousness before the susceptible moment arrives there will be more likelihood of his being able to ride the storm when it breaks without the loss of ship, cargo and crew.

In this connection it may be apropos to say parenthetically that it is a great pity that fathers and mothers, as a rule, handle these questions with their sons in a manner of so little sense and frankness. A young man is bound to fall in love—in fact, it is his duty to—and if his parents are going to do anything for him they will have to get their work in before the blow falls. Trying to stamp out results after the fact is too much like trying to undo a powder-blast after the fuse has been fired, which not only does not hinder the explosion but is apt to maim the meddlers. For a young man to find his heart becoming mortgaged to some one particular young woman is natural, and in the best sense of the word rational, and fathers and mothers make a grievous mistake in treating the youth, under these circumstances, in a way to imply that his behavior is half criminal and half idiotic. There is no sin in it and nothing in the world that is less laughable. Such dealings tend to cut the lines of confidence which in all matters should subsist between parents and children. To the youth himself or young man the matter is a very earnest one, and as far removed from criminality as it is from silliness, and anything in the parental attitude that tends to imply that it is either the one or the other is so much done toward driving the love-smitten fellow in upon himself, and giving him over to the sway of a passion that is, perhaps, unguided and unreasoning. It is a singular and lamentable fact that in the greatest two matters of a young man's life—religion and marriage—there is so generally that lack of mutual confidence between fathers and sons that the wisdom, experience and affection of the former are of no avail to meet the exigencies of the latter.

A GOOD WIFE IS SO MUCH CAPITAL

MARRIAGE then, to a certain degree, a young man is to look upon from a utilitarian standpoint. A good wife is so much capital. She makes him to be, by a kind of grace, a great deal more than he is by nature. She contributes the qualities needed in order to convert his vigor into a safe as well as productive efficiency. She introduces, for instance, into his intellectual nature that ingredient of sentiment which intellect requires in order to be able to do its best work. Heart and brain need to conspire in order to the attainment of the true, and without caring to assert that man is naturally heartless, any more than I should wish to assume that woman is by nature brainless, yet heart in its way is just as precious as brain in its way, and woman, so long as she is untainted by the passion of wanting to be a man, will be that member of the connubial corporation that will in particular contribute to the capital stock its affectional element. Some women may resent this, but I would like to caution young men against cherishing matrimonial designs upon any woman who is likely to resent it. If what you want is a wife, and not merely a housekeeper, you must keep your eye well open for a warm bundle of femininity that will be to you in a personal way what the fire on the hearth is to you in a physical way—a fund of tropical comfort that will keep the stiffness out of your thinking, the frost out of your feeling, and the general machinery of your life in a condition of pleasurable activity.

WOMANLY POWER BEHIND A MAN

UNFORTUNATELY for the interests of marriage it is quite too imperfectly realized how much of what men have been able to do in the world has been made possible by the inaudible and very likely the invisible cooperation of the wife. No analysis is, perhaps, sufficiently delicate to discriminate perfectly between the elements which the husband and the wife respectively contribute to the sum of a productive and successful life. The man, as being the more conspicuous factor, will probably be credited with pretty nearly all the results which are achieved, but he will always know, if he thinks carefully and considerately, and the public will be able to suspect, if it reads at all between the lines, that his best achievements contain an influential ingredient foreign to his own nature, and native only to the less demonstrative genius of his wife. In this way the more perfect the marriage relation the more distinctly does the Scriptural dictum that it is not good for man to be alone show itself to be, and the more evident and expensive appears the blunder which is being made by men who consider marriage a matter of indifference, and who leave it to accident to decide whether they shall respect or ignore this original privilege and prime necessity of their being.

MARRIAGE FOR MONEY

I CANNOT dismiss this matter without deprecating the tendency, so conspicuously operative among us, to degrade marriage to the level of commerce. This is not denying that there are material considerations that in this matter, as in all others, require to be respected. A poor young man marrying a poor young girl, with only the prospect that their life will become more and more complicated as time goes on, is a fool. I have had affectionate couples wait upon me to be married and then ask me to trust them for the wedding fee. I think that we who are clergymen ought to refuse to marry applicants who cannot show to our satisfaction that there is no likelihood that either they or their possible offspring will ever come upon the town. Nor, on the other hand, does my objection lie against any amount of contingent assets with which either or both of the contracting parties may chance to be endowed. My only contention is that in every marriage not essentially unholy the basal element is love, and that marriages which are "arranged," marriages which mean, first of all, an affair of perquisites or a barter in commodities, are a distinct infraction upon the spirit of the seventh commandment. The voluminous displays with which we know such unions to be sometimes celebrated only aggravate the mischief, and operate to teach our young people in all conditions of life that marriage may be reduced to a species of traffic, differing from the dealings on the stock or produce exchange only in some of the details with which the bargain is consummated. Such examples are distinctly alien to the entire genius of the institution of marriage.

Let me, in conclusion, express it as my most earnest and cordial wish in behalf of every young man who may read this article that duty and Providence may conduct him to the discovery of the girl that is intended for him and best fitted to him, and that he may have fulfilled in his own experience all the possibilities of comfort and strength which a true union is abundantly able to afford.

C. H. Parkhurst.



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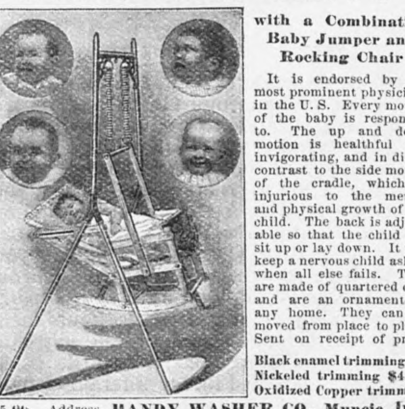
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