

OTHERS SAY—

The following article appeared originally in *The Columns*, the literary magazine of Cornell University. Dr. Smiley is head of the men's medical department at Cornell, while Dr. Evans holds a similar position in the women's medical department. The author, Huntington Sharp, is managing editor of *The Columns*. Reprinted with permission.—Ed.

Student Marriage By Huntington Sharp

Five thousand undergraduate men and women at this university are in constant and intimate social contact. We ask, what should our physical relations be that we may live our college years most happily and successfully? There are three ways open to us: we must observe total abstinence, seek relief in liaisons, or face the responsibilities of marriage. The first of these necessities fuller sex education; the second is an excuse when education has failed; the third would be possible only under social and economic readjustment.

A knowledge of sex facts should have been gained in childhood and in the social life of pre-college days. The Freshman is given a complete picture of the structure of the human body, a knowledge of the functions of its parts, and some taste of mental hygiene. There comes in upper years a working acquaintance with sociology, and with experience an understanding of his own emotional processes. But this is not enough. Young men should be aware of the more subtle threads of sexual growth. They must realize the significance of Jung's statement that we go through an ordered sexual development from the sadism of boyhood, through onanism, homosexuality, and narcissism of adolescence, to a normal heterosexual maturity at twenty-three or twenty-five. Knowledge of this simplifies sexual consciousness.

The student is relieved of the fear that he is abnormal and can direct himself to maturity by the straightest path. This can do away with worry and doubt, but it will not itself relieve physical tension. Dr. Dean Smiley is convinced that earnest application to class work and extra-curricular activities should occupy the students' minds so fully that sex problems can disturb them little or not at all. Participation in sports and outside work has been proved satisfactory in lessening the physical strain that is the result of hard mental work. Dr. Jeanette Evans suggests, "Let them understand the facts, show them the reasons for the mating impulse, and you have lessened the worries and anxiety; help them find two interests, one in sports or activities and the other in studies, and you have broken the strain."

Will a program of abstinence secured by an understanding of sex, and by a supplementary variety of interests order our physical habits so that we are happier and that our university work will be more significant? It will do much to give us a healthy and trustworthy attitude, but it does not solve the problem; at least for those who question ordinary moral restrictions. There are those who believe that marriage is a biocentric institution and that our ethics must revolve about our bodies, not our bodies about our ethics. A cruder version of this protest justified visits to prostitutes with the theory that sexual indulgence was necessary to health. Medical science will no longer allow this excuse.

The student now does not seek to justify himself save to say that his hunger is natural and needs no justification. The privacy of automobiles contributes to the success of this. Men and women of the same class come into closer and free social contact. Therefore university men now share their sex experiences with women of their own position and age, often students. Perhaps the situation has been aggravated by this change, but according to the Cornell Medical Department, it is less difficult to cope with than formerly. Students are more willing to discuss their problems with a medical advisor; there are fewer cases of venereal disease; there has been no indication that there is greater promiscuity.

This change has put illicit love on a coordinate, mutually understood basis. This sex activity is not bolstered by the false theory of necessity; it is not excused by ignorance. Pretense, misrepresentation, and seduction are rarely found as part of it. These men and women are moved by curiosity, impatience, or a youthful search for maturity. Or their indulgence may be an admission of weakness, in which each confesses his inability to hold fast to an apparently endless, hopeless, unreasonable self-denial.

The practical results of this have been that college officers learn of affairs through women students as well as through men; and since these are affairs with a frankly confessed cause and object, they are more easily understood and solved. Apart from the fact that this shift

has doubled the number of sinners, it is greeted by college officials as promising better mental and physical health. But college officials dare not forget that the number of sinners has been doubled.

The compromise between abstinence and promiscuity is marriage. Marriages erases the moral stain of sex relation. But have students who want marriage given in too easily to mere physical desire? That can be said. Yet there is no reason to accept this as the whole truth. Strong physical desire is a logical impulse to marriage among students, but it is a like motive for marriage in after-college years. It might be said that something is gained by waiting. We derive more satisfaction from that which we have earned by hard work than from that which we are given.

Thus it would be better to hold off the gratification of love so that when the time comes the participants deserve it by their fortitude, and the realization is more profound. This is a stupid argument. Who would make things difficult that he may enjoy them more for having suffered? The worth of student marriage as a solution resolves into what we can expect of marriage and what marriage offers that is immediately necessary. Percy L. Clark answers this question: "If marriage is to mean no more than an outlet for the 'grand passions', it is ridiculous."

There are two great objects in marriage — companionship and children. In the way our society is economically ordered the first, companionship, is the immediate object of most marriages; it is this that the matured college man and woman must have in a full measure as soon as they have a sense of values to build upon and have found their mates. But the second, the privilege of having a home and children, must be the ultimate goal. Normal satisfactory sex relations are the keystone of marriage — for there is no such thing as truly successful platonic wedlock — but it is not enough alone to make marriage significant as a social institution."

Mr. Clark demands that a sound sense of values must be the foundation of marriage. We have no right to assume that students have a sound sense of values. But it may

Agreement Is Changed By Fraternity Council

Twenty-nine undergraduate fraternities were represented last night at the Interfraternity Council meeting in John Jay Hall. Article II section 1 of the agreement was amended to read: "The Chairman of the Interfraternity Council shall be the Dean of the College. He shall preside at the meetings of the Interfraternity Council and shall perform the duties specified in this document."

It was announced that Freshmen would receive their bids on Friday Dec. 14 in the Trustees' Room in the Library. Bids are to be sent by the fraternities to the Dean's office in Hamilton Hall. Harold A. Rousselot '29 and Hugh H. Gardner '29 were elected delegate and alternate, respectively, to the National Undergraduate Interfraternity Council meeting to be held on Dec. 30 and 31 at the Hotel Pennsylvania.

be that marriage is the cause, and not the effect, of a sound sense of values. We best learn how to handle responsibilities by assuming them. One best understands the problems of life by living. We may ask, where are we to get a sense of values for marriage unless it be chiefly through marriage itself? Compared to matriage, formal education is kindergarden.

Were more of our students married there is no doubt that they would be better prepared for life, if only because they were in life already. One may object that this is anticipating drowning by holding one's head under in a bathtub of water. That is not entirely so. With married students formal education and the life to which it would apply go on together.

Existence would be no longer a matter of compartments: twenty years of education, forty years for realization, and ten years for senility. Education and realization would go forward hand in hand. I have seen in a half-dozen striking examples that married students not only can continue their academic work satisfactorily, but that they obviously get more from their studies than do others. This is because for these life is full and meaningful physical tension is relieved, education has become important as a means to a needed end.

However, circumstance is practically prohibitive. If the student man and wife live together, their establishment will inevitably demand study hours at the oven and the sink. Whether or not they have an income necessary to provide for servants, the business of housekeeping is serious and long. Marriage is in part an economic bargain. Custom requires the man to provide. Obviously, the student husband cannot do so and remain in the university unless he is exceptional. Perforce, the girl will have to chip in and together they can pool their resources and live. Ultimately, as long as they are students, money must come from their parents.

This is not an accepted and popular custom, and once more the necessity of the flesh shapes our ethics. I quote again from Mr. Clark: "If student marriage is proved to be efficacious in solving some part of the college sex problem (occasioned by the postponement of marriage because of the time spent in schools) there must be a broadening of parental responsibility to include such marriage in the educational scheme. When a goal is in sight it is not so difficult to keep it in mind."

"If, therefore, young people could look forward to relatively early marriage as a part of their educational program, instead of a something in the dim and distant future, they could and would accept the moral restraint of the late 'teens and early twenties with much better grace."

This necessary readjustment between parents and children is not altogether novel, nor is it revolu-

tionary, burdensome, or unfair as it seems. There would be no additional financial burden on the parents, for the married children would live on the same allowances that they enjoyed previous to their marriage. The need of sharing would test the compatibility and understanding they have of each other.

Student marriage, made possible by the financial support of parents, would be in early years of marriage without children. This would necessitate a further social readjustment to legalize the dissemination of knowledge concerning birth control methods and the sale of contraceptives.

In the last analysis, is this Student Marriage "Student Companionate Marriage"? It is, in that it recognizes the privilege and necessity of voluntary motherhood. It is, in that it makes allowances for incompatibility. All young people see the possibility of mis-mating. They share the universal objection to our antiquated and unsuccessful divorce laws.

The Swedish divorce law grants annulment upon mutual consent when a year has elapsed from the time the complaint was brought before a judge. This has been successful. We feel that we are entitled to as much intelligent protection. This does not mean that we think that marriage is a scheme for sexual experimentation.

The greater number of students who want to marry while still in college are in no experimental mood. They are as sincere in their intention to make marriage permanent and beautiful as are any young men and women. They have considered the two responsibilities of marriage, and they demand the first, companionship. But they are not prepared for the second, children. If there is a natural desire for children—a rhetorical question—they will have children as soon as they are economically able.

In or out of college, there is a minority that is not bound by any moral code. For these "Companionate Marriage" is "Trial Marriage", and wedlock is no more than a coat to be slipped on, which if it does not please, can be thrown on the heap of the other discarded decencies. License is the price we have always paid for freedom. But we must not forget that Student Marriage is bound by parental consent.

I have presented three facets of the university sex problem: abstinence by education, promiscuity where education has failed, and marriage—sexually sound and socially impractical. Apparently education must endeavor to eliminate promiscuity, and society must revise its economic standards to make room for under graduate marriage.

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