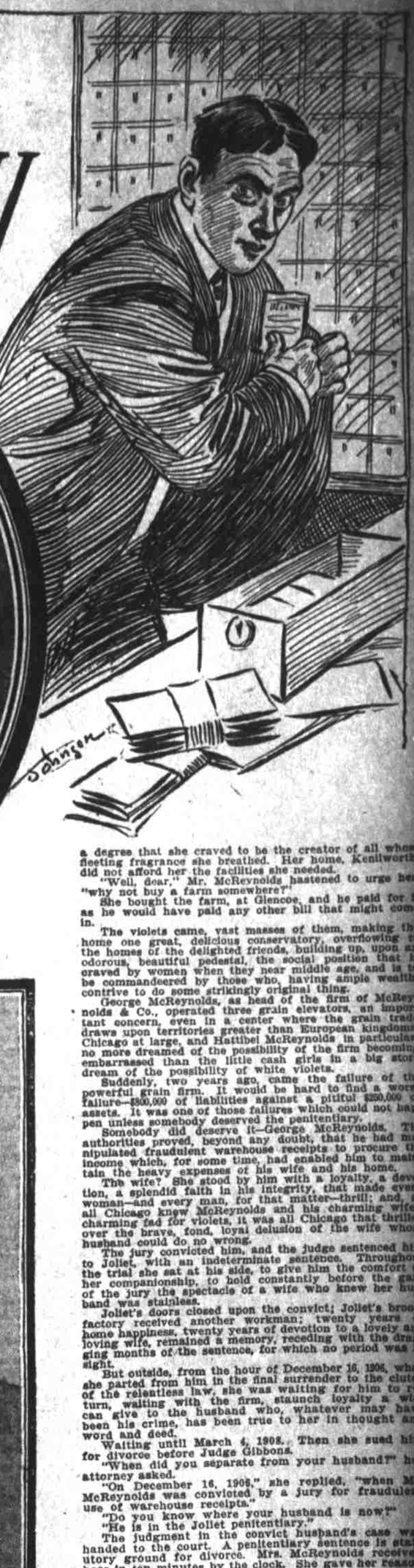
YOUR WIFE WANTS to KNOW

Mrs. George McReynolds Who Was Ignorant of Her Husband's Circumstances



The Husband Who Lost Wife and Liberty.

There's a Lesson for Married Men in the Story of George McReynolds

AS A MAN, when Fate begins to deal the unkind blows that are to ruin your fortune or your business, do you come home at night and tell your wife, and prepare her for the economy that is judicious?

When Fate keeps on dealing its blows, and ruin is near, do you tell her then?

Or do you conceive it your manly part to bear your burden alone, that you may let her enjoy the few days or weeks or months that remain to her of the happiness you dread to see dissipated?

HERE is a problem which, in its less acute stages, confronts every husband and every wife, from the millionaires who seem to be so intrenched in riches that no cataclysm in finance can wrench them into poverty, to the helper on the farm who wonders anxiously whether the querulous complaints of his employer over the corn crop mean that he shall be out of work early in the fall.

It is a problem which, in its crisis, has confronted hundreds of men, and, in its most cruel denouement, some scores of women.

It is one which, in every aspect of a husband's exaggerated chivalry of protection and of the wife's exaggeration of what she considered her duty to him and to herself, confronted only a few weeks ago George S. McReynolds, one of Chicago's most prominent Board of Trade operators, and his beautiful wife.

It was nearly twenty years ago that George McReynolds courted Hattibel Cook. It was a good, honest, plain American romance of the time and the place, Michigan.

There were no modern, new-fangled complications of money, social status and feminine fads to mar the course of true love. McReynolds was a fairly good-looking, ambitious, earnest young man, whose most notable qualification was that he had the capacity for falling very deeply, ardently and devotedly in love with a certain pretty girl named Hattibel.

The girl was intelligent, educated, fond of flowers, fond of home, fond of the innocent pleasures that brighten life in the most worthy stratum of American society, with a special faculty for appreciating the affection of some one particular man.

From these salient details it will be apparent that McReynolds and the girl he loved were a remarkable pair—so remarkable that they were precisely like the others among the millions of American men and women who never get into the newspapers.

To them, as to others of the millions, the time arrived when both realized they were made for each other. At Niles, Mich., on October 31, 1888, they were married.

After their marriage they gradually assumed characteristics that served to differentiate them from the rest of the population.

McReynolds, well-to-do, gradually grew more wealthy—not in a small way, for that would have left him still in the class of the average citizen. He forged rapidly onward as a grain broker, his progress being fairly coincident with the expansion of the interests of Chicago, where his business activities were pursued and his home life was enjoyed.

He became vice president of the Board of Trade, one of the solid men of Chicago, universal respect attending his advancement, universal opinion crediting him with being a millionaire, which is one of the healthiest things for credit that has ever been contrived.

His wife was sure he was a millionaire. Not that he ever told her so; far from it. Her George belonged to that class of business men who divorce, absolutely, the office from the home.

He never carried any troubles home to worry her. Apparently, and in reality, for many, many years, he didn't have any. He simply went to the dry, old office every morning, like other Chicago men who pass their lives in business, with never a thought of retiring until they resignedly drop in the harness, die with a decent satisfaction in having worked hard from the time they were kids, and leave their families comfortably well off.

Mrs. McReynolds appreciated him—what woman wouldn't? Every year of their married life brought to their splendid home the daily newspaper containing accounts, more and more numerous, of rich men here and rich men there who had this excuse to take them from home to secret, disgraceful pleasures, or had that liaison, long mysteriously cherished, to startle into heart pangs some confiding, complacent wife.

But with her George there was never any excuse, never even the possibility of a disillusion or a scandal. He was always in the office or on the floor, occupied with trade, or at home, devoted to his wife.

Was there any fault to be found with him?

So far as Hattibel McReynolds could discern, none.

Even when it came to that last, crucial test, money, he was as liberal as the most extravagant of women could wish. Her regular monthly allowance was $1000. The household and other bills that he met, always with a laugh or a friendly smile, made a yearly total, including that generous allowance of hers, which amounted to $38,000.

It went on, in the fine, free, lavish fashion, year after year. She could not make a call upon his generosity and his resources which he did not meet pleasantly, gladly—as though, indeed, he found it his greatest delight to gratify her tastes, however costly.

Her girlish fondness for flowers finally settled upon that most delicate, most poetic of blooms, the sweet, shy violet. She developed a passion for violets—thousands, tens of thousands, of all varieties and of all costliness.

Violets became her charming, elegant hobby, to such a degree that she craved to be the creator of all whose fleeting fragrance she breathed. Her home, Kenilworth, did not afford her the facilities she needed.

"Well, dear," Mr. McReynolds hastened to urge her, "why not buy a farm somewhere?"

She bought the farm, at Glencoe, and he paid for it as he would have paid any other bill that might come in.

The violets came, vast masses of them, making the home one great, delicious conservatory, overflowing to the homes of the delighted friends, building up, upon an odorous, beautiful pedestal, the social position that is craved by women when they near middle age, and is to be commandeered by those who, having ample wealth, contrive to do some strikingly original thing.

George McReynolds, as head of the firm of McReynolds & Co., operated three grain elevators, an important concern, even in a center where the grain trade draws upon territories greater than European kingdoms. Chicago at large, and Hattibel McReynolds in particular, no more dreamed of the possibility of the firm becoming embarrassed than the little cash girls in a big store dream of the possibility of white violets.

Suddenly, two years ago, came the failure of the powerful grain firm. It would be hard to find a worse failure—$300,000 of liabilities against a pitiful $250,000 of assets. It was one of those failures which could not happen unless somebody deserved the penitentiary.

Somebody did deserve it—George McReynolds. The authorities proved, beyond any doubt, that he had manipulated fraudulent warehouse receipts to procure the income which, for some time, had enabled him to maintain the heavy expenses of his wife and his home.

The wife? She stood by him with a loyalty, a devotion, a splendid faith in his integrity, that made every woman—and every man, for that matter—thrill; and as all Chicago knew McReynolds and his charming wife's charming fad for violets, it was all Chicago that thrilled over the brave, fond, loyal delusion of the wife whose husband could do no wrong.

The jury convicted him, and the judge sentenced him to Joliet, with an indeterminate sentence. Throughout the trial she sat at his side, to give him the comfort of her companionship, to hold constantly before the gaze of the jury the spectacle of a wife who knew her husband was stainless.

Joliet's doors closed upon the convict; Joliet's broom factory received another workman; twenty years of home happiness, twenty years of devotion to a lovely and loving wife, remained a memory, receding with the dragging months of the sentence, for which no period was in sight.

But outside, from the hour of December 16, 1906, when she parted from him in the final surrender to the clutch of the relentless law, she was waiting for him to return, waiting with the firm, staunch loyalty a wife can give to the husband who, whatever may have been his crime, has been true to her in thought and word and deed.

Waiting until March 4, 1908. Then she sued him for divorce before Judge Gibbons.

"When did you separate from your husband?" her attorney asked.

"On December 16, 1906," she replied, "when Mr. McReynolds was convicted by a jury for fraudulent use of warehouse receipts."

"Do you know where your husband is now?"

"He is in the Joliet penitentiary."

The judgment in the convict husband's case was handed to the court. A penitentiary sentence is statutory ground for divorce. Mrs. McReynolds received hers in ten minutes by the clock. She gave her reason for divorcing him:

"The greatest mistake a man can make is to keep a wife in ignorance of his business affairs. Of course, he does it because he wants to shield her from unpleasantness, but it is not only a mistake, but an insult to a woman's mentality."

That is all. That is the way Hattibel Cook McReynolds decided the problem when it came up to her.

WALTZING off WEIGHT the LATEST FAD

Mrs. Henry Payne Whitney, Who Gives Waltz Rehearsals.

"The Merry Widow" Waltz.

Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr. A "Merry Widow" Enthusiast.

SOCIETY is now deeply taken with the newest form of exercise—no, rather the oldest.

But it's new in that it is done with the distinct purpose of taking exercise. It was done for the mere purpose of graceful pleasure in the groves of Hellas, and, doubtless, in the early days after Eve left Eden.

It's merely the dance—as old as the hills, but in the form of a new waltz. It's from the "Merry Widow," and society women are now using it as a means of reducing weight by a pleasing and effective measure—at least that portion of American society dominated by Mrs. Henry Payne Whitney and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr., in New York.

SOCIETY has discovered that the waltz—this waltz—is really exercise.

It effectively reduces the weight of the too material, and is said to add flesh to the thin. It tones up the depressed and soothes the nervous and hysterical. And it's pleasant.

Young Donald Brian, the prince in the "Merry Widow," was invited to the house of Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jr., for tea a little while ago. All the guests, who, of course, had seen the opera, were enthusiastic about the waltz.

"It's so merry, so strenuous, so full of go," declared a young matron.

That is it—it has the "go"; there are quick steps and litne, active bodily movements.

"I should like to learn it," declared another young woman, wistfully, looking at the handsome Brian.

"And I'd be charmed to teach you," chivalrously volunteered the "prince" of the opera.

Delightful! It was so good of him! But when?

"Why not now?" he asked.

And so there was a rehearsal.

A few days later Mrs. Whitney gave a tea. Then there was another rehearsal.

"It's so exciting, so refreshing," declared one fair enthusiast.

Mr. Brian volunteered the information that it had reduced his weight nine pounds. He even declared that Miss Ethel Jackson, who does the dance with him, hasn't needed any massage to improve her figure since she began doing the "Merry Widow" waltz.

A FAD IN AN INSTANT

So society took up the waltz as an exercise. It was just that twist which made it popular. The waltz as exercise! Who had heard of such a thing?

But is dancing beneficial as an exercise?

"Yes," declared a prominent physician when asked the question, "dancing as an exercise is extremely beneficial.

"There are the regular and rhythmical bodily movements, there is the music, with which the muscles play in harmony, which tranquilizes the mind.

"The waltz certainly must be beneficial to nervous people. The stimulation, on the other hand, must be of benefit to those people who lie in bed all day suffering from headaches, the nerves and other disorders after social exactions of the previous evening.

"Extremely fat women would not benefit by the violent dancing, but there is hardly any doubt that persons wishing to keep down increasing weight will find the waltz effective."