

Why Arthur Hammerstein Keeps on Getting Married

ARTHUR HAMMERSTEIN, the son of the famous theatre builder and grand opera impresario, has married for the third time at forty-six. He justifies his own successive weddings and makes a plea for more romance in marriage in the interview which follows.

By Arthur Hammerstein
(In an Interview)

YES, I have married the third time. In the same breath I say that I won't promise that this will be my last marriage.

I hope this one will last, but I don't know. No marriage should outlast love. Who knows how long love will last? Nobody. Life is filled with the unexpected. It is what happens that determines our course—not what we might want to happen.

I may become Nat Goodwin's successor. Who knows? Certainly I don't.

There are proverbs which we often hear and never doubt. One of them is, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." Why should that be true of everything else in life except matrimony?

It strikes me there is a lot of unnecessary fuss made about marriage. I do a number of things of importance—secure a valuable play, make a production that is sure of a year on Broadway and several years later on the road—but people who know me say little about it. They take that as a matter of course. But I marry again and my private office is buried in telegrams. The day after the announcement of my marriage I received five hundred wires. When it was announced that I was going to be married I had a lot of applications from knot-splitters to do the job. Why? I tell you there's too much fuss made about a contract between two persons who are going to try to live together.

That man Herron had it right. He made a vow publicly to take Miss Carrie Rand to be his companion. She made the same vow to him. It was publicly done. I understand they lived in complete harmony until her death, and that he sincerely mourns her.

Less fuss, longer marriages, I say.

All the turmoil, the telegrams, the congratulations on what is an ordinary function of life make both parties to the contract restless.

They think they are—sentenced. All this fuss sounds to them like the turning of a key in the door of a cell.

They feel that they are in jail for life. And yet, think it over reasonably, and why should they be? A man who takes a lease on an apartment doesn't think he must live all the rest of his life in that apartment. If he gets a derby hat he may think it is a fine derby. It really may be a fine one. But he doesn't fancy that he must wear that hat until he reaches his deathbed.

Don't think that this doctrine is wicked. It is quite the contrary. Honest successive marriages, even though the marriages follow each other in rapid succession, are better than a nominal marriage and a hidden romance around the corner.

Somebody said, "There is a secret orchard in every man's life, in which he plucks forbidden fruit." I'm opposed to that secret orchard. The reason may surprise you. When there is such a secret romance the woman doesn't respect the man. And if he isn't blinded by egotism he knows that he cuts a pretty small figure in her eyes. That's one reason why the sub-rosa attachment is never really happy.

Poetical dreamers say that frequent marriages are a man's pursuit of the ideal. Richard Le Gallienne wrote "The Quest of the Golden Girl." But I, who speak from the standpoint of practical experience, deny that. In a physical sense, at least, it isn't true. My first wife was a woman of regular features, beautiful auburn hair, large, blue eyes, and a rounded, symmetrical figure. My second was tall—an inch taller than I—and thin—so thin that you would cut yourself if you struck her elbow. She was dark. My new bride is a petite blonde.

I don't believe that a man has more or less in mind one type of woman, and that if he marries any other he makes a mistake and is sure to revert to his ideal. What I do believe, with all my heart and soul, is that every man wants a good fellow.

There are too many wives and not enough good fellows. That's what's the matter with marriage.

A wife is a turnkey. A good fellow is a comrade.

The Former Miss Claire Nagle, Now Mrs. Hammerstein No. 3.



The Pioneer Mrs. Hammerstein.

I began marrying when I was twenty-one. That's altogether too early.

A boy's marriage is nearly always a calamity. Read the divorce statistics.

To particularize: The first Mrs. Hammerstein and I went to the same public school. It was in Harlem. Ours was a boy and a girl affair.

But it was a mistake from the beginning. A mistake before it began. I had been about the theatre all my life. I was embarking on a theatrical manager's career. A man in that business should never marry a woman who is not of it. She won't understand it. She becomes jealous and suspicious even when there is no cause. She knows that the life of a man in the business of the theatre has many temptations. He knows that he is an idol to some women because he can do a great deal for them. He is like all men—more or less vain and vulnerable. This his wife—the home type—realizes; realizes so keenly that even when the man is innocent she makes his life a hell of doubt and discord.

My first marriage followed this unhappy pattern. My wife left me. I arranged that she should get a divorce. The interlocutory decree was granted, although at the time she secured it there was no other woman in my life. A few days before the final decree was granted she came back to me. She said she didn't want a divorce. For the sake of our little girl, Elaine, I agreed that we should begin life again. But it was a failure. When there had been such a complete break there can be no beginning again. The cement of love loses its grip. My first wife reopened the divorce proceedings and this time the bonds were severed.

Among my acquaintances was John A. Hoagland. I met his wife, who had been a concert singer. We three went about a good deal together. He used to telephone me and say, "I'm going to be busy this evening. Won't you take Grace out somewhere? All right. Thanks."

They came to the parting of the ways and I married Grace Weir Hoagland.

That was a real love match. I had passed the callow age. It was not boyish

love. After a man is thirty he doesn't believe in so-called love at first sight. He knows there is no such thing. What a boy mistakes for that is something entirely different.

My second wife and I were congenial. We were also devoted—at least, I was. She knew the life of the stage and was interested in it. She was broadminded. There was nothing petty in her. We would have been together still but for my mother-in-law. My wife proved that she cared more for her mother than she did for me. That ended our marriage.

Her mother was an invalid. Mrs. Hammerstein II. said that while her mother lived she would spend most of her time with her in Hartford. I told her that as her husband I ought to come first. She said, "No. While she lives, my mother



Arthur Hammerstein Who Has Taken Unto Himself a Third Wife.

Why Should "Try, Try Again" Apply to Everything but Matrimony Asks the Famous Impresario's Son, Explaining How a Wife "May Be Turned from a Jailer Into a Comrade"

little patient at the hospital helped me over one obstacle that was in my way. That was my daughter Elaine. Elaine is twenty-two. The girl I married is twenty-three. I thought Elaine mightn't like it. She and I were great chums. She has never wanted me to be as much interested in anyone else as in her. But—well, we are married.

It wasn't a sudden match for Broadway. Broadway life speeds up romances. It is like crossing on a transatlantic steamer. You get better acquainted on shipboard in five days than you do in ordinary conditions of living in a year. So in Broadway two weeks are as two years.

I saw Miss Nagle every day at rehearsals. After the play opened I saw her at dinner and at theatre and at supper after the play. For five months we saw each other nearly every day.

Three marriages have taught me something about the psychology of the state of matrimony. One is that the actress is a popular marriage mate because she is a good fellow. Her life has taught her good-fellowship. She is broadminded and cheery and vivacious. Between her and the usual woman in the home there is the same difference there is between a race horse and a truck horse.

Mrs. Hammerstein No. 2.

shall come first." My three marriages have taught me that every man needs romance. If he doesn't have it at home he goes seeking it elsewhere. But he can have it at home if his wife is a good fellow.

I have learned that suspicion is the grave of love.

"Where have you been?" is the question that opens the tollgate on the road of divorce.

Never ask a man where he has been. He resents it. Even if he has been phandering you can't get him back by that question. If a woman concentrated on making herself attractive, a household magnet, she would never need to ask it.

One reason for the shortness of marriage is that there is too much familiarity. A couple know each other too well. If there were on the part of each a feeling that certain boundaries must not be passed there would be a magnetism for each other. A feeling now and then that the person across the table is not your chattel but a stranger in the house would solidify the marriage state.

Women have silly ideas about alluring the male. They resort to primitive means. They think that undress is provocative. As a matter of fact, a woman never looks so well as when she is dressed. A neatly shod foot is attractive. A bare foot is ugly.

I have heard that a man may be down but he's never out—matrimonially. Perhaps. It is true that any man can get some woman to marry him. But that chap that married the other day at seventy I think is a mark. Let me say that I am forty-six.

I would not have it understood that I am opposed to marriage. I am not one of those advanced thinkers who believe that we can dispense with marriage. Men need it. So do women. Nor do I think that—as so-called advance thinkers say—men and women who are married should live their separate lives in separate homes and see each other occasionally. That is not practicable, if only because man is a lonely body. He wants to go home to something human. He can't talk to his housekeeper. His dog isn't chatty. His parrot is monotonous. He wants human reaction.

Marriage is distinctly all right. But we should be careful how we practice it.

I think legalized trial marriage would promote matrimony.

I believe that divorce should be made easier instead of harder. Then both husband and wife would be better mates. They would be on their good behavior. And no jail is a jail when the door is open to the touch. Then it becomes a home.

I said, "All right. Send her around." She came to rehearsals and set to work. No, I wasn't especially struck with her at the beginning. It was watching her work that caused me to be interested in her.

Every man likes a girl who is full of life. He may say he prefers the gentle, soothing type, but that is because he has never known one of the other kind. I noticed that Miss Claire Nagle was never tired. She was always ready to work, never ready to quit. She was, as the saying goes, "always on her toes."

I noticed, too, that she was always in good humor. She was of the sunny, smiling type. While we were on tour and she played until half past eleven and was up and at the station at six she was as fresh and happy as at noon. Maybe I would have been proof against that, but she became ill and was taken to a hospital. I called upon her there. She was still sunny, still smiling, still in spirit "on her toes." I admired her gameness, and I pitied her with the pity that one who is well feels for those who are ill. The poet fellows have it right sometimes. The one who said, "Pity is akin to love" knew what he was talking about. He had called on someone in an hospital who already held interest for him.

That visit to the bedside of the sturdy