



## SHE SAYS: "Marriage Is a One-Way Compromise"

by Katherine Orcate

WHEN I became a bride, like most young wives I was given something old, something new, a cookbook, and a headful of romantic platitudes. My mother insisted that "the way to a man's heart is through his stomach." My aunt winked knowingly and suggested that both the Lord and she loved big families. And my mother-in-law told me to stop working at once, for "two can live as cheaply as one." No one, not even our forthright clergyman, burdened this innocent bride with the real facts of life. I'm not talking about the birds and bees, but rather the first rule of matrimony—that *marriage is a one-sided compromise*.

Fortunately—or perhaps unfortunately—it doesn't take a bride long to learn this little lesson. One friend told me she discovered it as she climbed into the car after her wedding. Happily anticipating the honeymoon trip her groom had secretly planned, she begged him to reveal their destination.

"You guess!" he teased.

"Florida?" she asked hopefully. "Bermuda? New York? California?"

To each the young groom shook his head.

"Then where?"

"Fishing!"

For most of us, the awakening is not so rude. We do get to Bermuda or Florida or Coney Island anyhow, but sooner or later all of us learn that marriage rests 80 percent on the wife's adjustability.

One of my relations, a woman now in her sixties, often tells the story of her early married life and her hopes for a house. She knew what she wanted; she'd even seen the compact little home of her dreams. But each time she pressed her husband about a house,

he said, "Wait! Our bank account is still too low."

She waited. Finally one day they went for a drive. "I've a surprise for you," the husband said, parking his car in front of a large, barn-like structure. "I bought this house for you last week, and to simplify things, I got the rugs and furniture, too."

As the young wife walked through the sunless rooms packed with ugly furniture, her eyes filled with tears. Troubled, the husband said, "Look, if you're still unhappy after we've tried living in it a while, why we'll move."

She was "unhappy" about that house through three children, five grandchildren, and 35 years. But like Mrs. Calvin Coolidge, whose first home was "bought for her," she lived in it.

Most wives these days are allowed some say in buying and furnishing a home. But after the last flourish has been added, how often is an oversized footstool or a shabby easy chair rolled back into the living room to ruin the decor? And what does a conscientious spouse say when her husband growls, "It's my house, isn't it? Don't I deserve a little comfort?"

THEN there's a simple thing like food! Simple, that is, if you serve what he likes, the way he likes it. (Generally this means the way his mother used to make it.) If you don't, then it's even simpler, for as all brides quickly learn, you eat the stew alone—in tears.

My mother talked about a man's heart and stomach, but she neglected to mention a man's taste. She had illusions of pheasant under glass and shrimp de jonghe. Little did she realize that her daughter would one day keep romance alive on frankfurters.

Looking around, though, I consider myself lucky. I may have said a permanent farewell to poultry,

rare meat, mushrooms, and a long list of other delicacies, but at least my husband eats leftovers. I know plenty of wives who haven't served their favorite food for years and who've never served the same dish two days running, yet are criticized for straining the family budget.

Budgets? How weary I get of the old saws about the little wife breaking the family bank and depriving her young of "greens," all for the sake of a gorgeous new hat. Most of my friends go hatless and furless, and they stay that way because their husbands would rather drive a new car.

Lots of women are long-range planners and savers who work hard to boost their family's standard of living but fail because their husbands can't resist monogrammed shirts, fishing tackle, or outboard motors. Men believe in budgets until they want something badly, then everything is forgotten.

There is no better example of a man's way in a man's world than hobbies. This is true of camera addicts, do-it-yourselfers, and amateur artists, but golfers lead the field. If a wife is lucky, she likes the game. About 10 percent of our five million golfers are women, largely wives who limp about the links on the theory that "if you can't fight 'em, join 'em." The "widows" stay home and wait—for supper, for social lives, and, hopefully, for Winter.

In our house the budget and the balmy days are spent on the "blue" rather than on the "green." For the head of our house is head over heels in love with a small boat. Ipso facto, we go boating every free moment of the Summer.

Do I like making sandwiches? Would I prefer baseball or tennis? Do I even like boats? Frankly, I can't remember ever being asked! Either I keep the family afloat, or I sink into a long Summer alone.

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