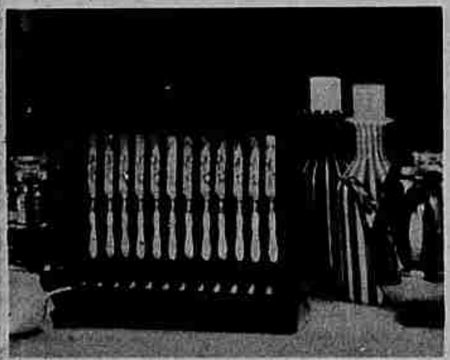

Newlyweds

(Continued)

that the effort to live up to them becomes an end in itself in which they completely lose sight of standards vastly more important to them as adults.

This lather of gifts neither starts nor ends with the wedding. Thousands of parents have gone along passively with the growing incidence of young people who marry in college and matriculate in connubial bliss—often on the old man's checking account.

Today, one of every four college students is married—bringing about a whole new set of social problems and questions. Often these youngsters plunge into marriage with only the vaguest idea of what it will cost and where the money is coming from. And studies made in colleges show that two decidedly can't live as cheaply as one —even on a collegiate shoestring. It costs the average married couple in college—cutting all economy corners—between $300 and $400 a month to survive. This means one of two things: either the parents hand it out to them or the wife must work—or both.

I know of one young couple receiving money from the parents of each—with neither set of parents aware that the other is contributing.

OFTEN THESE subsidies continue when the kids finish college.

One couple made a sizable downpayment on a home and turned over the mortgage and the key to the young marrieds as a belated wedding present when they finished college. The young man got a job that offered fine promise but a modest starting salary that did not permit him to furnish the house properly or maintain the mortgage payments without strain.

The couple was in continuous, nerve-grating financial straits—yet they felt that giving up the house would be an act of ingratitude and an admission of failure. They superficially resolved their problems when the young man quit his job and went to work for his wife's father at a considerable salary he should not yet command.

Result: the young man is doing work he doesn't like, and relations between the husband and wife are uneasy.

Not too many years ago, the working youngster was expected to contribute to the family finances. Now, this is not only seldom expected of him, but he is usually given a handout to supplement his earned income. This is not to suggest that we should go back to the days of the sweatshop; but we certainly do need to draw a new perspective on the problem instead of drifting into ever-larger subsidies for young people.

The saddest thing of all is that generally the motive of the parents and friends doling out these expensive gifts and subsidies is an earnest desire to help the youngsters. And far too often, it has just the opposite effect. It sets a standard for young people in their formative years that they can't hope to maintain when they are "on their own."

Many thoughtful Americans are deeply concerned about this situation. Psychiatrist Jerome D. Frank said recently: "Our goal as parents is not to produce adults who are continually serene but individuals who are able to distill strength and wisdom from the vicissitudes of life. Basking in creature comfort as we do, we are more apt to resent the inevitable hardships and sufferings of life and perhaps are more easily demoralized by them than members of less materially favored societies.

"A cornerstone of mental health, as I see it, is the ability to deal confidently with new experiences and profit from them. A child develops this ability best through having to cope with problems."

Hanson Baldwin, military editor of the *New York Times*, sees this toughness slipping away. And it worries him. He says: "The American man has been pampered. The extremely high standards of American life and the sheltered environment contrast strongly with the stark life in Russia and Red China, where hard work takes precedence over security. Can American man—after years of protective conditioning—vie with this barbarian who has lived by his wits, his initiative, his brawn?"

THE ONLY possible answer is that parents need to take stock of the moral and mental toughening of their children. They need to ask themselves: are we giving our young people too much, making it too easy for them, endowing them with a false set of values and standards? Are we setting a good example for them in these respects?

There's no easy answer to these questions. We must progress with the times and meet the Space Age and its problems on its own terms. But this doesn't mean giving our kids the world on a flying saucer—especially when they're first starting out and are eager and able to make their own conquests.

When and How to Help Your Children

It's natural and normal for parents to want to help their children even after they're married, says Dr. Freda S. Kehm, director of the Association for Family Living in Chicago. But it's important, she cautions, to guard against overindulging them. Here are her common-sense suggestions:

1. Make the subsidy fit the situation. In other words, don't offer a young couple gifts or "handouts" that are beyond their means to maintain or that will require them to scale a false ladder of material values so that they may use them.

2. Set an example of wise spending, sound credit, and moral and ethical values for your children to emulate. Young people raised in an atmosphere of extreme materialism can hardly be expected to adopt high values.

3. Stand firm against that most persuasive of all arguments: "Everyone else is doing it." Don't let "everyone else" dictate your family policies or coerce you into sacrificing your own good judgment or sense of principle.

4. Finally, don't deprive your children of the satisfaction of earning for themselves the things they really want. Every young American deserves to experience the sense of accomplishment that comes with attaining desirable goals and possessions by himself. If he suffers a few bumps and bruises along the way, they're part of the experience of growing up.