

WHY WIVES STAY HOME:



[It is unusual to hear a married person talking enthusiastically about marriage. Is this because most married people are unhappy (or merely reticent)? And why do wives stay home? In this article, condensed from a radio talk, LESLIE REES, Federal Play Editor of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, examines the way in which dramatists have dealt with this subject.]

HAVE you noticed how seldom it is you hear a married person talking enthusiastically about marriage? Men in each other's company avoid the subject. Women in each other's company talk about the troubles and worries and work that marriage brings.

Married couples in the presence of others refer to their marriage guardedly, mock-cynically, carefully refraining from conceding points in marriage's favour. This happens even among people whom you know to be pleasantly married, or more or less so.

It is the same with writers. In the great majority of instances, writers have always been scathing, or at the least humorously sarcastic about marriage.

"Marriage", said Ambrose Bierce, "is the state or condition of a community consisting of a master, a mistress, and two slaves—making, in all, two."

"Wedlock," said John Ray, "is a padlock."

There is *Punch's* most famous joke: "Advice to those about to Marry—Don't."

And *London Opinion's* comment: "Bigamy is having one wife too many. Monogamy is certain instances is the same thing."

Even old Sophocles, who lived two or three thousand years ago, exclaimed on behalf of one of his characters: "Only the woman who knows the cares of wedlock by experience knows what I endure."

It is Inevitable

Those are representative sayings. Nor would it be easy to assemble such a list giving the opposite point of view.

Why are people so hard on marriage? Is it because most married people are unhappy?

Personally, I don't think so. Of course everybody hates at times the cramping restraints of marriage. But



the main reasons why people happily married refuse to admit it I consider to be these: First, a fear of being sentimental, which leads them in the other direction. Second, a reluctance, by admitting the advantages of connubial existence, to play into the hands of the opposite number; and thirdly, and most importantly, a deep consciousness of the inevitability of marriage.

As Shaw says, however much we may all suffer through marriage, there is no question of abolishing it as an institution.

As long as pairs of people set up establishments for love or having chil-

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