

A LONG OR SHORT TIME.

THE QUESTION OF LONG AND SHORT ENGAGEMENTS

Discussed by Readers of "Progress"—A Great many Different Opinions—What a Bald-Headed Man Thinks—Rough on the Dude—Hugging the Delusion.

The correspondent who asked PROGRESS which was preferable, a long or short engagement, will, without doubt, find a variety of answers to the question on this page. Such a query requires a good deal of thought, and as PROGRESS said last week, there is evidently much diverse opinion upon the subject. It is impossible to print all the replies this week, and a number have been held until the next issue. As they are arriving by every mail, interest in the matter under discussion seems to be undoubted.

What "Astra" Thinks About It.

To be or not to be a long engagement, that is the question. Whether it is nobler, and at the same time more satisfactory to suffer the gibes and jeers of our outrageous married friends, who having got into the scrape themselves would fain see others in as sad a case; or else embark upon a sea of troubles, and by opposition to them only make them worse. To exchange the ills we are only too well acquainted with, to fly to others that we know not of. Thus does the near approach of matrimony make cowards of us all, and induce us to beg for a little more time in which to think the momentous step over. "Happy is the wooing that is not long a-doing," said our grandmothers, and there are well authenticated cases on record where those warm hearted dames met their lovers for the first time on Monday morning, and eloped with them on the following Sunday evening while the rest of the family were comfortably snoozing away in church. A post chaise with four horses and a half sovereign to the post boy made the road smooth for the ardent lovers in those days when the bride did not trouble herself about a trousseau; and pullman cars and ten-dollars-a-day-hotels were unknown luxuries, and yet I doubt if these hasty unions were any happier in the long run than the better considered matches of today.

Somehow or other there is a prejudice against long engagements; the popular opinion seems to be that they seldom come to anything, and many young people are afraid to enter openly into one, from a dread of the comments which they have so often heard in connection with others, and which they well know will fall to their own share. Their married friends will take an undying interest in their affairs, and ply them with questions as to why they don't get married, what there is to prevent them from doing so, and when they think they will really make up their minds, until the unhappy couple are almost tempted to wish they had never seen each other. And added to these trifling disadvantages, the perennial rumor, which never fails to spring up like the thistles which bloom in the summer, tra la, that the engagement is broken off, one faction of devoted friends insisting that "she jilted him," while the opposing party have it on the best authority that "he grew tired of her," as they always knew he would.

These, of course, are drawbacks, shadows on the dial, thorns on the roses, in spite of which, in my estimation, a long engagement is far more to be desired than a short one. Think of it, girls! Year after year of unalloyed bliss, summer after summer of cheerfully rendered homage and unlimited ice cream! Winter after winter of tele-a-tele sleigh drives and cosy evenings in the back parlor, when the fire burned low and the lamp did likewise, or else did not burn at all; when you reigned as sovereign over the entire realm of one manly heart, and wore your crown with a dignity any ordinary queen might well have envied, when you were free to enjoy the society of the one boy in the world to an unlimited extent, to domineer over him and henpeck him to your heart's content, knowing he enjoyed being bullied, above all things, and thought you so clever for being able to take charge of him as you did, always provided he knew you were not in earnest about it. Wouldn't he have kicked if he thought you were? Oh, it is a delightful state of existence! You know each other quite well enough to have differences of opinion which amounts in the end to absolute fiction, when each gives the other their freedom with a freezing hauteur, which Lady Macbeth might envy, only to make up ten minutes later and seal the reconciliation with self-reproaches and oscillatory exercises; when the cares and responsibilities that come with marriage are still far off and life is one long holiday. A long engagement by all means girls, because then you learn to know each other's disposition so perfectly that if you are unsuitable for each other, you find it out before it is too late, and part before you have taken the irrevocable step which might have made two people miserable for life.

A Bald Headed Opinion.

In case you care for a little variety in answers to your query, you will kindly receive a word from one who, though not one of your own "sect," is yet deeply interested in such an appeal as that you have made to PROGRESS. You know it is a very common occurrence for young men and women, between the jejune age of sixteen and that pleasant era of emancipation, twenty-one, to discuss with flippancy the most vital of all questions. Although having arrived at that age when men struggle

(in vain usually) with the problem of a cure for baldness, yet I am not opposed to the youthful habit. On the contrary I enjoy it. I have listened with unfeigned pleasure to proposals, and even heard the love whippers between each kiss. But that is not all! I have popped the irrevocable question myself and been accepted. Oh! the ecstasy of that evening hour (eight years ago) and every moment since is beyond comparison.

Engagements today are as common as mosquitos in New Jersey, or as tickling in fly time. And there is much to be said to encourage them. But what's the use of me talking, since the tendency of the age is to disregard the opinions of men of mature life. Besides I do not wish to exhaust the resources of my thought tank; to do so would deteriorate the growth of my hirsute covering, which will positively refuse to grow at all should my brief sentiments find a lonely burial in the waste basket. Do you see the point? Well! follow the example of your friend, JOAQUIN.

She Is Rough on the Dude.

Circumstances alter cases. There would be fewer short engagements were people in a position to marry. Many a young man today would like to get married had he ready cash to start housekeeping. As a rule a young man never thinks of that, he flirts around, spends what he earns, and when the right person comes along there is of a necessity the long engagement. I do not believe in a girl waiting until a young man has every thing easy for her, let them begin and help each other. Most girls think their husbands ought to begin where their fathers leave off, they forget their long years of hard labor. And another thing, if two young people are in a position to marry, they know as much about each other at the end of six months as they would the same number of years. I do not see why marriage should make them think less of each other if either of them had any sense. If that is the way it works, it is no wonder marriage has been termed a failure. I think it would be a long engagement and a decided failure in the end with a certain class of young men, I speak of these half duses, or whole ones, they think they are. Their greatest ambition in this world is to get a collar high enough and stiff enough, added to a light overcoat of the latest style, then stand on a nice public corner and make all the remarks they like about the passers by. Small foundation there is about them either in the shape of cash or wit.

I would marry a man on two weeks acquaintance, were he the right stamp, and like a stamp, they generally bear the mark. I'd like a peep at him in his home life, though that is where the devil gets in his fine work. It's not his society face that tells the tale. Were I engaged to a young man who was in a position to marry, and he would keep coming at a dog trot year in and year out I am afraid his love would be like himself, slightly slow; I would, as the boys would say, "give him the bounce on the double quick." But then again, I suppose, long engagements are pleasant for some people; I speak of those who have nothing to think about but having a good time. A society girl for instance, after she's married she must settle down somewhat. So it's Charlie here, and Charlie there, and spin the engagement out as long as possible; such people are rarely happy together. I guess it would be something similar to the Frenchman and his kisses, I would not like that, and would prefer a steady, sensible love. So my opinion is, if you can marry, why marry, and it depends a great deal with yourself whether you are happy or not.

Let Them Hug the Delusion.

"Which is preferable, a long engagement or a short one?" Well, I don't know? I think the chief difficulty in answering this momentous question lies in deciding upon the point of view from which to take it. It bears as many heads as Hydra of ancient fame, and every aspect has its extenuating circumstances. It depends upon what you want in an engagement. Some people like to keep the excitement up to fever pitch, and live in a brief paradise of bliss, and to them I should say make it short, very short! But there is danger of the tide ebbing, only to leave one high and dry upon the bleak sands of reality.

Pour moi, I shall never "hold up both hands" and declare for a short engagement—not by a large majority! There is too much fun to be got out of a long one.

It is very delightful to feel that one man cherishes the idea that he has won a very treasure among girls, and though you know he is awfully mistaken, it seems a pity to have the pleasing delusion dispelled as it too often is, by a few months of married life. One may protest against his hugging the fond delusion, but such conscientious attempts always go for naught, and the inevitable awakening must invariably come "after taking," not before. So let us prolong the dream as long as possible.

But besides the pleasures peculiar to the relations between those chiefly concerned, there are other advantages, not perhaps, generally recognized by the orthodox engagées, but they exist just the same. I mean the delightful facilities for making and having other new friends, who can be such in the real sense of the word.

I think a large proportion of the masculinity of the present day labor under the painful impression that every girl who looks twice in their direction has deep designs upon their heart and liberty, and it behooves them to walk circumspectly. Now, if it be clearly understood that the maiden's young affections are otherwise occupied, their fears are somewhat allayed, and they may show themselves friendly without dread of being drawn into the fatal net. It is only fair to say that their scruples are not always groundless. I have seen girls—but that is another story, as Rudyard Kipling says.

It is a relief, too, to the retiring-minded damsel, to reflect that a discriminating public cannot have a sympathetic sigh of pity for the helpless youth being

relentlessly hunted to his own undoing! Ah, yes! a long engagement fairly bristles with good points. Of course, I know there are men who object to their fiancées having anything to do with men other than their own charming selves, but kind fate preserve me from an engagement, long or short, with any such!

Seriously, I believe there is every advantage in a man and woman having ample opportunity to learn to know one another; and if a mistake has been made, it may be rectified before it is everlastingly too late. There might be fewer wretched couples chafing and dragging against each other all through life, had they waited to find out their unsuitableness before the irrevocable step was taken. Marry in haste and repent at leisure may be an old saw, but it is in a good state of preservation. So, at least, it seems to me. This is, of course, considering the question purely from a feminine point of view, but I fancy very much the same thing might be said from the other side. If men and women would use the same common sense that is brought into play in the other and less important matters of life, marriage would less often be a dismal failure, que pensez vous?

Three Months Usually, but Six Months for Saratoga.

In reply to the question, "Which is preferable, a long or a short engagement?" I beg to submit the following as the candid opinion of one who is at present numbered among the bachelors. I would prefer a short engagement, but please do not think for a moment that by "short" I wish to infer an engagement lasting two or three weeks, or in other words to be introduced to your affianced on a Monday, engaged Wednesday and married Saturday. No, far from it, but I would make the limit six months, although I consider three months quite long enough, but it depends greatly on circumstances; for instance, if a young man met one of the fair sex for the first time at Saratoga or some favorite resort, and both parties concerned were utter strangers to each other and were captured by Cupid, then I would approve of engagements extending to six months if not longer, according to the circumstances of the case in question.

Dragging in the Mother-in-Law.

An engagement—long or short; which should it be? It does seem to me there can be no very definite rule to govern this matter. Circumstances often play an important part in determining when an engagement should be consummated. For instance, one's prospective mother-in-law may be obtrusive. She may lay down too many rules for the fair daughter. She often may want to know just a little too much. And when you call to pass a few short hours with the girl you love she—the mother—generally succeeds in finding the most comfortable seat in the parlor. And it is this which makes two hearts beat as one and resolve on immediate freedom.

To the young man with a small income I would say: Let your engagement last as quickly as possible. The sooner you are married the sooner will you begin to lay up wealth; for many a young man has proved it possible for two to live cheaper than one.

For myself, I should say three months would give me a very good idea of a young lady's character. If I could not form correct opinions in that time, I could not in a whole year.

If it is really a love affair, and he thinks his beauty is fairer than the fairest of alabaster, and she adores him as her ideal of manhood, then the minister's services will soon be called into requisition.

A Stern View of the Question.

How does a woman love? Once, no more, Though life forever its loss deplore; Deep in sorrow or deep in sin, One king reigneth her heart within. One alone by night and day, Moves her spirit to curse or pray. One voice only can call her soul Back from the grasp of death's control; Though loves beset her, or friends deride. Yea, when she smilith another's bride, Still for her master her life makes moan, Once is forever, and once alone.

How does a man love? Once for all, The sweetest voices of life may call, Sorrow daunt him, or death dismay, Joy's red roses beset his way; Fortune smile, or jest or frown, The cruel thumb of the world turn down, Loss betray him or sunshine, by day or night, Wandering, toiling, asleep, awake, Though souls may madden or weak hearts break, Better than wife, or child, or self, Once and forever he loves himself.

Proposal.

The violet loves a sunny bank, The cowslip loves the lea, The scarlet creeper loves the elm, But I love—thee.

The sunshine kisses mount and vale, The stars they kiss the sea, The west winds kiss the clover bloom, But I kiss—thee.

The oracle weds his mottled mate, The lily's bride of the bee, Heaven's marriage ring he found the earth— Shall I wed thee.

Well-Posted Cattle.

Fair maiden (a summer border)—How savagely that cow looks at me. Farmer Hayseed—It's your red parasol, mum.

Fair maiden—Dear me! I knew it was a little out of fashion, but I didn't suppose a country cow would notice it.—Ex.

A Circulating Ring.

Alice—I met Minnie Renace today and she showed me the engagement ring that Horace Fledgely gave her. Gwendolin—Is it a pretty one? Alice—You remember the one he gave you and me? Gwendolin—Let me think. Oh yes! Alice—It's the same ring.—Jewellers' Circular.

The Correct Reply.

A widower, not long after the death of his wife, married the sister of the latter. A friend of his, returning from a distant journey, sympathetically inquired whom he was in mourning for. Somewhat embarrassed at the question, the widower replied: "For my sister-in-law."—Fliegende Blätter.

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FLOWERS, HOUSE AND BEDDING plants for sale, at greenhouses, and in City Market.—A. J. STEPHENS, Mount Pleasant. June 13.

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