

own taste by a lavish expenditure in ornamentation of his house and family. He may allow his wife to purchase freely from the stores of the city, having the bills sent to him for cheerful payment, yet possibly the wife sometimes finds herself literally penniless. I don't think the case is often so bad, but it is very evident that some wives of rich men are frequently put to shame for lack of ability to give in charity or in friendship a tithe of what their husbands spend upon their own personal whims and pleasures. School teachers and seamstresses may be able to surpass them in generosity and in freedom to indulge their personal tastes.

“WHY should my wife want money?” the husband may ask, “if she has all of her wants supplied? What difference does it make whether the money that supplies them goes through her own purse?”

“NO one can tell the wants of another. It makes one difference between childhood and years of discretion. You cannot tell a person's taste unless that person has money and time to gratify her taste. A little of each will suffice to indicate the natural taste, but there are women who wear rich silks and jewels in positive discomfort, because the colours, styles, and combinations are not to their taste. The one who buys them for her does not realize that he is seeking his own gratification more than his wife's.”

“ONCE it was believed that a married pair could not live happily together if the wife had a separate purse. That was in the day when the laws gave the husband absolute ownership of his wife. Her clothes, her wages, her inheritance, her body, and even her soul—to the extent of controlling its outward forms of religion—were all legally in the husband's possession. Little by little these shameful laws have been modified, and public opinion now despises the man who does not deal fairly with his wife.”

“YES, times have changed, and many a happy wife now holds property in her own name, and uses the income from her investments just as she pleases. She may even carry on business for herself, or have a business partnership with her husband. Whether this is well or not depends upon circumstances, chief among which are the claims of children; and the good sense of the parties must determine each case.”

“MARRIAGE is far higher than a mere civil contract, and pecuniary considerations are the least that should influence one. But external conditions have such power to perplex and disturb, that they

cannot safely be ignored in making a promise for better or worse. It will never do to blame the husbands for all the niggardliness that appears among women. A selfish wife is sometimes a serious check upon the generosity and public spirit of her husband, begrudging every contribution to the public welfare. One cannot help wondering where is the hitch when wealthy men's wives, who approve a good cause, or who desire the reading of a particular paper or magazine, have nothing to give in aid of that cause, or go without the desired literature. An ‘allowance’ does not always settle the difficulty, especially if the allowance includes the household expenses. Its smallness sometimes causes a meanness toward the kitchen-maid, and such higgling with hucksters as creates a widespread contempt for the mistress of the mansion. Or, if the mistress is kind and generous, she may fail entirely of saving anything from the bills she pays for her own ‘personal expenses.’

“WHY cannot a wife ask her husband for what she wants on each occasion? Put yourself in her place and realize the beggary this implies, unless she goes to him simply as a matter of convenience and with a perfect assurance of her recognised right to receive; the husband acting as the family cashier, who can more conveniently receive and pay out the common fund.”

“A SEPARATE purse is not a necessity. A common fund is all right if it really is common; if each feels an equal right to its use with due regard to the preservation of the income. If the family is really prosperous financially, it ought to be the wife's privilege as well as the husband's to subscribe large sums to good works. Woman's characteristic work in the world is yet undervalued. It never can have a money value. Women can never be *paid* as wife and mother. But as manhood matures and rises to higher development, it inevitably accords a greater freedom to womanhood.”

THERE is an amount of practical common sense in the above that commends itself to every thinking woman, to which I respectfully suggest their attention. LUCINDA.

REPLIES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

E. G. S.—No journal of any repute could publish a letter with such personal statements unless it were signed with the full name of the writer.

Midwife (4), Monthly Nurse (7), Country Midwife.—Many thanks. We will notice the various matters to which you allude.

Experience.—Watch our Vacancies columns.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)