

Getting in Step for the Wedding March

Matrimonial class venture of Brooklyn Central Y. M. C. A. to become permanent educational feature because of its service in preparing the 35 original students for soon-to-be-assumed marital responsibilities.

By Fairfax Downey



HIS fall will be open season for brides again in Brooklyn. Not that the customary marrying and giving in marriage did not go on all summer in that borough of Greater New York which bears the title, "The City of Homes." It did. But not until autumn will the Brooklyn Central Y. M. C. A. re-open its course for Men Contemplating Matrimony.

Last May the thirty-five students in the first session of the course were graduated. The Class of 1924 S, they may be called, the "S" standing, of course, for Spring. Statistics are not available at this writing stating how many of the class went beyond contemplation of matrimony and committed it, but many of them were engaged to be married and one led his intended to the altar before the course closed. The men who took the course paid tuition fees for it and gave it their most earnest attention. Their intentions, while not always immediate, were serious. And assuredly the same will be true of the Class of 1924 Fall and its successors—may they be many!

It can safely be predicted that even without the vernal urge, elimination of applicants for the coming class will have to be at a more strenuous rate than last spring. For the class is to be kept small, as is fitting. That is one of the principles laid down by Carroll N. Gibney, Educational Director at the Brooklyn Central, the moving spirit in this matrimonial course. To him a large part of the credit for its success is due. As evidence of the grateful reception with which the course met, comments from questionnaires of class members, compiled for *Association Men*, will be quoted later in this article. Nothing more could be added, unless it be appreciations from grateful brides.

There is something amusing in the idea of a matrimonial course. The thought conjures up the perennial jests about mothers-in-law and bride's biscuits as fitting subjects for lectures of warning in the curriculum. That was more or less the spirit in which Mr. Gibney was approached by some members of the procession of newspapermen and women who came to interview him on the subject of the institution which had sprouted in a Brooklyn "Y." They came to spoof, they re-

mained to praise. The plan of the course, knowledge of the abilities of its lecturers and doubtless a little introspection among representatives of the press married and unmarried, convinced them of the high worth of the instruction and advice being given thirty-five young Brooklynites from various professions and trades. A great deal of favorable comment and interest so widespread as to be national in scope resulted.

Right here, another prophecy may be ventured. There is going to be a demand for similar "preparatory schools" for the serious business known as getting married. As the Brooklyn "Y's" prospectus observed, "There is no enterprise upon which a man enters that is so important both to the race and to him as an individual (as is matrimony), and none does he so frequently enter so little and so poorly prepared." Plenty of daily testimony can be had to that truth. An answer is the right sort of matrimonial course, and one branch of the Young Men's Christian Association should not be left to give that answer alone, it seems to the writer. It is a countrywide project.

EVERY now and then a couple gets married in a balloon, on the stage, over the radio, at a fair, for a lark or on a bet. Several years ago, the newspapers reported a jazz wedding, the ceremony being conducted to lively airs and with dancing "because the wedding march is too solemn." It is solemn, but there's a darn good reason why. Let the rejoicing come later. The solemnity of a rite in which a man and a woman exchange those tremendous vows should stand undisturbed, for in the words of impressive warning of the Book of Common Prayer, "Matrimony. . . is an honourable estate. . . and therefore is not by anyone to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God." That may well



Carroll N. Gibney

stand as the text of the course given at the Brooklyn Central "Y."

For a number of years personal and family relationships and the effect of the sexes on each other have been to Mr. Gibney matters of study, research, and consideration. Four or five years ago he was planning a course of lectures and study for young married couples to include suggestions to young couples on home management, the problem of rent or purchase and such questions as entertainment, clothes, food, and so forth. A couple of years later during conversation on this project, C. W. Dietrich, recently re-

signed executive secretary, suggested a more pointed scheme of a pre-matrimonial course to deal largely with love, temperament and adjustment.

Mr. Gibney mapped out his curriculum along those lines, persuaded Dr. Wm. H. Price, a prominent Brooklyn physician to supervise and secure lecturers and finally inaugurated the course last April, "to get ready for the June weddings."

To be sure, a matrimonial course is not entirely novel, but the arrangement of this one was and it contained these two unique features, Mr. Gibney points out:

There was a charge of \$10 made for the course, a step taken in order that the applicants might give a token of their serious purpose in enrolling, and also to take it out of the category of the familiar talks on sex and marital happiness which are given to large audiences. The class limit of thirty-five men also helped emphasize this difference in character.

Second, the course was designed to meet a *personal and proximate contingency*.

To be admitted to the course by Mr. Gibney, an applicant need not have set the date of his wedding and he need not even be engaged, although those who came under such classifications were favored. Simply knowing a girl he would like to marry or like evidence

of sincerity rendered an applicant acceptable.

Lectures and subjects in the course were as follows:

Dr. William L. Love of the staff of the Peck Memorial Hospital, Brooklyn—Eugenics, who should marry.

Dr. H. C. Allen, Chief Obstetrician, Peck Memorial Hospital—Genetics, the creation of a family and significance of children.

Dr. Joseph H. Fobes, Professor of Gynecology, New York Homeopathic Medical College, the Flower Hospital and the Women's Hospital—Physiological and Anatomical Differences between men and women.

Dr. W. B. House, Professor of Nervous and Mental Diseases, Homeopathic Medical College, staff and consulting physician for several New York Hospitals—Psychological and Temperamental Backgrounds.

Dr. William H. Price, Staff Physician, Peck Memorial Hospital—Initial Adjustments of Married Life.

William F. Hirsch, International Committee, Y. M. C. A.—Budgets and Family Finance.

Brigadier Martha Hamon of the Salvation Army and the Brooklyn Nursery and Infants' Hospital—Religious and Spiritual Aspects.

THE course was under the supervision of Dr. Price, who for years has been particularly interested in that side of his work. Dr. Price secured his staff of assistants, was present at each lecture and conducted the discussion periods after each lecture in which the students participated and valued highly. An open public meeting preceding the actual class sessions was addressed by Harry L. Everett, D. D., of Jersey City. His talk was highly inspirational and helped materially to

spread the impression of seriousness which the whole project was so fortunately able to carry.

Questionnaires were sent out by Mr. Gibney after the completion of the course and received responses from a majority. They furnished, anonymously of course, interesting general data about the men in the class and their reactions.

These were their occupations: telephone engineer, branch manager, engineer, accountant, sales engineer, butcher, advertising, cashier, lawyer, private secretary, investment banker, telephone company employe, clerk, draftsman.

Their ages ranged from 20 to 34, and the salaries received from \$1,200 to \$5,300.

About 50 per cent were college men. About 30 per cent had high school and about 20 per cent public school educations.

Forty per cent were engaged to be married, the same proportion not engaged but hopeful, while 20 per cent admitted that their interest in the course, though strong, was as yet only academic.

Out of the thirty-five in the class, all received certificates of perfect attendance save one.

The students made such comments as these on the course: "Something very much needed." "Splendid work." "A great success. Every young man contemplating matrimony should have the advantage of taking a similar course." "Excellent." "Shall heartily commend it to my bachelor friends when it opens in the fall. Since the business of mating is such a serious factor in our lives, it is highly important that we give it intelligent thought and not go into it in any haphazard manner." "I believe this course

is of great practical value and should help to make happier marriages. I especially want to commend the manner of conducting the classes and the fine type of men selected to deliver the lectures."

Replying to the question, "What would you have added?" one student, doubtless with the proverbial stitch in time in mind, suggested a talk by a judge from a domestic relations court. Another wanted information on actual living conditions and costs in and near New York. Another would have liked more time. "You know we heard a lot in a few weeks," he wrote.

This remarkable proposal in the way of additions is worthy of quotation in its entirety—

"More lectures. I believe there ought to be as many women lecturing as men in order to give the woman's side of the matrimonial question in full. In this way the field would be covered more in detail. I am engaged and expect to be married soon, and my chief regret, after having completed your course, is that my fiancee could not have taken a similar course contemporary with mine. However, I tried to supply this omission by repeating my lectures as best I could to her. I succeeded very well."

ONE student, asking for more about nervous women and how to handle them, declared that since he was to be married shortly, he would have more to make in the way of suggestions thereafter. Another canny comment observed that women do not cry when they are really very sorrowful, so that a husband need not worry too much over apparent sadness on the part of his wife.

Further proposals were lectures on
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I WONDER.
* * *
HOW MANY fathers.
* * *
AND HOW many sons.
* * *
THROUGHOUT THE land.
* * *
READ THE tale.
* * *
OF THE little boy.
* * *
WHO WASN'T so bad.
* * *
AND WASN'T so good.
* * *
AND JUST grew up.
* * *
AS LITTLE boys do.
* * *
AND WANDERED around.
* * *
WITH OTHER boys.
* * *
JUST DRIFTING on.
* * *
FROM INNOCENT pranks.
* * *
AND NEVER heeding.
* * *
THE DANGER signs.
* * *
AND GROWING tired.
* * *
OF FAMILY rules.
* * *

Ye TOWNE GOSSIP

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By K. C. B.

AND LEAVING home.
* * *
WITHOUT ANY word.
* * *
OF WHERE he was.
* * *
AND THEN one night.
* * *
WITH ANOTHER boy.
* * *
BREAKING HIS way.
* * *
INTO A house.
* * *
AND SOMEONE seeing.
* * *
AND POLICEMEN called.
* * *
AND RUNNING away.
* * *
WHEN TOLD to stop.
* * *
AND REVOLVER shots.
* * *

AND AN ambulance.
* * *
AND A whispered word.
* * *
WHAT HIS real name was.
* * *
AND HIS father called.
* * *
AND SITTING there.
* * *
BY A hospital bed,
* * *
ALL THROUGH the night.
* * *
AND IN the morning.
* * *
JUST THE father.
* * *
SITTING ALONE.
* * *
WITH WHAT had been.
* * *
HIS LITTLE boy.
* * *
AND WONDERING.
* * *
IF HE also.
* * *
HAD FAILED to see.
* * *
THE DANGER signs.
* * *
I THANK you.
* * *

14 each between Westchester and Coatesville, the Coatesville runners won, covering the distance of 15½ miles in an hour and twenty-four minutes. Each competitor ran a mile and a tenth, and carried a message from one Mayor to another.

Fifty young men are enrolled in the Periscope Club of Fargo, N. D. This is a discussion group modeled somewhat along the lines of the Y's Men. The Club recently made a gift to the Association camp of a sleeping cottage which they also built.

A Y. M. C. A. kiosk at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley has been arranged for by J. J. Virgo, a leader well known to the American Brotherhood. Large numbers of American visitors have already found their way to it. The rest room is not for the use of Association members only but has a welcome for all exhibition visitors.

The Traffic Management class was the record breaker in the Educational Department at Everett, Wash., during the past year. The course consisted of 64 lessons, sessions twice per week for 32 weeks and attendance averaged better than 90% for the entire time. The Educational Council of 40 men has completed its survey of the field and will report to the local Educational Committee its findings on which will be based the ensuing term's program.

Eight horseshoe leagues covering different sections of Chattanooga and suburbs have been organized by the South Side Association. There are 55 teams averaging six men each in competition one or two days per week. Each League pitches an independent schedule and winning teams qualify for the city championship series to be played off in late September, which will be supervised by the Association. So widespread is the interest in this pastime that the City Commission has placed horseshoe pits in five parks and playgrounds.

Twelve teams are entered in the annual Hartford quoit tournament which will run through 18 games. The teams represent 12 different industries. A tennis tournament for industrial workers will be held later and baseball leagues are now in the midst of schedules.

Two unusual events have marked the summer program at Miles City, Mont. One was a father and son swim, while another was a day set aside for all the red headed boys of the city when the Association gymnasium and pool belonged to them. Each of these added novelty to summer work and increased interest in the Association program.

Educational work in Jacksonville, Fla. got under way in May when 115 were enrolled in a salesmanship class. A course in public speaking has also been launched with enrollment reaching 100. An Association school in summer is unusual but the uniform climate of Jacksonville makes little difference whether classes meet in summer or winter. In September a law school opens and shortly after that one in accountability, with others coming on later in the Fall.

The entire family group was reached in a recent Astoria, Ore., banquet which was held for mothers and daughters and fathers and sons. Competitive singing, stunts and an inspirational address were included in the program and the event's success brought a decision

to make the family program a fairly frequent occurrence.

Good sportsmanship is now the rule in the city baseball league at Salem, Ore., which is conducted under Association auspices. Eighteen teams play. In previous years the schedule was hardly ever completed owing to internal friction or fighting on the field.

Interesting figures covering the past twelve years showed the progress of the Association at Duluth, Minn. In that period more than 25,000 men and boys have passed through the membership; property value has jumped from \$212,000 to \$600,000 and the total operating expenses exceed \$1,360,000. Contributions have been required for less than 12% of this amount. Over 7,500 have been enrolled in educational classes and nearly 7,000 in Bible classes, while physical activities have attracted a total of 1,334,428 persons. Religious meetings have drawn 289,000, while the Employment Department has placed 5,633 applicants. Total attendance at the buildings during the 12 years is 9,726,000.

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the intellectual side of marriage and on children and parenthood.

So much for the reception of the course by the students enrolled in it. Naturally, such expressions of sincere appreciating and encouragement were considered justification for the continuation of classes. The replies have induced Mr. Gibney to plan to increase the number of lectures, particularly those by women. He remains firm, however, in his determination to keep classes small. And he smiles and says that he will not respond to urging to start a correspondence school.

He has accepted proffered aid from various quarters, such as the budget books which were presented by a bank to students in the course. And on one occasion, he marshalled the class and attended a feature motion picture film as the guest of the management, perhaps not so much for the lesson the picture was supposed to teach as to impress his charges with the fact that going gracefully to the movies at times instead of sitting at home all evening is part of the wisdom of married life.

It is a well known fact that the average bridegroom approaches his wedding in fear and trembling. He is not himself for days before it. Being under hostile shellfire seems no whit so nerve-wracking, since the man subjected to it knows that the missiles are coming only in his general direction and he is not a particular target, as is a bridegroom. The knees of the husband-to-be who walks out to meet his bride are shaking and untrustworthy. He is seldom in step with the Wedding March.

The graduate of the course for Men Contemplating Matrimony may not be entirely calm upon that occasion but he will be far more so than the unprepared.



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