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**Shall We Marry Now?**

Beth Cummings, '39, reviews a marriage article from the Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife

**MAGAZINES** are supposed to know everything.

That’s what I have decided anyhow, after working on the editorial staff of *Farm Journal and Farmer's Wife* for three years. With a circulation of over two and a half million, you can imagine what our correspondence must be like. Any subject—from sugarless recipes to seeding your front lawn, from getting along with your family to giving speeches at the Senior Banquet—comes out of our mailbag daily. But for some time now, wartime marriage has been far and above the most pressing problem. So did it become a problem to us, too.

It seemed to *Farm Journal* (more specifically, Carroll P. Streeter, editorial head of the women’s section) that the case for and against “Shall we get married?” can best be stated not by any one or two experts, no matter how wise or how famous, but by many people, and people who had faced the same dilemma one war ago.

Because this question is of such vital interest to everyone, I’d like to share with you some of these opinions as they were compiled by Mr. Streeter. He heard from young folks of the last war, the Spanish-American war, even the Civil War.

“The vote was almost even,” he reported. “Fifty-four percent said, ‘Marry now’—46 per cent implored ‘Wait.’”

Here is how the “Yes” voters feel about it:

1. “It’s better to have a little of the sweetness of married life now than to take a chance of never having any. There is just one best time to marry, and that’s when you are young and very much in love.”

2. “We aren’t afraid—we have the courage. This is no time for shrewd calculation, much less for fear. You always take chances when you get married—now you simply take more.”

3. “Marriage will help sustain both the soldier and his wife—give them an anchor, something to tie to—something to plan for and look forward to in the bitter days ahead.”

4. “The country needs the children. ‘The cream of our crop of young men, physically, go into military service. Many will never come back.’ If they are to procreate their kind it must be now. Certainly we do not want Hitler’s methods of renewing the population some day.”

5. “A married man makes a better soldier.” This opinion came chiefly from women. Men are more skeptical about this point, especially military men—who say, “If things are going well at home, it is a help to a soldier to be married. If they aren’t, he will be worrying and will have his mind off his work.”

So much for the side favoring marriage. Here is what we heard on the other half of the argument:

1. “Both of you will change, and the younger you are the more change there will be.” “My husband went to war smiling,” wrote one woman, “but he came back embittered and shattered . . . I’ve learned that happy marriage is based partly on good health.” Others have told how they had been “sure” that they had found the right person—only to find later that someone else was really the right one.

2. “Marriage is meant to be started out together. It is living together, changing and growing together, not just a belonging to each other for a short while and then meeting again years later almost as strangers,” said one woman who saw her new husband go off to the last war. “If you can’t live together why go through a ceremony?”

3. “Children are entitled to a father.” A man was writing. “In the whole war-marriage picture, the one I feel sorriest for is the baby. He is the one who takes it on the chin. Believe me, I know, for I was a war baby of 1918 vintage. I never saw my dad, but he never even knew about me. Mothers are wonderful, but a boy needs a father when he is growing up, and needs him bad.”

4. “The bride cannot live a normal social life. She is neither maid, wife, nor widow,” someone wrote. What she can do without criticism depends considerably upon the community in which she lives.

5. “The mental anguish is greater for husband and wife in time of war than for an engaged couple.” Or, as a man put it, “Surely it can be no less unbearable to have a husband in the war than to have a sweetheart in the war.”

Well, there are the “for and against” arguments—with all the sincerity and earnestness of experience. It’s your own problem. Volumes of books can be written on the subject, but it’s still your own problem.