

You don't like the sound of that word—salaries—do you? It does strike a metallic jangley note on the harmonious keyboard of romance, but the discord is much more severe when it doesn't hit the washboard of practicalities. Blue-pencil those words 'pay' and 'salaries' if you like and substitute the words 'give' and 'fair deal'—then think it over.

It's the same old story in the same old way, you say. Yes, but it's been revised, pulled out of the lavender-scented chest of forbidden subjects; brought right out into the open where the light of a newly aroused womanhood is shining full upon it.

We are apt to hear the trite expression that such and such a thing is 'one of the biggest problems facing the world today'. It is a steady accompaniment to reconstruction after every war, and this one is no exception. But it is safe to say that never in the history of wars has this particular problem been so vital, for the very obvious reason that wives in general instead of following Kingsley's advice—'Men must work, and women must weep'—have given it a new interpretation, 'Men must fight, and women must work.' It's the slogan that has helped bring victory to the Allies; that has kept the wheels of commerce spinning; that has brought bread to the tables (even war bread)—that has made the world go around when all the evidences of the senses proclaimed it should stop. . . . At a small tea the other afternoon, someone dropped this very question.

The effect upon that group of assorted 'better halves' of those two words, 'salaries' and 'wives', in the same sentence was similar to the little bit of leaven in the big 'lump'. In other words, there was a general rise.

The very young, very infatuated, very silly bride was the first to discover she had enough breath left to talk.

'Oh! my dear, it's ghastly! Romance would die. Ugh! The very thought of it turns me cold. Why, Billy's the dearest thing about money. I just tell him what I want and he hands it right over to me. You see [with a giggle] what's his is mine.'—That's what she said.

Fortunately, there were some older and wiser wives present who entered into the spirit of the theme with open and unbiased minds. The perpetrator of the argument endeavoured to give her version of the subject as soon as the smoke of the first explosion had blown away.

Of course the paramount case under consideration was the average soldier's wife. She who had done her double 'bit' at munitions, on the farm, on the tram or the elevator, while he had done his in the King's uniform. The average intelligent business, or working girl (if you will) who has tucked her crisp weekly pay-envelope into her shabby or gaudy bag, as the case may be, ever since she graduated from school or varsity, came second. Whether she had to do it to help the household expenses or send little Willy to 'prep' matters very little. The war is over, her 'boy' is home and they are to be married. Automatically, her pay-envelope ceases. Is it fair to her and her aforementioned married sister who also has tasted the freedom, the independence of having her very own monies to spend how, when, and where she pleased, to be thrust into a possible twelve-hour day of household duties, cares, and worries without any remuneration other than the simple creature comforts that her husband is able to provide for her and himself jointly?

#### *No Bolshevism Among Wives*

Men have been tying up industries, taking peace away from homes, and planting there seeds of Bolshevism that have culminated in famine, want, and woe because they wanted a forty-four-hour working week. What is a forty-four-hour working week to the average workingman's wife, or a fifty-four, or sixty-four for that matter? There are no housewives' financial unions, so they grin and bear it and make the best of their lot with a grumble or a sigh, or perhaps a tear or a smile—but they 'carry on'. . . .

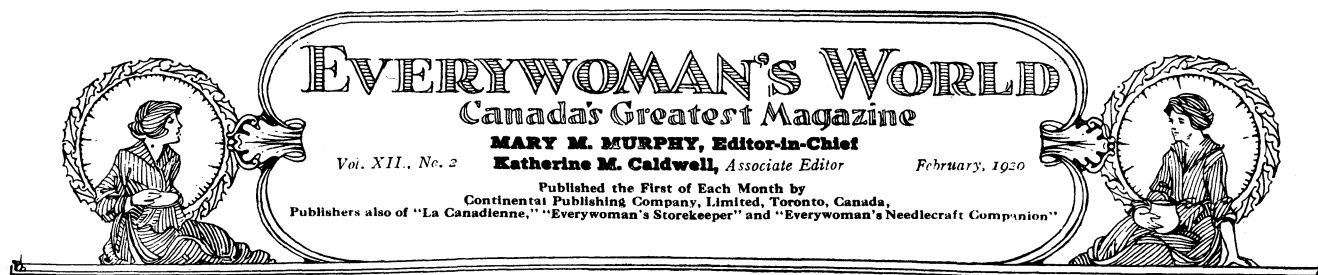


### 'Fifty-Fifty' Bases Satisfactorily Tried

One woman stood up and said, 'both Peter's and my idea of marriage was partnership in every sense of the word from a crust of bread, down or up. It's the Utopian idea of most marriages, isn't it? But we were determined to make it practical and my experience in the business world had taught me that it could be done. A fifty-fifty basis was the only feasible way of working it out, so we drew up a contract and both set our seal thereon. That was before we were married and we have tested it out for five years and have not found it wanting.

'Peter was just earning a fair, young man's salary as junior member of a progressive firm of architects, but I knew just how much it was and had a fair idea of what it would cost us to establish a little home and keep the "fires burning". We agreed that Peter would come home with his "pay-envelope" each week, two weeks or a month as the case might be and split it with me exactly in half. We had separate bank accounts and separate account books. Our idea was to share the expenses, household, clothes, and amusements evenly. If Peter wrote a cheque for the weekly butcher's bill, I wrote one for the grocer, and so forth until each of us had paid out exactly the same as the other. So much was set aside for diversions and amusements and entertaining. One night Peter would take me to the theatre or movies or out to dinner, and the next time I would give him the money to pay the expenses. If he took a friend out to luncheon downtown and I took one of mine to tea, we entered these expenses in our little account books and somehow at the end of the week managed to square things.

'This undoubtedly sounds very silly and awkward to you all, but my aim was to be a pal to Peter and he to me and so far we have succeeded very happily. We share the home, the happiness, and the income. There is no need of paying a salary to a wife when life is lived on this basis, do you think?'



#### Husbands

My husband had two wives,  
me and she, but me was legal.  
Signed, sealed, and twice  
delivered, I cooked,  
cleaned, polished spoons,  
floors, and children; her wasn't,  
so she at nine drove up the  
hill to hospital and job.  
Well, now she's in, I'm out;  
still childered, cooked,  
cleaned but somewhat  
tarnished, I drive and drive  
to live my loveless life  
and swear to boss and job  
my faith forever.

And that old termagent, my  
tongue, is queen of nothing  
now; has lately split, run off,  
and begun to play it safe.  
It likes to lie there low,  
a frozen log in ice awaiting  
spring's bright crack-up  
to let go its drift of grief  
and garbage; but my brain  
stays loyal and knows its  
loves and hates; endlessly  
it calculates why him and me  
and she did equal minus me;  
and no matter how I add, I'm  
left with nothing now except  
to wonder how was lost the rich  
and gleam (by grace of course  
unearned) of love, and love's  
dear increment.

Miriam Waddington