The Speech for the Prosecution

”It’s still a dream most of us share: two hearts and minds meet and decide they want to be together “till death do us part”. The traditional wedding ceremony with the beautiful bride in white and the handsome bridegroom beside her ins only the beginning – the next step is two or three children in suitable intervals and later, much later, peaceful old age together. Right?

Wrong. Nearly half of the marriages now end in divorce, and the number of weddings is falling steadily. In addition, almost a third of the babies are born out of wedlock. In public debate the situation is largely regarded as a crisis and a threat to national values, but is it? Why should we care about an institution so clearly based on the idea that women are inferior to men?

According to statistics, the most common reasons for divorce are recession, unemployment and infidelity. The statistics also show that the vast majority of divorces are initiated by women. So how is it, the wife loses her job, doesn’t want to be a burden to her family and leaves? Not likely. More often the unemployed husband is unable to fulfil his life with anything meaningful outside work, and the wife is unwilling to pamper and look after another child, her husband. Surely, it’s not the woman’s fault? In most infidelity cases it’s again the man who’s the culprit. And what is this “staying power” that so many people feel is lacking in today’s marriage – just another form of glue to enslave women in unsatisfying marriages?

For that what wives were, slaves. Her person, her property, her earnings and her children were all in the absolute control of the husband once the know was tied. the husband could also use her sexually when he wished, or even beat her. The 19th century Victorian era is often seen as the golden age of matrimony, when even couples who realized they were unsuited to each other just made the best of things. In reality it was the golden cage for women who, until 1870, risked losing their children as well as their property if their marriages broke down. Naturally, none of this applied to husbands. For over 60 years after divorce was first legalized in 1857, a wife could not divorce her spouse for adultery alone; she also needed other reasons such as cruelty. The wife, on the other hand, could be got rid of for a single night with another man.

People complaining about the number of divorces often recall images of this golden past when most children grew up in an intact family. What they have failed to notice, however, is the dramatic increase in life expectancy. Families weren’t any more “intact” then; divorce has merely replaced death as the main reason for a break-up in family union. Apart from that, childhood itself was much shorter as children had to leave home and go to work – or get married.

Single parent families are nothing new. Besides, are today’s young any worse off if their unhappy mothers no longer want to set them an example of conforming to men’s wishes and needs? Have we even got the right to demand that two people should live together until one of them dies? Isn’t the whole idea of matrimony in the end just an outdated myth cultivated by men looking for a cheap housekeeper? If marriages are indeed becoming a thing of the past – good riddance, I say.”

Find and underline the arguments in the text that show acceptance to divorce.

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