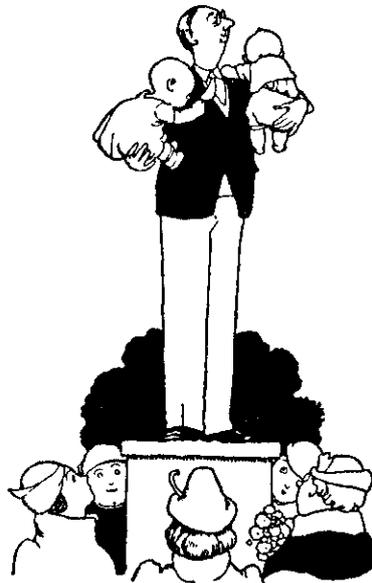


VINTAGE WORDS OF WISDOM

HOW TO BE A PERFECT HUSBAND

By
HEATH ROBINSON
AND
K. R. G. BROWNE



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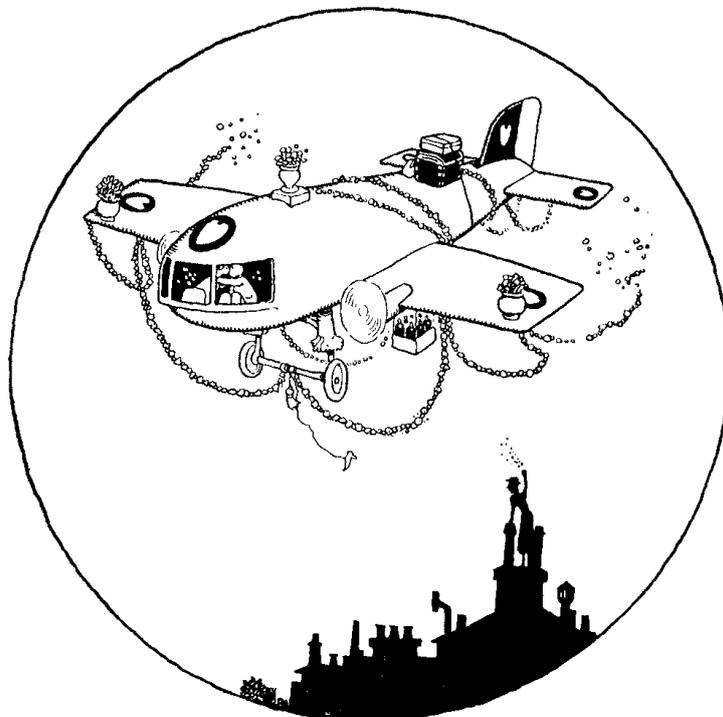
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DEDICATED

(a) With Respectful Sympathy To: The Newly-Married, the About-To-Be-Married, the Long-Married, the Ex-Married, the Frequently-Married, and even – such is our combined love for our fellow-creatures – People Who Would Not Marry If They Were Paid To Do So.

(b) With Sympathetic Respect To: The President, Vice-President, Chucker-Out, and Other Officials of the Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division.

W. HEATH ROBINSON
K. R. G. BROWNE



THE AIR HONEYMOON

FOREWORD BY GEOFFREY BEARE (TRUSTEE OF THE WILLIAM HEATH ROBINSON TRUST)

In the 1930s Heath Robinson was known as ‘The Gadget King’ and he is still most widely remembered for his wonderful humorous drawings. But humorous art was only his third choice of career, and one that he turned to almost by accident. On leaving the Royal Academy Schools in 1895 his ambition was to become a landscape painter. He soon realised that such painting would not pay the bills and so he followed his two older brothers into book illustration. He rapidly established himself as a talented and original practitioner in his chosen field, and in 1903 felt sufficiently secure to marry. However, the following year a publisher who had commissioned a large quantity of drawings was declared bankrupt. The young Heath Robinson, who had just become the father of a baby girl, had quickly to find a new source of income. He turned to the high class weekly magazines such as *The Sketch* and *The Tatler* who paid well for large, highly finished humorous drawings, and within a short time was being acclaimed as a unique talent in the field of humorous art.

For a number of years, he combined his careers as illustrator and humorist with equal and growing success. One day he might be illustrating Kipling’s *A Song of the English* or a Shakespeare play and the next would find him at work explaining the gentle art of catching things. He said of this time ‘It was always a mental effort to adapt myself to these changes, but with the elasticity of my early days, it was not too difficult’. During the First World War the market for luxurious illustrated books diminished, but demand for his humorous work increased, his gentle satires of the enemy proving popular both with the public at home and especially with the forces in the various theatres of war. This situation persisted after the war with very few commissions for illustration, but regular demands for his humorous drawings from popular magazines and for advertising.

In 1935 the *Strand Magazine* published an article titled ‘At Home with Heath Robinson’. This had a text by Kenneth R. G. Browne and ten pen and wash illustrations by Heath Robinson. The illustrations, which showed novel uses for unwanted items, were drawn under the working title ‘Rejuvenated Junk’. K. R. G. Browne, a fellow member of the Savage Club, was an ideal collaborator for Heath Robinson. He was the son of Gordon Browne who is still well known as an illustrator of books and magazines, and was the grandson of Hablot Knight Browne, who under his pen name of ‘Phiz’ gained lasting fame as the illustrator of many Victorian novelists, including Charles Dickens, Charles Lever and Harrison Ainsworth. The article in *The Strand Magazine* marked the start of a partnership that was only brought to an untimely end by the death of Browne in 1940. During 1932 and 1933 Heath Robinson had drawn a series of cartoons for *The Sketch* entitled ‘Flat Life’, which depicted various gadgets designed to make the most of the limited space available in the contemporary flat. It was this series of drawings that provided K. R. G. Browne and W. Heath Robinson with the inspiration for their first full-length book together. It was called *How to Live in a Flat*, and as well as greatly extending the original ideas showing many ingenious ways of overcoming the problems caused by lack of space in flats and bungalows, also provided much fun at the expense of the more extreme designs in thirties furniture and architecture. The book was published by Hutchinson for Christmas 1936 and was well received.

Over the next three years K. R. G. Browne and Heath Robinson successfully repeated the formula in a further three titles. Heath Robinson received much teasing from his family about the choice

of subject for the second book, *How to be a Perfect Husband*, but looking back over his cartoons one finds that romance and courtship had been among his most frequently chosen subjects, from early 'Cupid' cartoons to such pictures as 'The Coquette' and 'Stolen Kisses' which were reproduced in *Absurdities* in 1934. The next book in the series received a valuable preview when *The Strand Magazine* published an article called 'A Highly Complicated Science'. The science referred to was that of gardening and the article by K. R. G. Browne was accompanied by nine of Heath Robinson's drawings all of which were subsequently used in *How to Make a Garden Grow*. Again, much of the subject matter for this book and the next, *How to be a Motorist*, was drawn from Heath Robinson's earlier cartoons. Among his earliest work for *The Sketch* was a series of drawings on the practicalities of gardening. This included a picture of 'root pruning' showing the gardener tunnelling down to the roots of a plant to prune them. Although the earlier drawing is much more elaborate, the idea is the same as is presented on page 27 of *How to Make a Garden Grow*. Similarly the theme of motoring recurs frequently in his earlier cartoons.

But there is an important difference between the full-page cartoon for a newspaper or magazine, and the humorous book. The cartoon must be capable of making the reader laugh whatever his mood as he turns the page and so must achieve an instant impact with a strong idea and sound execution. The reader of a humorous book, on the other hand, will have picked it up in the expectation of being amused, and so here the author or artist's problem is one of how to sustain the humour in an extended form, rather than to create a sudden effect with a single idea. In the *How to...* books Heath Robinson found the opportunity to present the reader with a set of variations on a theme, allowing him to look at his subject from every angle and to explore each idea that presented itself. Thus the books allow us to see a different aspect of his humorous art; to see its depth, rather than just selected high points.

Heath Robinson died at home on 13 Sep 1944. His immediate appeal and general popularity during his lifetime resulted mainly from his humorous work and in this field he was both brilliant and unique. He was an unusually prolific and versatile artist with a seemingly inexhaustible stock of good ideas. But like artists such as Hogarth and Rowlandson before him, the secret of his appeal lay in his great abilities as a serious artist.

Geoffrey Beare



Geoffrey worked as an operations research scientist in the Ministry of Defence until 2009, when he took early retirement. He is the leading expert on Heath Robinson and has researched and written about all aspects of the artist's work. He curated the exhibition of Heath Robinson's work at the Dulwich Picture Gallery in 2003, which has been touring the UK ever since, and wrote the book that accompanied the exhibition. He is a Trustee of the William Heath Robinson Trust which is working to build a Heath Robinson museum in North London. He pursues his more general interest in the history of illustration through the Imaginative Book Illustration Society, of which he is chairman.

VINTAGE WORDS OF WISDOM

The **Vintage Words of Wisdom** titles are not simply facsimiles of old books. They have been carefully selected and professionally produced as high quality ebooks. Our aim is to make the best vintage books on popular topics of interest more widely available again. The books range from practical titles that include wisdom from times past to unashamedly nostalgic works that will appeal to those who may remember these or similar titles from their childhood. Often amusing and quaint, these vintage volumes also contain wise words and advice that may have been forgotten in the intervening years. So often it is worth revisiting the past to remind ourselves that the best ideas stand the test of time. Above all, the **Vintage Words of Wisdom** titles are highly entertaining and provide a fascinating snapshot of life in days gone by. We have chosen books with wonderful illustrations, exciting stories of daring and adventure, practical advice and charming nostalgic descriptions of a simpler life.

Titles include:

Poultry-keeping

Room and Window Gardening

Ferns and Fern Culture

Woodwork Tools and How to Use Them

Home Carpentry: A Practical Guide for the Amateur

The Boys' Book of Aeroplanes

The Railway Age

Sky Roads of the World

Lillie London's Needlework Book

The Cottage Farm Month by Month

Mrs Beeton's Jam-making and Preserves

Titles by William Heath Robinson:

How to Live in a Flat

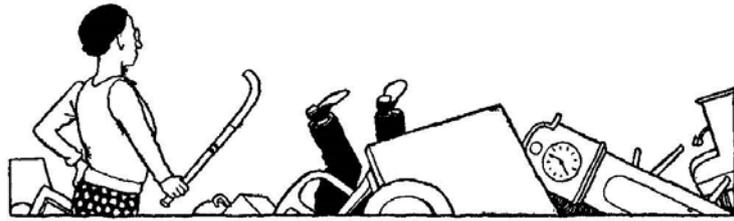
How to be a Perfect Husband

How to be a Motorist

How to Make a Garden Grow

Humours of Golf

For further details and the most up-to-date information on our titles please visit our website www.wordstothewise.co.uk



*What is wrong with marriage is almost invariably
the husband*

INTRODUCTION

As a topic for those who, having been dropped on their heads when young, write chatty articles for the daily papers, Marriage is probably the most popular on the market. It is a rare day – all *too* rare, in my opinion – on which nobody seizes quill and inkhorn and dashes off a snappy 1000 words on “What is Wrong with Marriage?” “Marriage: Its Cause and Cure”; “Why is Marriage, Exactly?” or some other aspect of the marital state (as it is usually called by those who object on moral or political grounds to saying “marriage” twice in one paragraph).

It is noticeable, however, that most of these little homilies, or chunks of nonsense, have a strong feminine bias. (This is not, perhaps, surprising, as most of them are written by elderly unmarried ladies of the type that wear pince-nez attached to the left ear by a kind of miniature hawser.) One gathers, indeed, that when strife breaks out in the home and the air becomes thick with harsh words, recriminations, and (in extreme cases) crockery, the little woman is hardly ever to blame. It would appear, in short, that What is Wrong with Marriage is almost invariably the husband.

It is to remedy this state of affairs that Mr. Heath Robinson and I, in our impulsive, big-hearted way, have compiled this little textbook, which can also be used to press cowslips and/or swat moths. While we do not claim that the mere perusal of its fascinating pages will convert a hardened wife-beater into the sort of husband who wins Dunmow Fitches, we do feel that any young man who is contemplating matrimony for the first time might do a good deal worse than give it the once-over. And we might add – in fact, we *will* add, for who can stop us? – that as it contains nothing that could bring a blush to the most girlish cheek, matrimony-contemplaters of the other sex can learn quite a lot from it too.

It seems odd that it has been left to Mr. Heath Robinson and myself to perform

this public service. Husbands first came into being a considerable time ago – long before the corkscrew and the celluloid collar – but nobody, so far as can be ascertained, has ever provided them with a handbook. The beginner who takes up, say, bee-keeping – doubtless because he has been crossed in love and wishes to forget – can walk into any bookshop that will allow him credit and acquire a variety of works on apiculture (as it is laughingly called, for some reason) ranging from *The Amateur Apiarist's Vade-Mecum*, by O.J. Corklady, to *The Adventures of Queenie The Bee*, by Emmeline Doolittle Stoop. By studying these during the long winter evenings he can learn all the rules of the game and acquaint himself with the eccentricities of his little pets before he buys a second-hand hive on the instalment-system and gets stung for the first time.



The bee-keeping beginner

To date, no such assistance has been available to the novice husband. Hitherto the latter has had to get along as best he could by observing his father's behaviour at home and doing precisely the opposite. This is obviously a makeshift and unsatisfactory plan, because it is far harder to be a successful husband than to keep a bee happy and content. The mind of Woman works in mysterious ways – if, indeed, it works at all, which some deny – and many a young husband has been flung out into the snow, with a rapidly swelling bump where the rolling-pin caught him, merely because he did not know his matrimonial onions.