

Discourse on Marriage

Read the following essay written in the early 1600s about choosing a wife. While somewhat tongue in cheek, the basic principles he espouses were considered appropriate for his time period. Consider Othello and Desdemona's relationship; find and support with textual evidence from the play three "rules" that pertain to them. What about Iago and Emilia? What rules (if any) apply to them?

"Translated" to contemporary English (cuz I love you so much)

A conversation on marriage and wives and the most difficult part of all: How to choose a good wife rather than a bad one. A sly and useful argument about a decision in which a man can easily make a mistake; it's a thin line between great happiness and terrible unhappiness. What's said here can apply to men and women; single, married, and those about to be married.

By Alex. Niccholes, expert in marriage even though he's not yet been married himself.

The spectator often sees more than the player.

CHAPTER # IV - How to pick between a good wife and a bad.

This is a hard job because good wives often appear the same as bad so they can hardly be told apart. If this wasn't true, the bad wives wouldn't succeed in fooling as many men as they do. The old saying goes, "The Devil can impersonate an angel" so he can fool more people into committing sins. So too, bad wives - followers of the Devil - appear to be what they aren't: honest. That way they can trick others into sin. Because marriage lasts until death [do us part], and the happiness or unhappiness of a marriage lasts just as long, you'll have either a heaven or hell in this world depending upon whom you marry. Thus, don't get married without a lot of thought and advice.

Marriage is like a sea where a lot of people get shipwrecked because they didn't have better knowledge and advice before they sailed out from the harbor. So, to stop people from getting shipwrecked on the sea of marriage, I've made a map of sorts with directions for anyone who chooses to brave this sea when it's stormy.

I've done this because people of our time, trying to be brave or ignoring what's ahead, get married too young and don't have the tools or capabilities to sail on the sea of marriage. In the olden days, no one would have made some of these marriage matches since they would have been seen to be doomed.

Many times a marriage that looks great at the start [in other words, has a calm sea] ends up in sadness [a storm]. So, if you don't want to regret things after you're married, get advice before because "looking ahead makes one successful."

So don't say, "I wish I'd known," because that's a bad excuse. Get wise beforehand.

If a man is adventuring into marriage (marriage is an adventure because anyone who gets married risks his peace of mind, freedom, body, and sometimes even his soul!), the first thing he needs to look for after choosing a wifely candidate is how she's likely to turn out.

It's best if she's sober and calm, doesn't practice rude behavior, carries herself well [good posture], has a steady gaze and focus in her eyes, and doesn't walk strangely - having such traits is a bad omen.

The saying "An honest woman can be told by the look on her face" is true since wild looks signal problems. A woman who isn't focused on one thing [her husband or marriage] looks around for things that please her; falsely acting like she's nice is a cover-up for lustful bad behavior.

The next thing to look for - depending upon the man's education and wealth - is the education and general quality of the woman picked. Her looks shouldn't be bad because sometimes physical attractiveness can cause love. Beauty causes some men to feel affections and that adds to love. The opposite [an ugly woman] would reduce a man's love and wouldn't make him want to be with her physically. This is important because dangerous consequences are the result [no kids, pleasure, etc.]. Let your mind rule your heart - don't pick a woman with problems since you'll regret it.

Remember, the average woman is best. Having an average woman is best because a very beautiful woman makes every lustful man want you out of the picture; they'll try to get your wife and it'll be real work to keep her. It'll be even harder than keeping the golden apples in the legend of Hercules' last labor. As the Italians say, "If you have an exceptional horse and a beautiful wife, you're always going to have worries."

Next, after you've made your choice and looked her over as an individual, there is one more thing to think about (assuming you didn't figure all women were evil & chose the least): you need to look at her and her relatives' size. Be sure they aren't too little so you don't get stuck with a bunch of dwarves and pygmies for children.

Be sure she's tall and well-formed since power and strength are usually combined with height.

After you look at this, look at her parents who produced her since, as Ezekiel said, "Like mother, like daughter."

This [a child resembling its parents] can be seen in nature; a particular fruit comes from a particular tree. A hawthorn tree doesn't produce roses. As the king noted: men are very careful to breed dogs and horses for perfection and they're only used for fun and non-important things. Even more important should be men's selection of wives based on breeding and lineage since they are living with the man and produce a man's children which will carry his traits into the future until the end of time.