

**MARRIAGE IN EPIGRAM:
STINGS, FLINGS, FACTS,
AND FANCIES FROM THE
THOUGHT OF AGES**

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Marriage in Epigram: Stings, Flings, Facts, and Fancies from the Thought of Ages by Frederick W. Morton

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FREDERICK W. MORTON

**MARRIAGE IN EPIGRAM:
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Uniform with this Volume.

LOVE IN EPIGRAM:

*SAPIENT GUESSES AND FOOLISH CONCEITS
ABOUT THE TENDER PASSION.*

WOMAN IN EPIGRAM:

*FLASHES OF WIT, WISDOM, AND SATIRE FROM
THE WORLD'S LITERATURE.*

MEN IN EPIGRAM:

*VIEWS OF MAIDS, WIVES, WIDOWS, AND OTHER
AMATEURS AND PROFESSIONALS.*

COMPILED BY
FREDERICK W. MORTON



MARRIAGE IN EPIGRAM

*Stings, Flings, Facts, and Fancies from
the Thought of Ages*

Could you add any?

COMPILED BY

FREDERICK W. MORTON



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY

1903

WHY?



*Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge,
And nature that is kind in Woman's breast,
And reason that in Man is wise and good,
And fear of Him who is a righteous Judge,
Why do not these prevail for human life,
To keep two hearts together that began
Their spring-time with one love?*

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

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INTRODUCTORY.

MARRIAGE, to judge by published beliefs and opinions, — and literature is full of them, — is one of the world's greatest paradoxes. It is, according to one, an institution ordained by God, and, according to another, a social contrivance invented by the devil ; it is a survival of paradise, and a foretaste of purgatory ; it brightens human lot and perfects human joys, and it infuses into earthly experience the canker of regret, care, and sorrow ; it is synonymous with kisses, honeyed words, gracious deeds of kindness, and also with bickerings, curtain lectures, and spite-work ; it is prophetic of eternal association, and likewise of divorce-court dissociation ; it is reminiscent of Cornelia, and also, alas, of Xantippe ; it is a pet theme for preacher and poet, and a butt for satirist and sinner ; it is — but why particularize further ? Marriage, one is told, stands for all that is

pure, good, holy, divine, and for all that is corrupt, base, unhallowed, diabolical.

For ages Hymen has been not less an idol than a knave, and his henchman, Cupid, has shared in his worship and his defamation. Surely their intentions have always been good enough; even matrimonial anarchists admit this; and if many of these good intentions have turned out paving-stones for the nether world — well, the more the pity. Mistakes *will* happen, so don't blame the gods. Cupid has corralled a miscellaneous, ill-assorted aggregation of material, and Hymen has simply done the best he could with it. At least he has tied the knots, and even a mundane court — and mundane courts are prone to adjudicate against monopolists — would hold that his responsibility ended with that function. The knot once tied, the rest of the enterprise concerns the wedded couple only.

The fact of the matter is that Hymen has been doing a good work: marriage, despite its flaws and failures, is a glorious institution. Even its cynical detractors are only half-hearted in their denunciation. The when, the how, the who are the important ques-

tions. Some candidates for matrimony assume its silken bonds—shackles, say the grumpy—with the determination to love and win love, bear and forbear, cherish and be cherished; and others would not hold the peace if the Angel of Judgment stood over them with a sword. It is natural that the one should chant eulogies freely fringed with tender superlatives, and that the other should be raucous with insinuations and reproaches. Hence the apparent paradox.

This book does not take sides. It gives the happily mated few or many their say, and lets the disgruntled few or many indulge in their jibes and jokes. Neither does it, by inclusion or exclusion, seek to point a moral or adorn a tale. Why should not Tom, Dick, and Harry, Sue, Mary, and Mary's fair cousin give vent to their excess of enthusiasm or of bile? Their agonies of glorification and their writhings of discontent offend nobody, influence nobody, deter nobody. Wedlock is here to stay, for time if not for eternity. People read pleas and provocations, theories and Gradgrind facts, arguments and warnings, and go on in the same old way, courting the intervention of Cupid, and making Hymen