

marriage". He said the B.M.A. were not prepared to make a recommendation that marriage should take place without a further break after school, or that parents should not be consulted. Well now, there is the B.M.A., in your name, apparently saying that parents should have no control over their children's marriages over the age of 18. I shall be interested to hear in discussion whether or not you agree with that, and if so, why.

It is possible to make tests of suitability based on medical research, to see whether two people are likely to adjust to each other. Could one say that, if parents withhold consent, before a court gives the consent the parents are unwilling to give, the court could require the boy and girl to undertake a test? Would it be reasonable to say: "If you cannot get the approval of your parents, you must get the approval of the computer?"

DISCUSSION

Drs Ellesby and Macalem: Do boarding schools militate against parents sharing life with their children? Does Dr Annis Gillie feel that if the age between starting school and puberty is the critical period of parenthood, it is therefore unwise to send children away to boarding school during this period?

Dr Annis Gillie: This depends upon your particular circumstances. Obviously, if your children are at boarding school you will have only four months in each year during which you can give them your full attention. As a general practitioner, I could not take four months leave each year, therefore I did not send my children to boarding school because I wished to spend a good deal of my time with them—to get to know them well. This does not mean that I disapprove of these schools; in fact, I am chairman of a girl's boarding school and I think the school is doing a very useful job.

Dr Gancz: I was particularly interested in the question posed by Judge Pennant in his address on divorce; he wanted to know if a scientific assessment of compatibility is possible, and whether the medical profession could help in this type of assessment. In America, electroencephalographic and cardiographic tracings are used to assess character and ability. The tests are employed in industry and they are often used to determine whether prospective directors and their wives are likely to fit in with the personal character of the rest of the set-up. I read an article devoted to this subject in which it was suggested that it would be inadvisable for persons to marry if EEG's showed similar changes due to

epilepsy. The author also suggested that an individual who suffers from a major allergy should be advised not to marry a person who suffers from an allergy of the same nature.

Chairman: Perhaps Professor Stengel would like to comment on this.

Professor Stengel: I am not aware of any tests of suitability for marriage. There may be tests in industry to ascertain whether a person and possibly his wife are suitable for a certain type of performance. After all, you know that during the war so-called officer selection tests were evolved, and although the value of those tests has never been validated, there was, on the whole, an impression that they had served their purpose fairly well. All these tests were concerned with a certain limited kind of performance. Even in America there are no tests of suitability for marriage that would be regarded as acceptable.

Chairman: The test for the army officer might not be the same as for a good husband.

Dr Blakeway: If the age of majority should be altered, would it not be better to move it up to 23 or 24 years of age?

Judge Pennant: My immediate reaction to that is to wonder if it is politically practicable to *take away* from youth, for we are living in an age of a youth cult in which more and more is being given to young people, with the unfortunate result that they have less and less to look forward to as they grow older. Would it be possible now to say, 'We are taking away from you the right to marry freely at 21, we don't think you are fit for it until 23?'

Dr Loakes: Is there any evidence that the 11-plus examination is failing to select those children who will do well in later years?

Dr Herford: The brief answer I think is undoubtedly, "it fails". Without the 11-plus tests you can say that certain children will not do particularly well and others will do outstandingly well. There are quite a large number of children in the intermediate situation with a borderline, many of whom are capable with a little bit of coaching, and some who have no particular interest in work or the particular type of question that is asked in the 11-plus and who will fail. It is said that the 11-plus is a good test for those who have a machine-gun type of mind and if you really stop to think during the 11-plus you will inevitably fail. I think there is a fair measure of truth in that. Two of my daughters failed in their 11-plus quite substantially, but they both succeeded in getting to the university and they are both doing quite well. You could not apply that throughout the whole scale, so I would say that in broad terms the 11-plus is a useful sort of hurdle. We may do better if we could find a suitable alternative method.

Chairman: After a period the innocent party may be divorced. What is innocence? Should we allow divorce if no solution can be found within the marriage framework to make bearing and forbearing in mutual disaster less difficult?

Judge Pennant: If by innocent one means utterly without fault, I see very few innocent people as petitioners for divorce. That is why people

complain that the law at present is so unsatisfactory, because it brands one as guilty and one as innocent, whereas I think in the great majority of cases both are partly to blame or not to blame because being unsuited to each other they should not have married.

Chairman: Perhaps Mr Wallis would like to comment on the second question.

Mr Wallis: I am afraid I do not really understand the question, but as the questioner is here, could I ask him?

Dr Herford: With the greatest of pleasure. It is a question that fascinates me, because I believe that as we grow older we learn to what extent we are producers of our own disasters. If we understand how often we produce our own disasters we should be a little less likely to blame other people for what is largely our own fault. If we understand how often other people produce disasters, we should be a little bit more sympathetic with them in their situation.

Mr Wallis: Dr Herford related this to the idea of marriage guidance and I think it is very topical indeed, because if this work teaches one anything it is that we tend to blame our partners for something in ourselves. This comes one's way when one listens to what somebody is complaining about, and if a wife says "My husband is too bossy", you say, "What was he like when you first married him?" and she says "I admired him because he could stand up for himself." In other words, she is saying the very same thing but she now uses different words for it, and in the marital interaction most of us produce from our partners an unrecognized part of ourselves and then object to it; so that I think this mutual bearing and forbearing is a very apt example of the kind of work that is involved.

Question: Perhaps the judge would tell us what he means by suitability?

Judge Pennant: I suppose everyone who feels happily married considers that he is suitable for his wife, or *vice versa*; that was all I meant, that they might live out their lives in mutual comfort and support.

Question: But how do you judge whether somebody is suitable or unsuitable?

Judge Pennant: Professor Stengel knows this and I don't, but I understand that there has been some research work done on the question of whether or not people are likely to be able to adjust their own personalities so that they can live harmoniously in close contact with a spouse. I would imagine that the research workers obtain their answers largely by a statistical examination of a large number of samples. Where the difficulty arises is in getting the information; we do not know what happens to marriages of people who were thought unsuitable for each other before they married. If we could find that out we would be in a stronger position, but I feel that Professor Stengel is the person really to deal with that sort of question.

Professor Stengel: May I say a few words about some of the questions raised by Judge Pennant. First of all, it is extremely valuable for us to get an idea of how a judge views the problems of a broken-down marriage, and also the ideas he has about how they could be avoided. Contrary

to what other judges sometimes say about doctors, and especially about psychiatrists, Judge Pennant gave us the impression that he thought a lot about our possible contribution. As we see it, this is almost an equally dangerous point of view. Of course, one has to be an optimist and a lover of humanity, and a believer in humanity, especially to be able to judge in the divorce courts. But, I take it, that Judge Pennant views people as beings who are governed mainly by reason. Most of them are not, although they wish they were.

But here is a question: Why is it that so many men are more aggressive against the wife than against other people? This is something that is observed by many parents of difficult adolescents and of schizoids or schizophrenics; these young people are very charming outside, but at home they are incorrigible, especially with the parents, and in particular with the mother. This is observed not only in the abnormal but in *most* difficult young people. The pattern goes on later in life and the wife is often the victim. On the other hand, we know that where there is most love there is most hatred, because human relations are governed by this mixture of love and hate. Now, as for the demand for sex, this is a very difficult question, because very often when a wife complains about an oversexed husband we find that she is frigid, so there is no sort of definite standard. On the other hand, there are men who make objectively excessive demands and very often in those cases the excessive sexual intercourse serves other purposes of which they may not be aware, such as aggression.

Should parents continue to control marriage? May I remind Judge Pennant that in many parts of the world this is being done as it has been done for hundreds of years, and from what we hear it has not worked and it has not been accepted. Now we come to the question of the age of majority. I think the B.M.A. was impressed by the fact that a great deal of our difficulty in human relations, especially in sexual relations, is thought to be due to the discrepancy between biological and social maturation. This is why the majority age of 21 is purely arbitrary, because we know that biologically most young people are ready for marriage before they reach 18 years of age, especially nowadays, since there is better nutrition and people mature earlier. The problem is the discrepancy between social and biological maturation.

Dr Gillie: There is now a reversal of the male-female ratio of the population in the under-35 age group which is said to be increasing considerably, and it could have one of two effects, or both simultaneously; first of all, this disproportion could make a wife of greater value, someone to be treated with care and forbearance; the second effect of an increase in the number of bachelors is that the wife may consider a change-over while the going is still good. Is there any evidence that there is any trend as yet following the change of the population ratio; or looking into the future, do you anticipate any change?

Mr Wallis: I would like to suggest that perhaps one change this is already bringing about with us is a change in clothing. Some four or

five years ago there appeared on the London underground what seemed to me something rather new, and it was an advertisement for a man's mackintosh. The picture was of a girl and a young man who was wearing a rather bedraggled coat, and they were looking with great excitement at the handsome bronzed man in the background, wearing one of these new coats. This struck me as something rather new, for we have grown accustomed to the idea that the ladies dressed to attract the male, but I think we are now beginning to move into the reverse. Perhaps this could be statistically correlated to the very point that Dr Annis Gillie has made. I think this is perhaps half a joke but it *may* also have some validity.

Dr Fisher (Bournemouth): I would like to make one point about reducing the age of majority down to the age of 18 for marriage. Young people themselves regard these age limits with considerable hostility; in fact, my young gardener has just taken his parents to court over this matter. I remember when I first read in Taylor's *Medical jurisprudence*, the article on 'rape', which pointed out that rape is impossible before the age of 14. I said 'My God, I have only got 13 weeks to go'. These matters worry the young people concerned far more than we elderly people who pontificate about what they should or should not do at any particular age. I think it is virtually impossible for us at our age to get inside the skin of a youngster, unless of course we have got Professor Stengel's knack of getting people out of themselves.

Dr Herford: I have been interested in the way in which the daughters in certain families tend to marry young; the mother married young, the grandmother married young, and so on. It seems to me that in quite a number of cases, if these children had a very happy home themselves, if they know that their parents have been extremely happy, they set out in life quite hopefully to find the same happiness themselves. In the home situation, they found a certain assistance to maturity in the way that Dr Annis Gillie was mentioning, and having found that they are quite capable of bringing a great deal of maturity to marriage. Now I think the other point we want to bear in mind is the one that has been made quite a lot of by Tanner in London, namely, that the age of puberty ranges from 12 in some up to 17 in others. Thus the biological age is the only real thing that counts, and for certain individuals the chronological age scale to which our whole education system is tied is quite meaningless.

Dr McLachlan (Southsea): I believe that marriage under 21 should be made harder, but if a couple want a divorce this should be granted. What are the panel's views?

Judge Pennant: I think that this questioner is really asking for approval of divorce by mutual consent. I believe they have it in parts of Scandinavia. One would like to know how it works there. We need more information to form an adequate view.

Dr Gillie: May I say something about marriage in what one might call the sophisticated social class? Falling in love to *a certain degree* is a very natural thing to do, fairly repeatedly, and there is a good supply of flirtatious language to make it amusing even if it does not proceed to a further stage. One only has to think of one's own family; if the child

had married the first young man, or even the third or fourth it would have been an absolute disaster. In societies without the sophisticated language of being in love, only the line between being in love and practising is a different matter at the moment. The precipitation is almost immediate, much faster. I think we are losing the stage of falling in and out of love and the fun of it before the real thing happens, and I am quite sure that many unhappy marriages are formed because many youngsters have not had this normal chance to go through that phase of being in and out of love.

Dr Herford: Earlier, reference was made to the power of the press and the way teenagers are influenced by mass advertisements. Sex is one of the symbols that can be tied to cars, refrigerators, and almost everything to make them more desirable. To have a girl friend or to have a boy friend has become so much a status symbol that many of these youngsters are driven to feel that they are 'on the shelf' if they don't have one; they strive desperately to get a boy friend or a girl friend, and having got one the only way they can tie the friend down is to get married. The other thing that interested me was that a great many of these youngsters who apparently have not been very successful in education in the narrowest academic sense have an extraordinary understanding of human nature. They are the first to agree that between the ages of 17 and 20 they are busy finding out what sort of persons they are; the other persons are busy finding out what sort of persons they are too—they are making a mutual experiment. They agree that it is very easy to fall in love with the wrong person for the wrong reason or for what may seem to be the right reason at the time, and if an early marriage is made it could lead to disaster. Many of them do consider this to an extent which rather surprises me.

Chairman: On this note we must end this afternoon's discussion. It is a pity, because we were just reaching below the surface of the subject.