

CHAPTER 13 - Some American Husbands

Chapter 13 titled "Some American Husbands" from "The Ways of Men" contrasts the historical roles of men and women with the changing dynamics in modern American households. Traditionally, men were the dominant, colorful figures, providers, and protectors, while women were confined to caretaking roles. However, the last century has seen a substantial shift in these dynamics, especially in America, where the husband often finds himself in what the chapter describes as a state of "bondage" due to the increasing control and expectations placed upon him by his wife.

The chapter humorously describes this shift using the metaphor of Samson's loss of power to Delilah, suggesting American wives have gradually usurped roles and responsibilities traditionally held by their husbands. It frames the modern American husband as a new "model" human, notably dutiful and obedient once married, contrasting with his less commendable characteristics as a youth. The text comically depicts the husband as domesticated and well-managed under the expert "horse-womanship" of American wives, implying a loss of autonomy and freedom once married.

Moreover, it comments on the social expectation for the husband to be the breadwinner, contributing financially to the household without expecting anything in return, highlighting a sort of matrimonial market where the American wife's financial contribution is minimal, yet her demands and pretensions are inversely high. The chapter recounts tales of husbands planned to spend quiet lives with their spouses, only to find themselves sidelined in their own homes, relegated to the role of financier of their wives' social ambitions.

The narrative details the allocation of domestic spaces to illustrate the husband's diminished presence in the household, suggesting that his role is more of an unseen provider than an active participant in home life. This diminishing of the husband's authority and place within the American household is contrasted with other cultures where the husband retains a more central, authoritative role.

Throughout, "Some American Husbands" humorously critiques the shifting marital dynamics, showcasing the American husband as a figure of patience and unacknowledged sacrifice. It uses examples of social events, home arrangements, and personal anecdotes to exemplify the ways in which American husbands have adapted to, or are subjugated by, their roles in modern matrimony, ending on a note that admires their resilience and generosity in the face of these challenges.