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# **MEN, WOMEN, AND GOD**

A DISCUSSION OF SEX QUESTIONS FROM THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

**BY THE REV. A. HERBERT GRAY, D. D.**

AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN ADVENTURE," "AS TOMMY SEES US," ETC.

## **TO MY WIFE**

WHO FOR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS HAS BEEN MY CHIEF TEACHER AND HAS INTERPRETED LIFE AND GOD TO ME THROUGH THE CONTENTS OF THE DAILY ROUND

# PREFACE

This book has been written at the request of the Student Christian Movement, and is addressed in the first place to men and women of the student age. I have undertaken the task with great gladness because my long and happy contact with men and women through the Student Movement has taught me how great is the need for a fuller understanding of the problems of sex, and how possible it is that men and women should find help through the timely suggestion of right and wholesome thoughts.

My brother, Dr. Charles Gray of London, has contributed a very valuable appendix dealing with certain facts in a way which is only possible to a medical man, and I am very greatly indebted to him for thus enriching this volume.

It will be apparent to all who read it that I also owe a great deal to many who have shared with me their knowledge and experience. In particular I owe much gratitude to a number of generous-hearted women who have enabled me to write the chapters which are more especially addressed to their sex.

I have deliberately omitted from these pages any reference to disease. I do that not because I am not impressed by the terrible penalties with which nature visits certain sins, but because I do not believe in the power of fear to deliver us. Though there were no such thing as venereal disease, immorality would still be a way of death, and morality would still be the way of life and joy. Till we perceive that we are not on the path of progress.

Books of this sort have generally been addressed specially either to men or to women. I write to both alike because I am quite sure that until men and women understand and help each other, there is going to be no happy solution to the problems of sex. When they do so learn to co-operate I believe we shall as a race find our way out into that larger and happier life which can only be ours when we have accepted the facts of sex and learnt to use them to the enrichment of human life and the glory of God.

**A. HERBERT GRAY.**

*Glasgow, 1922.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the following pages I propose to write simply and plainly about the social, personal, and bodily relations of men and women, and about the ways in which their common life may attain to happiness, harmony, and efficiency.

I shall deal with matters often handled only with much diffidence, and thought of with uncomfortable reserve. And I address myself to men and women alike.

I do it all on the basis of one assumption, namely, that a God of love in designing our human nature cannot have put into it anything which is incapable of a pure and happy exercise; and in particular that in making the sex interest so central, permanent, and powerful in human beings He must have had some great and beautiful purpose. I start, in fact, with the faith that the sexual elements in our humanity, once rightly understood and finely handled, make for the enrichment of human life, for the increase of our health and efficiency, and the heightening of our joy. I believe that nothing is more necessary for the world to-day than that we should trace out the ways in which this tremendous life force that is implanted in us all may be used to forward the higher aims of our common life, and to help the race on its upward march. And yet even as I write the word "sexual" I cannot but remember that the mere word will for many good people produce a sensation of distaste. Partly because they have a sincere passion for purity, and partly because this whole subject has been defiled for them by the excesses and indecencies of mankind, they doubt whether it can be right or useful to think about it at all. They regard the facts of sex with a mixture of fear, perplexity, and shame, and take themselves to task if still some curiosity about them lingers in their minds. Therefore before I go any further I would like to ask such people to realize that they are denying my initial assumption. They have not yet come to believe that there is any divine and holy purpose enshrined in the sexual side of life, although God is responsible for its place in our humanity; and I would beg them forthwith to think this matter out.

Sex is no accident in our humanity. The function of the sexual elements in our physical frame is so central that unless they be truly managed health and strength are impossible. Their relation is no less vital to our mental and aesthetic life, and they appear to control almost absolutely our nervous stability. No man or woman attains to fullness and harmony of life if the sexual nature be either neglected or mismanaged. No society is strong and happy unless this part of life is truly adjusted. It may even be said that the evils that come through the mismanagement of sex relations have beaten every civilization up to the present. And no doubt it is natural enough to shudder over the abominations of prostitution and sex vice in general, and so to turn our minds away from the whole matter. But for all that our emotional energies would be better employed in trying to understand this titanic force, and in learning how it may be utilized for our upward progress. Mere prohibitions have so utterly and entirely failed us that we ought now to realize that there is no hope in them alone. What we need is a positive constructive ideal for this part of life which will indicate the real value of the sexual forces in us, and not leave young men and women partly perplexed, partly ashamed, and partly annoyed because they are as the Creator made them.

And so I repeat we must begin with the assumption that, though we have not yet spelt it out, God must have had some great purpose of love when He created men and women with a clamant sex instinct at the center of their personalities.

Hebrew instinct declared that "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." Christian instinct must repeat the verdict with vastly increased conviction, for our humanity is such that the Son of God could wear it. He was not ashamed to call us brethren, and to be tempted like as we are. To suggest that in passion and in its exercise at the bidding of love there need be anything that is not holy, is to arraign the Creator. Sex love abused and misunderstood has indeed strewn the world with tragedies and disease. But sex love is going to remain. Not until we have learnt to make it an

instrument for the perfection of life and the heightening of vitality can we hope to reach the life which the love of God designed for us; and to that we shall not attain until we have dared to acquire knowledge and through knowledge to attain to wisdom.

The ideal which still lingers in many minds, though it is seldom openly confessed, is that boys and girls, young men and women, should be kept in complete ignorance of the truth about their sexual natures until they marry, and that then they should be left to learn all that they need to know from Mother Nature direct. That at least would seem to be a fair inference from the fact of the conspiracy of silence in which ninety per cent of parents have engaged towards the beings they love best.

Unfortunately in order to carry out the policy thus implied it would be necessary to keep children from associating with other children, to forbid them to read the Bible, the great classics of literature, and the daily papers—to keep them from the theatre, and from the study of nature—in fact to bring them up in a world which does not exist. For in all the ways I have suggested do boys and girls now collect garbled, half-true, and distorted notions about sexual life. And even if it were possible to carry out the policy it would still not be desirable. Marriage is not the simple and easy thing which the policy would imply. Mother Nature does not teach young couples all that they need to know. Often they make serious mistakes in the first few days. Often they mishandle and spoil the beautiful relationship on which they have entered to their own disgust and disappointment. Uncounted couples to-day have reason for the bitterness with which they complain that nobody ever taught or helped them. In fact the policy of silence is as cruel as its assumptions are untrue. Ignorance is an impossibility for the young. Our choice lies between garbled, distorted, and defiled knowledge and a knowledge that shall be clean, innocent, and helpful. It has often happened that men and women brought up on the policy of silence have first learnt the facts about life through some contact with vice or sin, and those who know what horrible sufferings sudden discoveries of that sort may mean for sensitive natures cannot possibly have any doubts remaining on this point. There are few more cruel things possible than to bring a girl up in the ignorance which is mistaken for innocence and then to allow her to go out into the world to learn the truth by chance, or through some unclean mind.

That is why I gladly address myself to the task of this book, in which at least some of the truth is told.

Of course the real issue that stands in the background here is the one which concerns the nature of true spirituality. We are all agreed that the essential greatness of man lies in the fact that in him spirit may rule everything else. And until spirit does thus rule he has not reached his true life. But the question of the place of the body in the full life of man still remains to be faced and thought out.

The hermits of the desert assumed that the way of true life lay in the repression of all bodily desire and as much negation of the body as is consistent with mere existence. But in fact they often succeeded in making life disgusting, and generally in making it useless. It may be doubted whether they contributed anything to the real problem of civilization. Yet their mistake is still repeated in part by many good people. Many still think that the way of the higher life consists in forgetting the body as much as possible in order that the soul may live in freedom. They admit the body's needs with reluctance, and treat it as something with no essential relation to their spiritual activities. Often they willfully neglect the duty of health. Still more often they believe they ought to regard with disapproval the clamant desires and cravings of our bodily natures. But in so doing they miss the real significance of the Incarnation. Our life here is an embodied life, and it cannot be fine unless the body is finely tempered. That body is designed as the instrument through which the spirit may find expression. The first essential no doubt is to submit it to discipline and so reduce it to the place of a servant. At all costs it must be brought under control. It must be understood, and kept in good health. And if these things be neglected the life of the spirit is hampered and depressed. But still spirit must express itself through body, and all the wealth of powers with which body is endowed has significance and worth.

For this reason the attempt to keep spiritual and bodily activities separate always revenges itself upon its authors. On the one hand it leads to an impoverishment of the spiritual life, for on these terms the spirit is left with no fine instrument through which to express itself in the real world. And on the other hand, bodily activities divorced from the control of the spirit tend to become mere animal things and so to produce disgust and degeneration.

But indeed the body cannot without disaster be simply ignored. The attempt merely to repress its manifold urgencies leads to a state in which these forces seek out for themselves abnormal channels of activity, so destroying the harmony and balance of life. The essential glory of human beings lies in the fact that in them body and spirit may be so wedded that their activities are woven into one harmonious whole. It was in a moment of real insight that Robert Browning cried—

"Let us not always say,  
'Spite of this flesh to-day,  
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole.'

As the bird wings and sings,  
Let us cry, 'All good things  
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now, than flesh helps  
soul.'"

Now all this is supremely true of the sexual part of life. If mere lust is the vilest thing on earth, pure love is the most beautiful. And when pure love dominates a life all the sexual activities of the body may be transmuted and redeemed until a complete life is attained in which all the primal forces of our beings find a happy exercise under the control of a passion that is at once physical, mental, and spiritual. But the body is not in this process denied. It is accepted, understood, and made to play its true part. If passion be truly handled it provides the driving force for a life that is effective, courageous, and joyous. He is most truly living a spiritual life who has learnt to use all the powers of his incarnate nature in a life of strenuous activity and loyal love.

I do not mean of course that there is no place in the highest type of life for renunciation. Nor do I mean for a moment that only in marriage can greatness and fullness of life be attained. It is hard to use words correctly at a time when special meanings have come to be attached to such words as repression and suppression. What the psychologists have discovered is that unconscious, or incomplete, or unaccepted repression of bodily instincts leads to a dangerous condition. He who has not really surrendered desire, but simply tried to drive it underground, may indeed reap troubles enough and to spare.

But it needs no psychological training to know that deliberate, sincere, and courageous renunciation of this or that bodily desire for the sake of some compelling ideal may lead to the very finest kind of life. Only in this process the body is not ignored. It is taken into account. Nor are its forces neglected. Through the process technically described as sublimation, a way is to be found whereby life force restrained in one direction finds other and most valuable ways of expression.

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I write this book as one who has learnt to thank God for all the elements in our normal humanity, and I send it out with the prayer in my heart that through it some may be helped to a truer understanding of themselves which will ease their way to success and joy and to that fullness of human life which is the divine intention for us.

## CHAPTER I

### KNOWING THE FACTS

The first essential equipment for a right journey through the country of sexual experience is that we should know the truth about our bodies —those temples of the Holy Ghost—and should understand the meaning of the emotions and desires which connect themselves with our physical constitution.

Further, because the problem of sex can only be solved by the cooperation of the sexes working together in mutual understanding it is right that men should know a good deal about women's bodies and vice versa. Such knowledge almost always begets sympathy and a certain intelligent tenderness. The lack of it has often led to unconscious cruelties, to misunderstandings, and even to serious mistakes. To mention one instance only, how can men be expected to treat the other sex with true consideration if they do not know that once a month for a period women ought to be saved from fatigue and strain? And yet there are many adult men in that position of ignorance.

But though the detailed facts are all clean, and really easy to be understood, the manner in which they are conveyed into our minds is of vital importance. I do not think they can be fully conveyed through any printed page. They are too delicate for such handling. They are not truly conveyed unless behind the mere words which express them there is a reverent soul that can impart the right tone and emphasis to them. I would quite gladly attempt to put them all down here could I only be assured that my words would only be read by men or women when alone and in a reverent mood. That being impossible I can only begin by insisting that they ought to be known. And this I can also do—I can

assure all young people who read these pages that there is nothing whatever in the facts of the case to be afraid of—nothing that they cannot know with perfectly clean minds. There are no terrible mysteries in the matter. There are no horrors in normal sex life. The truth even about the ultimate intimacies of body between men and women is that when truly achieved they are beautiful, and holy, and happy.

But how are young people to get the right knowledge? The worst possible way in which to get it is to pick it up bit by bit in connection with evil stories, the reports of divorce cases, and the hints of vice which lurk in life's shadowy corners. Yet that has been the most common way in the past. Quite little boys have passed on mysterious stories from mouth to mouth defiling the whole matter. Many girls have first begun to wonder and to ask questions when they first heard of an illegitimate child. Words in the Bible, such as "lasciviousness" and so on, have started mere school children asking questions to which probably they only got distorted answers from other school children. Just because their parents did not tell them anything, they have assumed that there must be something to be ashamed of in the truth. And so ninety per cent of boys, and I know not what proportion of girls, have the subject of sex spoiled for them even before adolescence. Sex, sexual experience, passion, and so on are things they think half unclean and yet annoyingly interesting. They are half ashamed, and yet remain curious. Some are half afraid. Some rather more than half disgusted. Some indeed try to banish the whole subject from their minds. This may seem to be a refined thing to do; but, as we know with a new definiteness since the psychologists have explored the matter, it is really a disastrous thing to do. For to adapt ourselves to sex is one of the problems that cannot be escaped. In this world we cannot live the disembodied life. What we may do is to live a clean and happy bodily life, but only if we build our house of life on knowledge.

Wherefore to all young men and women I would say—Get to know the real truth from someone you can trust. Go to some older man or woman with a clean mind and a large heart, and learn about yourself. Of course the best people in the world to go to are your own parents; but if for any reason that resource is not open to you, go to a doctor or a minister or some senior friend. It is worth while to take a lot of trouble to find the right person, and it is still more worth while to take trouble to avoid the wrong person. Find someone who has seen the hand of God in the facts of sex and who can therefore talk about them without embarrassment. And do not let yourself be deterred by the fact that you may have made mistakes already of which you are ashamed. Most of us made mistakes in our early years just because of the same ignorance which has been your fate. And therefore we are not shocked. We are just sorry, and would like to help. It is not true that mistakes inevitably spoil the future. Forgiveness, recovery, and new life are possibilities for us all. And if you have already made mistakes through ignorance, that is but one reason more why you should know the truth without delay. When you are told the truth you will be learning something about God as well as about yourself, for He made you.

Nor is it only for your own sake that you ought to know. If you want to achieve helpful relations to men or women, and ultimately to achieve a right relation to husband or wife, you need to know the plain facts about our incarnate life. Men and women often make the right way of life more difficult for each other by mere ignorance. You need to know if you are to be really kind.

I cannot forget that when young men and women of sensitive and refined natures come to this knowledge all at once, when already adults, it may at first create a sense of repulsion. It does not do so for those who have learnt the facts bit by bit as they were ready for them. In that case they are accepted easily and naturally. But with the others it may well be that just because they have clean and delicate minds, they may at first experience some real distaste when they come to understand the creative processes through which they were born. But to any such I would say that against that possibility they may be forearmed, if they will but believe that when love takes two people into its charge the physical consequences all come to seem natural and right and sacred. You need never know anything of these matters at first hand except when real love for some man or woman has mastered you, and then the experiences to which that love will lead you will be found to be pure, and simple, and happy. If you approach this part of life with reluctance or in fear, or with some mistaken sense of shame, you may spoil it, and spoil somebody else's life in addition. But if you will believe this plain witness, which thousands would unite in offering you, you may be greatly helped. Ultimately your way to success in this part of life lies in accepting your nature with its sexual elements— not in trying to be a sexless person. That is not the way of purity. It is the way of folly. Therefore again I say—Do not be afraid of the facts. Those who have traveled that country report to you "There is nothing here to be afraid of—at least there used to be nothing."

And now in case these pages are read by some young married persons who still have before them the chance to serve their own children in this matter, may I insist that a solemn obligation rests on them to see that their children learn the truth in a simple and natural way from the lips of their fathers and mothers? The ideal way in this connection is that children should learn about their own bodies from the same people who first tell them about God and goodness. When that happens there is no danger that

they will slip into an unclean attitude towards sex, for children nearly always accept the things their parents tell them as natural and right things.

Perhaps the first step in the way is to decide never to tell children anything that is not strictly true. When your little girls or boys ask how babies come, tell them that they could not understand, but that you will tell them as soon as they are old enough. And then very early tell them at least that babies come from the bodies of their mothers. The first wrong turn that the thoughts of many of us took in connection with sex was when some older person was made embarrassed or angry by our natural questions. We made a note then and there that there must be something queer and wrong about the way babies come, and the impression sank down into the unconscious part of us to bring forth mischief for years to come. But if a parent's own attitude to sex is clean and true he or she will find it quite possible to tell the plain truth to innocent little minds. The first bit of knowledge imparted, namely that babies come from the bodies of their mothers, will often beget a new attitude of regard and chivalry in children towards their own mothers. I can say with certainty that it is very good for a boy to know that for his sake his own mother once went through both pain and risk.

And then let the rest all come naturally. It is better to tell your children in almost any way than not to tell them at all, but the best way is not to make a solemn occasion of the telling, but to let the knowledge pass from you to them as incidents and occasions suggest. If you have contact with nature in common with your children the occasions will be many for telling them about flower and animal life. And this will naturally lead on to instruction about human beings. Even if such contact with nature should be impossible, life in any place and in any guise will assuredly present you with opportunities for your teaching. And in any case try to get in *first*. Before the slime of schoolboy talk or the follies of schoolgirl talk have defiled the subject tell your children about it, as about something sacred and beautiful—much too sacred and beautiful for the chatter of idle hours in playgrounds, etc. You will be surprised, if you have forgotten your own childhood, how early it is necessary to do all this if you are to get in first. No general rules about the right age can be laid down. Children differ enormously in regard to the ages at which they pass from stage to stage in their development. You will need to watch and to understand. Above all do not let your telling take the form of mere prohibitions. Do not let it stand related in the first case to warnings against sins. You do not want to associate the idea of sin in the first case with this subject at all. What you can do is to implant a certain reverence in a child's mind in relation to the whole matter, and if you succeed in that you will have forearmed your child against sin. I long to know that children are learning about sex not in association with scoldings, reproofs, and warnings, but rather as part of the splendid truth of God. It is the association of the facts of sex with the sins of men and women that has spoilt this part of life for most minds. Of course it is only kind to tell boys and girls where it is that they may go wrong—it *is* necessary to put them on their guard. But that should be a secondary matter—a mere addition to your teaching.

My own experience as a minister has brought to my knowledge several very pathetic instances of how young girls get into very serious trouble just through lack of the knowledge their mothers ought to have given them. It seems possible still for a girl even of seventeen or eighteen, or even much older, to be almost incredibly ignorant, and no words are too strong to describe the cruelty of allowing them to face life in that condition.

In any case let your teaching be, in general terms at least, complete before adolescence. If you wait till adolescence has begun, the telling may cause undue excitement. If you finish your general teaching before that stage it will save your child from much unwholesome curiosity.

And here, though the subject must necessarily be distasteful to many, as it is to myself, I must put in a word about self-abuse. [Footnote: Knowing from experience that a good many parents do not even know what self-abuse means, let me simply say that it consists in such handling of the genital organs as creates emotional and physical sexual excitement of a kind that is obviously unnatural.] In recent years a large number of men have given me their confidence, so that I am not speaking from hearsay when I state that a percentage of men which probably approximates to seventy-five are, at least for a time, victims of this habit.

I know that it is easy to exaggerate the physical and mental evil effects of it. But what is beyond all question is that it produces bad psychic consequences, and does so leave men out of conceit with themselves that when they realize that they have become victims to the habit their mental sufferings are often pitifully acute. Indeed, it is because my pity and sympathy have been so drawn out to many men I know that I cannot forbear to speak on behalf of those who may yet be saved from it. The facts about it are that the habit is often begun at an almost inconceivably early age. It is very often begun without any sense that it is wrong, and certainly without any knowledge of how evil it is. And once it has been begun, it is horribly hard to abandon. Uncounted good men have to confess to-day that in their younger days they never did achieve liberation in spite of constant efforts. Uncounted men have brought about in this way a certain perversion of their natures with regard to their sexual functions

which clouded their lives for many years. And yet the cure for this situation is very simple and almost easy. The men who have completely escaped practically all testify that they owe their immunity to the kindly and timely advice of some wise senior. The habit is *not* natural, and therefore it is *not* hard never to begin it. If it has not been begun in boyhood a very little determination will keep an adult man from falling into it. And this means that in this case parents can, if they will, save the rising generation. Perhaps it is mothers chiefly who will have to render this service just because the habit is begun so very early, while boys are still in very close association with their mothers. I may seem to be contradicting what I have just said about mere warnings, but I would certainly say that any sort of arresting warning is better than inaction in the matter. Yet even in this matter any kind of harsh warning is not the best way. A boy can be taught that there is a certain sanctity about certain parts of his body. He can be taught to treat them scrupulously and hardily. He can be given positive ideas which will save him, though I also believe that he ought to be told with definiteness to avoid this particular snare. I know of no other case in which a little wise love and timely vigilance may have such tremendous results in saving a child from future suffering and mistake. Does anything more need to be said to mothers who really love their sons!

I have written these things about boys and men because it is in that connection that I can speak from first-hand knowledge. But several women doctors have told me of late that there is a very real need that girls also should be helped in view of the similar danger which lies in their path. With them the habit is no doubt much less common. But it is common enough, and has serious enough consequences, to constitute a call to parents in their case also.

Most of those who read these pages will themselves be young. If they have troubled to read the paragraphs I have just written a number of them will, I know, be moved to say to themselves, "We would give anything if our parents had done these things for us." Yes! it is a great pity they did not. But do not be hard upon your parents. They were the victims of a wrong tradition. The conspiracy of silence had in their day been given almost religious sanctions. Some of them were themselves embarrassed by the whole subject just because no clean persuasions about it were current in their youth. That was their calamity, as it has in part been yours. But no such calamity need overtake your children. If you can and will cleanse your minds now—if you will take this whole subject out into the cleansing light of God, and look at it there till you have seen the divine truth about sex—if you can escape embarrassment and attain to thankfulness, then you will be able to keep this whole matter clean for your children. Your generation has suffered much. The next need not. And remember that whatever doctors, teachers, and ministers may do for the nation, it must be parents who will save us in the long run.

You at least can get ready.

## CHAPTER II

### COMRADESHIP

The first outstanding social consequence of sex is the mutual attraction of young men and women in general. With apologies in the meantime to the girls who "have no use for men" and to the queer men who "don't like girls," I propose to speak to the great majority. To many a healthy and normal man there is nothing so wonderful or beautiful in all God's earth as a woman. And the converse is often true. The most interesting thing about the world for many of each sex is that the other sex is in it also.

Those who share the assumption on which this book is written will agree that an influence so strong, so profound, and so universal must have some fine significance in the divine scheme of things. It is an element in humanity which must affect the whole of life. To handle it rightly must be necessary if life as a whole is to succeed. And the first step towards a right handling of it is to accept the fact of it gladly and openly. The convention lingers that it is a little weak in a man to admit that he needs and craves woman's society, and that for a girl to admit the converse is not quite modest. And thus there is often a certain furtive element in the relations of the sexes between fifteen and twenty-five which is all of it a great pity. It is here that Mrs. Grundy has done us real injury. The poor old dear has been so fussy and nervous about it all. She has often tried to close the doors upon free and wholesome fellowship, and so has driven the young to find out other ways of meeting. But even she has not been able to keep the sexes apart. The truth is that the mutual relations of men and women in the realm of comradeship, and



quite apart from marriage, may be so happy and enriching—so exhilarating and so bracing—that one may reverently say the whole arrangement of having divided mankind into two such groups, is one of the most splendid of the divine thoughts. For many a man the joy and worth of life depend largely upon women. The things he gets on his journey from his mother, his sisters, and his girl friends—from his wife, his daughters, and the women friends of later days are the golden things in life. And I know that many a woman would say a corresponding thing about the life career of a woman. That is God's plan—to make us dependent on one another for the stimuli, the inspirations, and the joys which prevent life from becoming drab and monotonous. "In the beginning God made them male and female," because He loved them. He made them gloriously different that they might enjoy and help each other.

It is one of the mysteries of history that for uncounted centuries man imagined that he only needed woman in her capacity as a wife and potential mother—that for long ages woman had no place in society except as wife or mother. Why it was so long before the spirit of God moved women to shatter that conception, I do not understand. But with its shattering there appeared for a time a tendency to imagine that men and women are in most things practically the same, and that the difference of sex is a very little thing. Many people seemed inclined to believe that a woman is just the same sort of being as a man, except for one special function—that of motherhood—which can only be exercised occasionally, and need not be exercised at all. That I am sure was a mistake with the possibility of disaster in it. No doubt there are men with many feminine characteristics, and women with many masculine ones. But woman is not only physically different from man. She is different mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. And that is just why we need her so much in all life's departments.

We need woman in politics, for instance, just because she is different from man. If the extension of the franchise to some millions of women had meant merely that the number of people had been increased who would think and vote simply as men had previously thought and voted, it would have been no great event. If women members of Parliament are going to be mere replicas of the old type of M. P., then they might as well save themselves the bondage of Westminster, for their presence there will make no valuable difference. But we do need them in the constituencies and in the House exactly because they bring new and different vital forces to bear on the conduct of affairs. Experience is already teaching us that men and women think more truly together than they do apart. There is something about the sweep and range of man's thought which is peculiarly stimulating to woman's mind, and there are aspects of truth to which men remain blind until women point them out. For this reason very often mixed committees act more wisely than committees of only one sex. I suspect that the same thing holds in relation to art, and even to scientific work. It certainly holds in connection with social work, and church work. In fact in all life's departments, with a few obvious exceptions, men and women supplement and stimulate one another, and by comradeship make a bigger and better thing of life than would be possible otherwise.

I am not assuming that a fine comradeship is necessarily an easy thing to achieve. I should be surprised if it were, for I know of no fine things that can be attained easily. Comradeship between the sexes is rapidly spoilt by "silliness." It has to be based upon a considerable amount of restraint. It can be and it ought to be "jolly," but it becomes a poor thing at once when either man or woman forgets dignity. We are still at the experimental stage in traveling through this new country that has opened up to us within the last twenty years; and if that is a reason for being very charitable about mistakes, it is also a reason for being alert to find the right paths.

I am very much impressed by the opportunity that lies before students as a class in this matter. In most of our universities and colleges men and women meet in the freest way, and they only and for themselves can discover how this new kind of life is best conducted. College rules and regulations are not going to do it for them. Indeed the older generation is not going to do it for them. But if they will find out the right way and establish for themselves the right standards and conventions, they may do an immense service for the rest of the nation. And I believe they are already in large measure doing this. My experience has on the whole made me entirely hopeful, and has deepened my faith in the fitness of men and women for freedom.

None the less and although I belong to the older generation, I propose to offer some suggestions for this part of life. I cannot make much use of the word "flirting." It has nearly as many different meanings as Bolshevism. By some people it is applied to any high-spirited and happy intercourse between men and women, in which case it signifies only a right and good thing. Some people mean by it "playing at being in love," in which case it is a silly and unworthy occupation which saps the real love power in men and women. Others again mean by it the whole bundle of silly and sentimental manners which some men and some women assume when in the presence of the other sex, and in that sense of the word flirting means just exactly the foolish thing that common sense would declare it to be. What I am quite sure of is that success in this comradeship between the sexes depends upon the discovery of a right way which lies between the coldness which is the negation of good fellowship, and the undue familiarity which is both dangerous and undignified. We men have in the past been accustomed to

boast that we will go just as far towards familiarity as women will allow, and have declared that this whole matter is one which women must regulate. Male opinion on the whole used to regard a man as something less than a sport who would not take liberties wherever he saw they would not be resented. To use any sort of compulsion was indeed held to be ungentlemanly, but short of that men have recognized no compulsion of honor bidding them refrain from familiarities. "That's the girl's affair," they have often said. But this is really a flagrant case of the way in which we men deceive ourselves and assume positions that are both dishonest and cruel. I call this particular one dishonest because it is absurd for us to pretend that our expectations and desires have no influence on girls, and that therefore we have no responsibility for events. Of course girls will tend to give what men in general persist in asking. They are just as human as we are. Our conventional assumption that they are always mistresses of the situation—models of perfect self-mastery and understanding—is ridiculous and unkind. It is the age-long injustice which men have practiced towards women to pretend that they are creatures without passion and by nature always in control of their emotions. We know it is not true, and yet we act on the pretence that it is. And I call this position of ours cruel because there is no reason whatever why we should try to lay on women the whole burden of refining and controlling our mutual relations. Why should we not take our share of the task? Since history began we have asked many things of women, and then kept our real respect for those who refused them—a mean and cowardly attitude. Women are not angels and it is mere sentimental nonsense to pretend that they are. But they can be splendid companions when men help them towards the attaining of that relationship. Often we have seemed to want of them only sentimental dalliance, with the result that they often grant it. But many women would rather pass men by altogether than meet them in that way, although most really long for some relationship that will call into exercise the mental, aesthetic, and spiritual powers of both men and women. Indeed there is ground for this charge against both men and women, that often in social intercourse with one another they suspend the exercise of the finer parts of their natures. We have all known men of great intellectual gifts and wide experience who when "the ladies" appear promptly put on the garb of mere triflers. And we have also known women with very real literary, or artistic, or intellectual gifts who treat men primarily as beings to be played with. And so do many people miss the enriching joys of companionship, and make social intercourse petty and wearisome. I believe most women want to know whatever is big and strong and efficient in men and not merely to find out whether they are good at badinage. And though many men think they are afraid of serious and clever women, they really in their hearts want to discover the responsible and sincere qualities in the personalities of girls and not merely the surface ones.

God forbid that we should banish chaff and jest from our common life, or pretend to be old while still we are young! God forbid that we should be prim and Puritan when the sun shines and life calls! There are no sillier things in life than the mere affectations of intellectuality. Mere solemnity is both an ugly and a futile thing, and nothing is duller than a constant enforced earnestness. I remember a dear old celibate professor of mine who, having met a number of self-consciously intellectual women, became so annoyed that at last when asked whether he did not rejoice in the higher education of women he broke out with the sentence, "No! I don't like clever women—I like silly girls." The story may be apocryphal. The man at least was human enough to have said it. All that I am pleading for is that men and women should cease to hide from one another the deeper interests and concerns that really are present in their lives—that they should not merely play together but should also think together.

As to the detailed manners and customs which should control comradeship I claim no authority to speak dogmatically, and, as I have said, I am sure the rising generation will have to settle these things for itself. I am at least sure that both the stately coldness of Lady Vere de Vere and the familiarity in which dignity is forgotten are fatal. I confess to the hope that the linking of arms and the slapping of one another on the shoulder are not going to be characteristics of social intercourse in the future. And as to kissing I confess myself unblushingly conservative—Victorian if you will. Nine times out of ten it may not be a thing worth making any fuss about. But it is a mistake. Partly, to put it bluntly, because kissing sometimes arouses desires which kissing cannot satisfy; and partly because it is, I believe, a fine instinct which suggests to both men and women that they should keep their kisses for the one person who will or may some day have love's right to them.

And here I think I ought to put down for the sake of girls a fact of which they are often ignorant. When you allow men to embrace and kiss you—even when you allow them lesser familiarities—you may go your way thinking no more about it and undisturbed. The whole thing may not really have stirred you. But with men it is not so. Often by such things tumults are raised in them whereby the way of self-control and chastity is made cruelly difficult. Only some of you do it, and you have done it generally in ignorance. When you realize the truth you will see that it is unkind—possibly you may even realize that it is dangerous. And yet I do not want to overstate even this point. I heard lately of a girl who, having been told the truth, became so nervous that she was afraid to sit within five feet of a man and found general social intercourse spoilt for her. There are no dangers for men, but on the contrary there is very great help for men, in the society of girls who will meet them in a spontaneous, natural, and

friendly way. It is when the girls who should be their natural companions are found to be prudish and stiff that men are all too apt to look for other girls who will at least be friendly and often much more than friendly. All that I want girls to know is that there are dangers on the horizon of this part of life, and to ask them to use their wisdom and their common sense. What I ask of men is that they should cease meanly trying to avoid responsibility in this connection, and should face their half of the problem. For the problem *is* worth solving. Happy, free, wholesome companionship between men and women is a bracing and splendid thing. We cannot possibly solve the whole problem of human life till we have attained to it.

And now a last word to the people to whom at the beginning I offered an apology—to the exceptional young people who take no interest in the other sex. I do not commend your attitude. It is not wise. If it is in your case instinctive and spontaneous you need not worry, for nature will soon cure it. But if you have consciously adopted it, or are deliberately retaining it, you are making a serious mistake. You are not sexless beings, and by adopting this attitude you are repressing certain parts of your natures which will one day make their presence felt whether you like it or no, and possibly in unhappy and unnatural ways. Girl friendships cannot fully and finally satisfy any girl. Companionships with other men are insufficient for any man. Instincts in your beings which may not be denied demand something else.

If you have decided that there is nothing worth while in the fellowships that may exist between men and women, surely it is plain that you must be wrong, for the verdict of nine-tenths of mankind is against you. If you have in you any positive antagonism to the other sex, that is in itself a manifestation of your sexual nature, and a bad one.

There is a fine, breezy, sunny world full of beauty, interest, and deep satisfaction for our humanity, the doors of which you are closing on yourselves. If some people have traveled there unwisely or have lost their way in it, that is only a coward's reason for staying outside. Things may seem to be going very well with you in spite of your attitude while you are still in the early twenties—you may say that you are getting from life all that you want. But as you approach the thirties you will infallibly discover your mistake. Nature will then assert herself. A certain mysterious loneliness will overtake you, and life will lose its flavor. In all modern life there is no harder problem than the one which arises for those who without any will of their own have to face that situation. To court it is mere folly. As a matter of fact behind your attitude there lies concealed the attempt to deny your sex, and that is the one impossible thing to do. You may control it, discipline it, or sublimate it; but you will do nothing but make trouble for yourself till you have accepted it. If it annoys you to find that you are not sufficient in yourself for yourself—if in particular you resent the mere suggestion that the other sex should in any way be necessary to your completeness and happiness, you are really quarrelling with the established nature of things. You may do that if you like, but there is always only one end to the quarrel. It is we who get broken, not the eternal order.

## CHAPTER III

### LOVE

The crowning fact about sex is that it makes possible the experience of being in love. I am sure that all possibility of a right handling of sex problems depends upon a true understanding and valuation of love — that beautiful and imperious emotion which masters and transforms both men and women, which is closely linked with the creative instinct, and which at a certain stage in its growth calls into being the whole group of tumultuous sensations and demands known as passion that it may achieve its own fulfillment. If we know the truth about this matter we shall with comparative ease answer most of the questions which arise in connection with sex.

By what divine and mysterious instinct it is that love is awakened I do not know. A man may know and appreciate a score of women, and yet remain in the depths of him essentially unmoved; and then some one woman with no conscious purpose will release some secret spring of life in the depths of his personality, whereby she becomes for him hence forth the center of the world. It may happen that this love comes on the heels of knowledge and grows out of friendship. I believe they are fortunate persons to whom things happen in this way. But it may also be that the mysterious instinct will do its work at a first meeting. Love at first sight may be quite incomprehensible and unreasonable, but it is a fact none

the less. One meeting may fix the destiny of a man or a woman, even though the second may not occur for months or even years.

The days that immediately follow this experience may not be happy days. Many a man has to serve and wait ere he can awaken love in her who is to him the one woman in the world. Many a woman has to wait and wonder and face distress. Then, too, till the stage of mutual acknowledgment is reached love makes men and women awkward. They do uncouth, crude, and clumsy things. They get into muddles. They make mistakes. It would seem that some delicate process of mutual adjustment is often necessary before two souls can really find each other, and while the stumbling preliminary days last, love is often a torture as well as a delight. Nor are the best lovers the most successful at first. A superficial emotion may be easily handled, but a deep one will upset a man and make him strange to himself. And so two people will maneuver and wander and baffle each other. They will often be sure and then uncertain by turns, and will wonder whether love does not chiefly mean hopeless complications.

But when two souls do really discover each other, then at once a new life begins, so radiant, beautiful, stimulating, and mysterious, that even the poets have failed to find sufficient words for it. In their hearts two lovers always know that this is what they were made for— that this is the very core and essence of human existence. I think they generally know that they have been ushered into a house of life of which they are quite unworthy, and that they take their first steps therein in reverence and in awe.

Let me simply enumerate some of the manifest consequences of this love.

1. From the very first love expresses itself as a reaching after intimacy. For many days two lovers are busy telling each other all about themselves, about their past experiences, their hopes and aspirations, their doubts and fears, their relations to other people, and their various circumstances. They want to know and be known. They want to share everything. Towards mere friends we do well to practice some reserve. By talking about ourselves we may be apt to bore them. But lovers want to know everything, and are wise if they have no reserves.

2. Then, secondly, love obviously increases the vitality and so adds to the physical beauty of both men and women. Indeed it increases vigor of all kinds, producing new powers of sheer physical and nervous endurance. What will a man who is truly in love not do for love's sake, and that without thinking of fatigue! What untold things women have accomplished under the spur of the same inspiration.

3. Thirdly, it awakens the latent idealism of both, It is not by accident that men in love are found trying to write poetry, though it may be a bad accident if other people have to try to read it. Of course we laugh at this naïve habit, because poetry seems a thing incongruous with the ordinary prosaic man, with his baggy trousers and clumsy ways. But for my part I rather incline to thank God that such an impulse should ever disturb the average man. What could be better than that at one stage of his life at least he should try to reach the stars. And if from the works of real poets we were to banish all the love-inspired poetry, how paltry would the remainder seem.

4. Still further, love awakens the soul. Our spiritual capacities share in the general stimulus which it brings. It is not by chance that courting couples go to church. They do *not* go simply to whisper in the gallery, and if they do hold hands during the sermon I do not think that God is ill pleased. They go because the inspiration of love inclines them to long after God. Of course it does. All love is of God, and this special kind bears openly upon it the marks of its divine origin. And while on the one hand it is true that love leads towards religion, it is equally true that without a sense of things spiritual love cannot be its perfect self. Perhaps the commonest cause of the failure of love lies in some arrest of spiritual development. For when the soul is asleep, what is left of love is a poor thing.

5. And then, fifthly, at some point in its growth love summons passion into life. What has been hitherto an emotion of the heart becomes also a tumultuous activity of the whole being, and love having mastered the whole incarnate nature of each in turn drives the two together in that oneness of the flesh which is the decree of God. No doubt it is just here that the compulsions of civilized society set a serious problem for ardent lovers. Primitive men probably knew nothing of a period of engagement, and lovers would proceed to become wholly wedded just as soon as nature laid her compelling hand upon them. But it is our glory that we are not simply the tools of natural forces. We belong to the directorate in this life, and even on the force of love we can impose times and seasons. But when the right time does come, then lovers who have already been attaining to union of heart and mind express their passion also in the union of their bodies, and this wonderful experience, when it does so enter life, is realized as something sacramental. It is literally and exactly an expression in the terms of the body of something which is already a spiritual fact. Nothing satisfies real love except this complete mingling of two personalities. It is not satisfied without physical intimacy, and yet physical intimacy alone is not enough. That which is satisfied by mere physical intimacy is not love. The full human passion which

alone deserves that name calls also for intimacies of mind and spirit—for the interplay of two personalities through the whole stretch of their powers. But it cannot be too strongly said that on the terms I have indicated the ultimate bodily union of two lovers is a beautiful and happy thing. It is felt to be something with large spiritual consequences. In some mysterious way it really does bind souls together. Each knows that henceforth he or she is bound to the other for life, and a man is usually moved by a glowing sense of reverent gratitude to the woman who has thus trod with him the strange paths of that new country. Considered apart from love, such an experience may seem to be gross, because apart from love it is gross. But as an incident in the communion of two loyal hearts it is realized as a pure and natural thing. Through it the flesh is caught up into harmony with the spirit and is thereby redeemed. A certain new balance and repose of being is attained whereby a whole personality will experience a wonderful sense of liberation. [Footnote: I do not think the creative instinct often enters into consciousness at this point. It does so with some women, but with very few men. As a rule the real content of the experience is just an ardent desire in each for utter nearness to the other. It is the expression of their love that they desire. It is each other that they love—not as yet any third person.]

6. And then, sixthly, from love that has thus run its natural and ordained course a new life results. Even human love has creative value, and by it the doors are opened into that most sacred world in which a man and a woman succumb together to the power and beauty of an infant, thrill together over its untold charms, and find that little hands are clutching at their hearts with amazing and mystic power. And not until that point is reached is love made perfect. Mere lover's love is a selfish thing. I do not say it in criticism, for I believe lovers have an inalienable right to live for a while simply for each other. But from the point when they bend together over a baby's cradle they take a step up in life, and their love becomes a call to service, whereby its selfishness is purged away. Parentage is usually thought of as supremely the crown of a woman's life. So it is, though it is not its only possible crown. But I believe that it is equally the crown of a man's life. It is perhaps true that the production of true fathers belongs to a later stage of human evolution than the production of mothers, for fathers are not so obviously essential to young children. But I hazard the suggestion that one of the prime needs of the stage at which we have now arrived is just that men should learn the arts and powers of fatherhood, and take a larger part in the rearing of children. And I believe men will find, as I have said, that parentage is for them also the crown of life. With many men the emotions that come with fatherhood are the deepest of which they are capable, and they are also the finest. Even men who seem to me pretty low in the scale of humanity often recover some of their lost manhood when under the power of their own little children. And with normal men their fatherhood comes to dominate life.

Its most obvious result is that it compels a man to work, and to work hard. We are mostly born slackers. We should like to take many holidays, and if we were left alone we would do it. But parentage binds us to the wheel. We discover that we have got to face the grind, because the plain alternative is that the bairns would starve. And so we do it. Of course at times we rebel. You may hear men every now and then complaining half cynically and half humorously that, having once been indiscreet enough to fall in love, they were thenceforth swept along by rapids till at last they found themselves involved in all the paraphernalia of family life from perambulators to doctor's bills. But there are few men who do not know in their hearts that the toils have been the making of them. If love led only to delights, it would ruin us. It is because it leads also to heavy labor that it makes us. It is because I see this so clearly that I am not so much distressed as some people are over the fact that motherhood also means very hard work. [Footnote: No doubt in our disordered social life it often means far too much work. No doubt thousands of mothers are simply crushed by it. But it is not a good thing when mothers can evade even reasonably hard work.] The great discoveries of the moral and spiritual worlds are only made in and through work—yes, and sometimes through work that is sheer grind. There is no other road to moral or spiritual maturity either for man or woman. I have this deeply rooted objection to inherited wealth—that it makes possible an escape from this redeeming discipline, and by removing one of the normal consequences of love often leads to the spoiling of love.

Let us, however, be clear about this further fact—love does not merely lead to enforced labor, it also redeems that labor. Not merely does a man face up to his job because it is in a sense done for love's sake, but love itself supplies the necessary respite and counterbalance to the burden of toil. We all need recreations. The tightly drawn string must be relaxed. Moods come when normal and quite Christian men say, "Oh, I can't stick it any longer; I want to enjoy myself." We naturally demand that there should be an element of delight somewhere in life. Notoriously it is rather hard to come by. City crowds at night present the spectacle of people making huge and fevered efforts to run delight to earth and often achieving only pitiful failure. I believe the normal way in which delight ought to enter the lives of married people is just through their satisfaction in each other's society, enriched by the society of their children. When a man and a woman have made the right sort of home they escape finally from all fevered cravings after picture-houses and ball-rooms. There lies to hand for them that which will day after day refresh and delight them, and make them ready for to-morrow's toil.

I am not forgetting that at this point modern voices will want to break in on me with appropriate quotations from Bernard Shaw and others, and try to silence me by pointing out what a mean, petty, dull, sickly, and stodgy thing mere domesticity can be. Yes! it can be all that for people who let it be all that. Even love that once was passionate cannot redeem the life of two people unless there is something there to redeem. Two lifeless and stupid people living together *can* make of life something duller than either could make alone. If it be part of general wisdom to try to live widely and fully, and to use as much of our natures as is possible, that is surely as true for two people together as it could be for them apart. And to make a marriage into a great thing both parties to it must work to make it wide in its horizons and worthy because of the multitude of its interests. No sane persons imagine that mere marriage excuses people from the necessity for handling this big, mysterious, and difficult thing which we call human life with vigilance and determination. But life on any terms for the great majority of people must have monotonous and trying periods in it. It almost always has heavy sorrows and not a few bitter disappointments. And it is in view of these things that married love is found to have redeeming power. It is one of the lies of the cynic that love must needs burn itself out somewhere about the forties. Thousands of people have found at forty that the best was yet to be. For the fact is that all through the afternoon of life and even when the shadows lengthen towards the end love will still send beams of beauty and romance into daily life, and remaining still passionate will put golden content into the passing hours.

It is life stories of this sort which alone reveal the meaning and purpose of God in making the sex interest so almighty and central in life. We do not understand love till we have thus looked on towards the end. When it is allowed to run its true course it does in this way redeem life.

If I am told that I have drawn a hopelessly idealized picture of married love, I can only reply by a blunt denial. Twenty-five years of intimate contact with ordinary people have taught me these things. The kind of life I have pictured is going on in uncounted small and unknown homes all over the country. It is going on with commonplace people who are neither very interesting nor very clever, but who are wise enough to be simple and human. The real wonder of love is just that it can lift two commonplace people into a life that is not commonplace. And that is just how most of us get our chance in life. The people who are going through these experiences are for the most part quiet people. We do not hear about them. They do not have novels written about them, and they supply no copy for the society newspapers. It is the other people who advertise their woes. It is the unhappily married who make a noise. Only the very greatest novelists can make a good novel out of the story of a successful marriage. But apparently almost anyone can produce stories that people will read if only he or she puts in enough highly colored material about the aberrations of lovers and the possible ways in which marriage can be wrecked. It is sheer untruth to say that most marriages are failures. In most indeed there are ups and downs. The most affectionate couples make mistakes and quarrel over trifles. Love does not make all tempers smooth in a hurry. But love does teach people how to get past such troubles. It does bring balance and repose into life for both husband and wife. It does tend to produce efficiency and health in those who handle it truly. It does make for normal and happy development.

It is only with this background of positive truth about normal love that I can approach the other questions which must be dealt with in this book. If we are going to inquire as to the sanctions of the received moral standards, and the reasons which make the moral struggle worth while—if we are going to find the truth about the way in which to conduct married life, and find any light on the question of birth control, it can only be in relation to the positive truth about love and its manifold reactions on human beings. We shall never learn to manage the emotions and desires which arise from our sexual natures until we have first understood what it is that nature is trying to achieve through these means. To a number of these further questions I shall pass on in the succeeding chapters.

I hope I may do so now on the assumption that anything is worth while if only we can conserve for ourselves the possibility of such a career of experience as I have outlined, and that whatever spoils such experience beforehand, or renders it impossible, is really an enemy both to our well-being and our happiness. If

"Life, with all it yields of joy and woe  
And hope and fear...  
Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love  
How love might be, hath been indeed and is,"

then the key to all morality and all sound practical wisdom is just to conserve at all costs our chance of knowing love—love pure, passionate, fruitful, and holy.

I ask myself whether I can say anything of use to those who love deeply and truly, but find their love unreturned. Many who read these pages may say to themselves that they can fully believe that mutual love is the way into a wonderful country of new and full life, but that for them love has meant only a great longing and a great pain. They could give generously and nobly. They have in them a great wealth of love which they long to spend lavishly; but because he or she remains indifferent they find themselves tormented by that which is best in them. There is something here harder to face than even the sorrow of widows or widowers. To have loved and lost might be said to be a tolerable situation compared with the feeling that one's love has not been wanted.

Those who have never known such a situation may speak lightly of it. Those who have will always want to deal gently and reverently with it. Plainly it has great dangers attached to it. It is easy for those who are facing it to allow themselves to become bitter and cynical. It must be hard for them not to feel that many who do enjoy the privilege of mutual love are shamefully ungrateful. And it must be harder still to escape pangs of jealousy at times when they see the light of joy in the eyes of lovers, or the pangs of something finer than jealousy when they feel the charm of little children.

I know of only one perfect resource for men or women in this situation. It lies in God. Other people always seem dull and uninteresting to those who want supremely one special person. But God is not uninteresting. He has to be sought. He is not found by the careless or the cowardly. But those who seek Him earnestly do find Him, and as a sense of His love and His reality steals into the heart healing begins at once. He restores the soul. He fills the hungry. He is sufficient. And when that has happened other people begin to seem lovable too, and the human love that seemed at one point not to be needed finds numbers of objects. No one who can love is an unimportant person in a world that is starving for more love of divine quality.

And this at least I can report for those whom it may interest—that I have known some very strong and gentle men, and some very brave, gracious and understanding women whose lives are very rich in blessing to other people, who know how to help the weak and comfort the sad, and in whose faces there shines the light of a great and patient faith. Having wondered for a time whence came these great endowments, I have learnt at last that they were prizes won in a great contest wherein having had to face the trial of love unreturned they learnt at last to accept their own sorrow without anger, and then to use their power of love in self-forgetfulness for other troubled souls.

Yes, there is that to be said—to be said with great respect and tenderness because love unreturned involves a very fiery trial—but to be said with conviction because it is most blessedly true.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FALLING IN LOVE AND GETTING ENGAGED**

This will be a very short chapter, for there is only one thing which I feel moved to say on this subject, and yet it is so important that I put it in a chapter by itself. Put in a sentence it is this: Only real love offers a basis for a happy marriage, and real love is something more than physical attraction. If all young men and women knew that and would be strong enough to act upon it, there would be very few calamitous marriages in the future.

But let us face the facts. Mere physical attraction can be tremendously strong. It springs into existence sometimes between two people who hardly know each other. The explanation of it must lie in mysterious facts about our incarnate life which I certainly cannot analyze. Once it is there it is felt as an imperious summons to marriage. To each the other seems for the time being a wonderful person, to be desired beyond all others. Often the critical faculty in us is entirely suspended by this attraction; and "her" words seem wise, though in fact they are silly, and "he" seems noble, though in fact he is only an averagely decent man. Two such persons long ardently to be together, though they do not nearly always want to talk to each other. They are held by something they do not understand, but which moves them profoundly.

Now by some mysterious and kindly providence I believe it usually happens that this mutual attraction declares itself between two people who as they do get to know each other find that they are

also attracted mentally and spiritually. Usually from this beginning a real fellowship between the two persons will grow up which involves nearly their whole personalities. Many people who fell in love at first sight have made splendid marriages. But it does not always happen so. Sometimes this physical attraction remains the only bond between two people. Sometimes in the other departments of life they actually fret and annoy one another. Sometimes a friendship refuses to grow up. Sometimes even while the attraction still exists contempt lurks behind it. And that means that it is entirely unsafe to get engaged on the basis of a mere physical attraction. There is really something impersonal about mere physical attraction. The individual as such is hardly an active agent in it. He or she is the victim of some great life force that seems to want to throw men and women together regardless of their mental and spiritual qualities. Behind a mutual physical attraction there must be some strange harmony between the two physical natures concerned. But that may be the whole truth of the situation. And to become engaged or married on that basis alone is just another instance of acting as if we were merely bodies, when we are not. It constitutes another attempt to forget mind, heart, and soul, and is therefore disastrous.

And that, of course, means that a man and a woman, if they want to find their true life, must take care to get to know each other *before* they commit themselves, even though they are attracted. "Maggie" in *What Every Woman Knows* showed herself extraordinarily astute when she packed off her husband, who was the victim of an intense physical attraction for another woman, into a lonely place in the country where he would have to spend all day and every day with the lady whom he held to be his heart's delight. The result was that in four or five days he was bored almost beyond endurance. He had an acute mind and a very definite type of character, and no happy life was possible for him merely on the basis of a physical passion.

Therefore it is not enough that merely to look at "her" makes your blood run fast and your nerves tingle. It is not enough that the very sight of "him" should give you acute pleasure. Before a man and a woman get engaged they would do well to have some long talks together, and so to find out what their real interests are, and whether their general views and purposes in life are such as can possibly be harmonized. Marriage lasts for a long time, and is a poor affair when a husband is bored by his wife's conversation, or when a wife is repelled by her husband's views. Even to such there may come recurrent hours of ardent love, but both will want more than that. We must take our whole selves into marriage, and to have experienced a mere physical attraction is no proof that we shall be able to do it. I remember one very distressed young wife who once asked me for help. She had been carried away by the attraction of a masterful man, and had lived through her engagement and the early days of marriage in a whirl of excitement in which she never stopped to consider what sort of a man he truly was. A month or two after marriage she inevitably began to find out, and was both shocked and repelled. She was longing to have a friend in her husband; but they both felt that a friendship between them was impossible.

I am sure it must mean one of the hardest tasks which life ever sets any of us to keep one's head when under the influence of such an attraction, and perhaps to have to decide not to act at all in consequence of it. To stifle an incipient passion in that way may be a terrific business for some people. But we are queer complex creatures, and we needs must take account of the whole of ourselves if we are to find life.

I repeat, physical attraction *is* often the beginning of everything else. But it is not always so, and for that reason we must needs beware.

Of course the converse of all this is also true. A man and a woman may attain to a fine fellowship of mind and find co-operation in many ways congenial, and yet may experience no mutual physical attraction. And if they begin to think of marriage they have indeed a delicate problem before them. Generally, I believe, the further intimacies which come with marriage will awaken physical instinct in both, and when nature has had her way with them a really complete marriage will be attained. But it is not always so. Neither may have the power fully to awaken the other. In some marriages that are fine friendships either the man or the woman is half-conscious of deep-seated longings that have never been satisfied. And if by chance a third person appears with the power fully to awaken the physical nature of either the husband or the wife, a very difficult situation arises. I do not say it is a situation which cannot be handled successfully. I do not believe we need be the victims of passion. But only a fool would deliberately court the possibility of having to face the situation I have described. Wherefore I say again we need to take account of the whole of ourselves if we are to find life.



# CHAPTER V

## OUR MORAL STANDARDS

There are at least three moral standards in existence in the English world. There is first the Christian standard, for which men and women are equal, which recognizes the sacredness of personality in every case, and which calls for absolute continence and chastity before marriage and absolute fidelity after it. This is the standard I am concerned to understand and defend.

There is, secondly, the legal standard, for which men and women have not equal rights, but which, in the marriage and divorce laws, accords to woman an inferior position—which takes no cognizance of immorality between unmarried persons unless children result and which, in England as distinguished from Scotland, attaches no penalties to infidelity on the part of a husband.

And then, thirdly, there is the working moral standard of society. I cannot describe it because it differs so greatly in different sections of society. In general it has to be said that it treats lack of chastity among unmarried men as a very venial offence and punishes the same offence in women with very severe social penalties; and it may certainly be said that it has not yet demanded a full recognition by the law of the equality of the sexes in the matter of moral and married rights.

Now the question of the relation of our legal standards to the Christian standard is an exceedingly difficult and yet vitally important one. The hope of enforcing the Christian standard by law has tempted many minds. In our own day many try to make the law of the land enforce the Christian position about divorce. But there are grave difficulties in connection with this course. The Christian attitude and spirit cannot be produced by law. The scope of mere law must always be much more restricted than the scope of the mind of Christ. The Christian mind is not primarily concerned with penalties and does not desire to see penalties attached to the failure to reach the Christian standard in all things. To attach a criminal stigma to all lapses from the Christian way in morals would be disastrous.

What might be expected from the law of the land is, I think, that it should recognize the fundamental equality of men and women, and that, while demanding less, it should at least point towards the Christian standard (see note at end of chapter).

For the rest, the adjustment of legal enactments to the Christian ideal must always be a matter for delicate and vigilant handling.

With regard to the working moral standard of society there is just this to be said, that if the Christian standard be the true one then our aim must be nothing less than a condition in which public opinion shall in all things endorse the latter. To-day the social standard is lax when the Christian one is strict, and cruel when the Christian is generous and forgiving. In saying this I am of course thinking of the *true* Christian standard. There is a conventional Christian standard which is more cruel and unforgiving than society's standard. But it is really definitely unchristian. Further, society is radically insincere, forgiving what can be kept secret, condoning on account of moral skepticism much general laxity, and yet breaking out into a mock moral indignation before discovered vice.

We are all in great danger in this connection on account of the mysterious force of the herd instinct. We tend to accept what others think just because they think it. We live under the power of convention often without realizing how insincere and hollow convention may be. Wherefore if we are ever to make progress it becomes nothing less than a duty to scrutinize current standards. They may be less than Christian, and if we are ever to make progress it can only come through an honest process of inquiry and revision.

### *The Reasons for the Christian Standard*

To-day the spirit of inquiry and challenge is definitely demanding the reasons for the Christian standard itself. But I have no complaint to offer on that account. I believe only good can come from it in the end.

I believe the stored wisdom of the ages is embodied in that Christian standard, and that the more we know about sex the more clearly do we perceive that that standard points the way, and the only way, to real happiness for men and women in social relations, and to the attainment of our highest life. But I freely acknowledge the right of the rising generation to demand the reasons for this standard. I propose, therefore, to try to state those reasons on the assumption that I am addressing honest and sincere minds who only want to know the truth. I can only work out the answer bit by bit.

To begin with, "Why is self-abuse wrong?" It comes under the head of incontinence, which the Bible and all serious moral teachers so firmly condemn. But why? Doctors are beginning to say that unless it is excessive it does no particular harm either to the brain or the body. Its victims worry about it—But need they? Here at least the answer is easily found because it is supplied by those, and by all of those, who indulge in the practice. I have never met a man who did not despise himself for it. It invariably leaves a man out of conceit with himself. I have heard men stoutly defending irregular relations with women, but I have never heard this practice defended, even though it is exceedingly common. Robust male sentiment is all against it. And the reason is that, because it is an attempt to satisfy sexual craving in an abnormal way, it always leaves psychic disturbance behind it. It may relieve a physical tension, but it does nothing to satisfy the whole man. It leaves a bad taste in the mind. Both mind and spirit as well as the body enter into true sexual experience. They have no place in this, and by reason of it the inner harmonies of a man's nature are inevitably jangled.

I have noticed, too, a further and very serious consequence of this habit. It plants deep in many men's minds, and especially in the minds of sensitive and intellectual men, an abhorrence for the sexual side of themselves. Just because they have never achieved freedom from them, they hate and despise the passions that overcome them. This often leads to very serious consequences when love enters into their lives. They want then to dissociate love from all its physical concomitants. They regard all things sexual as impure. It may even come to them as a shock to find out that the women they love are capable of passion, and they resent any bodily effects of their own love. And this may almost spell calamity unless psychological adjustment is achieved in time. For true marriage *must* involve a clean and happy acceptance of the sexual facts. A man must bring a clean mind to the whole of his common life with the woman he loves, and self-abuse is ultimately a serious evil just because it defiles the mind.

Then, secondly, why are wild oats evil things to sow? Why should we not endorse the shrug of the shoulders with which society treats them? I notice that even women lightly forgive them, and I believe they make a mistake. Forgiveness is indeed always a divine operation, but light forgiveness implies that nothing serious has happened. What then is so serious about licentiousness?

I must of necessity discriminate at this point. By wildness men often mean occasional intimacies into which they do not pretend to be led by love. About such experiences I suppose men would say that they amount merely to the satisfaction of a physical appetite, and that after they are over a man may go his way as little affected as is a man who has satisfied his thirst.

But that is not the truth about them. The man in such cases suffers damage. He suffers it because he has attempted an impossibility. He has tried to separate the various parts of his being, and to satisfy his animal nature without any consideration for his mind and heart. But sexual experience itself proves that that cannot be done. The sexual instinct is intimately related to our whole beings, but especially to our affections. At the moment of sexual intimacy a man at least pretends for the moment that he loves, and when he offers that pretence to someone whom in reality he despises and means to leave in an hour, he does violence to his whole nature. The soul of him insists all the time that this is a low business. His outraged mind and heart protest and produce an evil after-taste. No man likes to remember such events. The best of him could not enter into them. He is left jangled and upset. All that makes such doings seem right at any time is that when it has reached a certain degree of intensity passion seems to justify its own demands. That is the age-long illusion whereby evil deceives and betrays us. But till we have learnt to repudiate that suggestion we are not even on the way to succeed in this part of life. Often the men who defend such indulgences admit that they are gross, and then fall back upon the contention that a man *must* be gross at times—that his nature demands it. It is a fairly serious slander to offer to our sex. Fortunately there exist thousands of incarnate proofs that it is *only* a slander. We all know that his sexual nature sets the ordinary healthy man a very serious problem, and about that I have tried to speak with sympathy and charity in a later chapter. But the assertion that a man *must* be gross is hard to hear with patience. It is one of the lies that savor of cowardice.

By "wildness," however, men sometimes mean temporary intimate relations between men and women to which they *are* led by love, and such relationships are at least very different in moral quality from the gross ones I have spoken of.

Why must they be condemned? My whole contention is that love and love alone makes physical intimacy pure and right. Why then cannot love sanctify passionate relationships outside marriage? Why should the union of true lovers be held to be impure before marriage and pure after it?

Let me answer the last query first. I do not think the union of true lovers apart from marriage is impure. I believe that such lovers make a very serious mistake—a mistake that may turn out to have been cruel. I believe that society is utterly right in condemning such unions, and that those who really understand will always refuse to enter on them. But impure is not the word to apply to them. They are clean and beautiful compared to the bodily intimacies of those who marry without love. And yet I do not

think that even emotionally they can ever be perfect. Sexual intimacy is not the perfect and sacramental thing which it is meant to be unless both parties come to it with free and untroubled minds, feeling that what they do is a right and happy thing. But in the unions of unmarried persons there generally lurks some half-hidden sense of shame. Some part of the being of one or the other really endorses society's standards, and even love cannot dispel the shadows thus created.

And yet still that does not meet the challenge to show the *reason* for society's standard. The reasons are really many. In the first place, if unmarried lovers take steps to prevent their intimacy from having its due fruit in a child, they are robbing their experience of its fine spontaneity, and introducing an element of calculation and caution into what should be a thing unbound. While, on the other hand, if they do not prevent the coming of a child they are, in the present state of society, doing a definite and cruel wrong to their own offspring. To love a child dearly and to know that by your own act you have handicapped it in life from the first must be a bitter experience indeed. I am well aware that law in regard to illegitimate children is unchristian. Even more is the attitude of society to them unchristian. But so long as things remain as they are, the parents of an illegitimate child do it a wrong. Further, even though law and custom should alter, it would still be true that a child without both its own parents is seriously handicapped in life. Which leads on to my next point; for, secondly, if two lovers really love, they want to give their whole selves to one another, including their whole futures. No man truly and loyally loves a woman who wants to keep open a loophole of escape from her. It would be well if women would always apply this test to the passionate protestations of men. Real love is love without reserve. True sexual intimacy in itself means taking each other for better or for worse, and when lovers unite themselves though still unwilling for such permanent unions, their love is not perfect. They are not really united by love. They are letting mere present desire carry them away. I hear of many men, and even of some women, who ask why they should not have many lovers if they have many friends. The answer is that no man gives his whole self to a friend, but that love, when it is real, does mean the giving of your whole self. And that, plainly, a man can only do to one woman and a woman to one man.

It is generally in defense of temporary unions that people question the necessity for marriage vows. But temporary unions cannot be ended happily. If they were entered on without love, they are gross things, as I have already said; and if they were the creation of real love, there is no happy way out of them. The two have been too close to one another to part without tearing apart—leaving ragged and it may be bleeding edges on their personalities. Then again, as I have tried to show already, love is only made perfect when it is allowed to issue in responsibilities and labors. Divorced from them it is a selfish thing. There is a wild and lawless element in passion, which is part of its glory. But that glory is only sweetened and justified for those who let their passion carry them through the whole career of experience to which it summons them.

All this may be accepted as establishing a case for permanent unions as the only legitimate things, but inasmuch as it claims that the demand for permanence lies in the very heart of love itself it may still be asked with some urgency, "Why introduce a marriage ceremony with public vows?" And here I must follow a somewhat different line of thought which may at first sight seem contradictory. In spite of all that I have said, I believe that even ardent lovers are all the better for being bound, because of the wayward element of inconstancy in human nature. Thousands of married persons have never once been conscious of their vows. They have never come near thinking, "We must hold together because we promised," or "We must make the best of things because we are tied together." Thousands have never for a moment wanted to change their condition. But with others it is not so. No men or women are always at their best. Though they may have had moments on the heights when they gladly took each other for better or for worse, there will come other moods when the finer notes of love will not sound in their ears. There will come to all but a few couples hours when they will be irritated and annoyed with one another. And if they were free to do so, they might fling away from each other and so miss after all the best that was to be. For the best is not to be found in those early days when passion flames and dominates, but rather in those later days when two personalities have at last become really fitted to each other and when the daily round of labor is illumined by the lamp of love. And therefore, being what we are, it is a good thing for our own sakes that we should be bound.

Even though the bonds should actually mean pain, it is still good that they should be allowed to bind, though it be only for the sake of the children. Passionate lovers do not think of children, but society must needs put their claims before all others. Probably the historical reason why society came to insist on monogamy and to condemn all irregular unions lay in the fact that it is the inalienable right of a child to be brought up by a father and a mother, and that no society can be strong and finely ordered unless its foundations are laid in family life, wherein men and women co-operate to give the rising generation every possible chance.

I assume that I am addressing honest minds that wish to handle the issues of life sincerely and wisely, and to them I am sure it must be worth pointing out that it can never be right for individuals to order their lives on principles which could not be given a universal application. I can well understand a

passionate couple being quite sure that they will hold to one another throughout life, though they be in no way legally tied. I can imagine that many such couples would resent as a profanity the mere suggestion that they could ever want to part. But imagine what society would become if legal ties were abolished. You and your man or woman may be quite sure that you would never part, but you know that thousands would. Couples would set out on the joint life with little thought, and allow the first painful misunderstanding to part them. Many men would shake off their obligations almost as soon as they found they were becoming heavy. Both men and women would pass from one temporary union to another, mutilating their better natures in the process. Thousands of women would be left in helpless loneliness. Tens of thousands of children would go uncared for and neglected. The picture becomes more horrible the more carefully you look into its details. And as you look you begin to see the real value of our moral standard. It is not an instance of the fussiness of Mrs. Grundy. It is not an instance of slave morality imposed upon free people. It is not one of the arbitrary dicta of a tyrannical Church. It is rather the embodiment of the wisdom learnt through ages of varied and often tragic experience. It is an attempt to conserve for each rising generation the possibility of the best in the field of sexual experience. It does point out the way of happy, healthy, and complete life.

I have left to the end a thought about the marriage ceremony which will only appeal to some, but which I feel ought to have a place in this chapter. Many fine and sensitive lovers shrink from the publicity of ordinary weddings. Their love is to them so sacred and so personal a thing that they do not want to make any parade of themselves before a great gathering of relations and friends. Well! I know of no binding reason why such sensitive couples should call in the relations and friends. Those relations and friends like to rejoice with those who rejoice, because of a very human and kindly interest. And many couples, and especially many brides, greatly enjoy their friends on their marriage day. If, however, a couple prefer a private wedding that is their affair. But about the place and value of a religious ceremony I do want to add a word. If a man and a woman realize that their love is a sacred thing, I believe they will find they actually want to make the great step into final intimacy in the presence of God, and to stop for a moment ere they go up into that mysterious country to ask His blessing and guidance. I have said that at a certain point love itself demands intimacy, and that it is an entirely natural thing for us to desire it. But none the less it *is* a momentous hour in the life of any couple when they pass behind the last barriers and enter on a sacramental oneness of body. It is a wonderful hour—the hour of all others when the romance of life is most splendid. But just because it is that, and because the issues of that hour are so far-reaching, what could be more seemly than that they should pause for a moment on the threshold and ask the Giver of all love to bless and guide them! To kneel first together before Him, and then to pass on—to acknowledge His goodness as the author of love, and then to go up on to love's high places, what could be more just to the real facts! I know not with what solemnities those who do *not* believe in God are going to dignify that hour in life, but to all young men and women who *do* believe in God, I would like to say with all possible urgency: Be sure you do not take that great step until you can ask God's blessing on the taking of it. Be sure you pause a while to be quiet before Him ere you allow your love to have its final sway over you.

NOTE.—It will be said at once at this point by some, "That means the law is wrong in allowing the remarriage of divorced persons, because in that case there is a definite contradiction between the legal and the Christian standards."

I have deliberately excluded a discussion of the problem of divorce from this book because I am concerned with the unalterable truths about sex rather than with the social question of how best unhappy situations arising from sin can be remedied.

But at this point I must say a word. I conceive the Christian position to be "Marriage cannot be broken without sin." And that position the law endorses. It requires proof that in fact a marriage has been broken by sin, before it will sever the legal bonds.

I cannot, however, believe it to be a Christian interest to maintain the mock appearance of a marriage when (if ever) all moral content has disappeared from it. Christianity calls for an unlimited forgiveness. But when forgiveness and patience have failed and either husband or wife has found another connection or has even ceased to have any vital relation to his or her partner in marriage, then I feel that that marriage is morally dead. And dead things should be buried if possible.

There remains the question of remarriage.

If the law allows this and if Christianity says "There is a higher way to which God calls you," I do not think there is here an indefensible contradiction. It is a case of a higher and a lower way.

The law says "I will not compel you to remain unmarried." Christianity says "I will not compel you at all, but I call you in love's name."

That is exactly the situation we must accept in connection with many of Christ's precepts. Giving

alms. Loving enemies. Refusing to judge. Refusing to swear, etc., etc. These are all clear Christian duties. But law cannot deal with them. All this seems to me quite plain. In common honesty, however, I must confess that it is not clear to me that the spirit of Christ does forbid the remarriage of a divorced person in all cases. Christian marriage always has love in it. It is not always there in actual marriage. We must think the whole matter out afresh in terms of love before we can understand the Christian way. Some things the world calls marriages are not really marriages at all to the Christian mind.

## CHAPTER VI

### A MAN'S STRUGGLE

A great many men are secretly ashamed of the very fact that they have to struggle with temptation in the matter of purity. In an inner chamber of their lives they contend with impure thoughts and impure suggestions, but they try to keep the doors of that chamber shut, and would blush if others knew what goes on there. Yet all healthy and normal men are so tempted. Those who seem to have escaped have generally taken the course of repressing the whole sexual side of their natures, and of shutting their eyes to the sexual facts of life, which is not a wise course. And so, firstly, in view of the task of facing temptation it would be well for us all to realize that temptation itself is not sin. We may expose ourselves to quite unnecessary temptation. We may play with fire. We may be fools, if we will. But some element of temptation is part of our normal lot in life, and we need not blush about it. To the average young man it can truly be said, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." In this respect we are all brothers in arms, and I believe the first step towards victory lies in an honest facing of the fact. Let us admit that we are tempted and get openly to the business of understanding how temptation can be conquered.

Let me attempt first of all to clear away certain mischievous delusions about the subject. It is actually believed in many quarters, and half believed in many more, that continence is bad for a man. It is only "natural," men often say, for an adult man to satisfy his desires, and if he does not he suffers in health. It is a point on which we must let the doctors speak, even although plenty of individual men could testify from experience that the idea is nonsense. And what do the doctors say! Sir Dyce Ductworth, Sir James Paget, Sir Andrew Clark, Sir Clifford Allbutt, and scores of others have all expressed themselves with the clearest emphasis. Sir James Paget, for instance, says, "Chastity or purity of life does no harm to mind or body. Its discipline is excellent. Marriage can safely be waited for." Further, in the noble little book on "Sex" by Thomson and Geddes, I find this sentence: "Féré, a leading authority on sex pathology and hygiene, denies categorically that a man is ever hurt by continence, and affirms that he is always the stronger." What probably is true is that if a man lives in thought an impure life, and submits himself to exciting suggestions and imaginations, the secretions of his body will be increased, so that he may become subject to very severe strain. And that, if continued, may work nervous damage. But this only means that a continent life requires thought and proper direction. There *need be* no evil effects from continence. We must be quite clear about this point, for so long as we toy in mind with the suggestion that there is any natural necessity for incontinence, we are fatally weakened for our struggle. It is a man's glory to be master of himself, and to maintain his virginity through the years before marriage. And he may quite well achieve it, if he will but go the right way about it. No doubt the struggle is much harder for some than for others. No doubt there are reasons in plenty for charity to those who fail. But there is no real reason why any man should not hope and expect to succeed, and a right expectation is the very foundation of success.

Then, secondly, a man would do well to realize one simple physiological truth about his body. That body naturally and regularly secretes semen. But it is not necessary that that semen should be discharged by sexual activity. On the contrary, a large part of it can be reabsorbed by the body and used up in mental and physical activities to the great benefit of the body and the enrichment of life. That is why the ancients taught that Diana is the natural born enemy of Venus. The man who takes plenty of regular exercise employs his vital forces in a way that lessens the strain of his moral conflict. And though it is true that this re-absorption of semen does not completely remove it, Nature has her own method during sleep of readjusting things in a quite harmless way.

From this it follows of course that the real secret of a successful struggle for purity lies in living a life

full of wholesome and varied activities. Our artistic sensibilities are intimately related to our sexual natures, and by some self-expression through art, or by the sympathetic appreciation of the art of others, we provide an enriching outlet for our natural energies. Social activities and wholesome social intercourse, too, are of the very greatest importance. The sedentary and lonely life is often found quite fatal, and a life in which only male companionships are available is very undesirable. Indeed it may truly be said that the best way of avoiding undesirable relations with women lies in the cultivation of right and happy relations with them. I suppose more men have been brought through this difficult period owing to the fact that association with women of refined natures made the thought of sexual irregularity seem repulsive, than by any other single force.

But at all costs let us be sure that we live full lives. I heard lately of a man who was so constantly assailed by sexual cravings, and so convinced that in him they were abnormally strong, that he went to consult a psychotherapist. When he had been fully examined it was found that in him sexual cravings were really rather weaker than in the average man, but that in the house of his life they had no rivals, so that he imagined them to be almost all-powerful.

It is when a man allows himself to sit in idleness and indoors that the fumes of lust are apt to rise up and make the windows dim, till in that stuffy air he lives evilly at least in thought, and is weakened for the problem of defense. But the man who will get out into the bracing open air of life will find his noxious fancies blown away and his mind restored to health.

Then, thirdly, there are certain fairly obvious points in relation to the right management of the body about which doctors are agreed. They really amount in general to the suggestion that we should live a simple and bracing life, and keep brother body in his proper place of subjection all round. Keep your body clean, and do not funk your cold bath in the morning. Avoid luxurious foods, and overeating of any sort. Get up when you wake up in the morning, and avoid lying in bed half awake. Take plenty of fresh air and exercise every day. And finally, and at all costs, keep absolutely sober. Probably the last of these pieces of advice is by far the most important. It is the unvarnished truth that the vast majority of men who have gone wrong did so for the first time, not when they were drunk, but when liquor had made them reckless and forgetful. The plain truth about alcohol is that it has a twofold effect upon the human constitution. On the one hand it heightens desire, and on the other it lowers self-control. It is that fatal combination that has been the undoing of many a man. On one night of folly men have thrown away that which they may have guarded jealously for years, and not because they were vicious or gross in nature, but only because they allowed the edge to go off their sobriety. Often by the next night they would have given almost anything to be able to live that bit of life over again and live it differently. But it was too late. I know of no argument for temperance that has anything like the weight of this one.

Then, too, a word must be said about the broad jest and the undesirable story.

Many a broad jest is excused because it has in it some savor of real humor; but it would be well for us to ask ourselves deliberately what things we are going to allow ourselves to laugh at. We all laugh at some of the ways of lovers and no doubt we always will. They have beautiful ways, but beyond question some of them are amusing. There is no possible reaction to a girl's persuasion that her boy is pure hero and saint except a smile; and love itself will blend with such smiles.

But it is quite a different thing to bring laughter to bear on love itself, or on marriage, or on the sacramental intimacies that express love. I believe it is a profane thing to do. Our best instincts call on us to treat these things as sacred. And sacred things are easily spoiled by careless speech. No vulgarities are quite so vulgar as those which, in printed rags and ragged talk, are clustered round marriage. In the name of all that is beautiful and holy let us be done with them.

Further still, a great many broad stories have in them a minimum of humor and a maximum of dirt. By a strange perversity men who are scrupulously clean in body and who have both intellectual and artistic capacities will stoop to defile their tongues with such things. There are few colleges or offices where public opinion entirely forbids them. But they do a deadly work none the less. They cling about the mind with fatal tenacity. They surround the subject of sex with unclean associations. They defile the inner house of life. And it is in that inner house of thought and imagination that the real battle of purity is fought.

Our real task in this part of life is to see sex as a clean and beautiful thing, to be treated with reverence. Thousands of people never achieve this, even though they live respectable and decent lives. And the reason lies in the fact that in their early days vile stories and jokes defiled the whole subject for them.

A similar thing is true of pictures. Some day we shall as a race recover the sense that the form of a woman is one of the most beautiful things in all God's earth. We shall look at the great statues and pictures which do justice to that beauty with no other feelings than thankfulness and joy. But there are

very few men who can do that today. What has made it impossible is the existence of pictures of a suggestive kind, which are handed round in furtive ways, and are literally drenched with unclean associations. For which reason it is a real point in connection with a man's struggle that he should have nothing to do with suggestive pictures. Many years ago I had a friend with great intellectual power. He held a position of great responsibility and was widely respected. He also had conspicuous literary gifts, and knew how to work hard and well. But he brought to me the greatest shock I have ever had in my life. When he was well on in the forties he suddenly fell with a crash, and had to fly the country. He was never able to show his face in England again, and died a diseased exile in a foreign land. And all because he had been overtaken by sexual sin of an indescribably shameful kind. The shock he gave me was one of sorrow, for he had been a friend. But it was still more one of amazement that such a thing could have happened to such a man. Later I came to understand. When his effects were being sold there was found in his study cupboard a great pile of indecent French plays and novels. That was what did it. In secret he had for years debauched his mind, and inevitably in the end his thoughts brought forth fruit. That experience taught me once for all how certain it is that the inner world of thoughts is the real place where a man attains or misses purity.

There is something grim and stern about this business. I confess to a certain wholesome fear in connection with it which I hope never to lose; though fear will never do as our predominating emotion in this respect. But I keep a place for fear—enough of it to drive me to my knees. I have seen boys go wrong at fifteen, and I have seen old men go wrong at sixty. I believe that no man is safe until he is dead. He was no coward, nor had he a licentious past behind him, who confessed that late on in life he had to beat his body and bring it into subjection lest having preached to others he should be a castaway. He knew; and was honest and wise enough to keep up precautions to the end. There is simply no way through this part of life for the man with slack habits and a self-indulgent attitude of spirit. The man who will not stand up and brace himself, who is not game for a fight, and will not endure hardness is never going to make anything fine out of the splendid but difficult enterprise we call human life. And all the time he will need to have his sentinels out. All the time he will need to make sure that he is master in his own house of life, and allows no interloping thoughts or imaginations to run riot there.

But what about religion! The conventional way in which to end a plain talk about any sort of temptation is to say that God can and will help a man in those straits where his own will is too weak, and that through prayer there is a way of escape for us all. I believe all that absolutely. With great gratitude I may say that I know it. Indeed I cannot understand how any man who has been saved from overthrow can fail to see as he looks back on his life that it was just the goodness of God that upheld him. But I have learnt to beware how I tell men and women that by prayer they can get through, though all other means fail. Men who were having to face a severe strain of temptation have come back to me and told me that they had tried the way of prayer and that it had not availed them. The fact is that something far greater than a mere attempt to use prayer as a special device for this special need is required.

We are so made that religion is a divine possibility for all of us. Indeed it is more than a possibility: it is a necessity if life is ever to seem complete. Without it all other things fail in the end to hold off attacks of disappointment and ennui. Because we were made with the capacity for it, we cannot be content without it. It may take many years for a man to discover that without religion life is going to be a failure; and it is that discovery that constitutes for many the tragedy of middle life. In early days the varied interests of life carry many through in some sort of satisfaction. And yet even with the young the life that is without religion is of necessity an unbalanced life. Parts of the man or woman concerned are inactive, and the other parts occupy too much of the stage. Till an interest in God—that greatest of all interests—has entered a man's life attention is too much concerned with other things. Till the spirit is awake the body obtrudes itself too much on consciousness. And thus a man fights the battle of purity on wrong terms. There is no interest so cleansing as an interest in God. Nothing so takes a man out of himself as the attempt to face His demands. Nothing is so certain to counterbalance all unruly thoughts as to know and worship Him. No discipline is so bracing and purifying as the discipline of seeking Him.

But this seeking of God means something much greater than the mere attempt to use prayer for a special purpose. It means getting our whole life rightly related to Him. It means subordinating our desires to His will, and seeing our whole life as something to be used for His glory. Religion cannot be made a mere appendage to life. It cannot be kept in an outhouse like a motor bike, to be used when occasion calls. When God comes into a life He comes to rule—and to rule everything. No doubt we are all tempted to resent the surrender of self which is thus asked of us. Instinctively we cry out for our own way. We want to manage our own lives and to plan out our futures in such ways as will please us. Because religion involves discipline and obedience, we are all apt to turn away from it. We may have liked some of the emotions which are associated with worship, and inspired by religious thoughts. But we want to call no one Master—not even God. So long as that state lasts no one will find religion a help

in the battle with temptation. If we faced the truth about ourselves many of us would find that what we really want is to be allowed to live rather worldly and selfish lives and then to be able to bring God in on occasion to save us from certain particular sins which we loathe. But that cannot be.

In other words, the way of escape is to get one's whole life and one's whole nature rightly related to God. That means the profoundest of all possible readjustments, because it means that instead of putting himself in the center of every picture, a man puts God there. And when that readjustment has been completed the power of temptation is gone. I would not now say to a man merely that if he will pray he will get the help he needs. I would say that if he is willing for a real spiritual experience he may pass into a new state of being, in which he will fight with success where he used to fail. Religion *will* do all things for you if you give your whole self to it, but it will not fit into life as an occasional resource.

Let no one suppose, however, that consciousness of God has no relation to the sexual side of life. Far from it. What the man who submits to God will find is, firstly, that he is helped to clean and reverent living, and to mastery over his body. But he will also find that when at last real love calls him up into complete companionship of body and soul with a woman he loves, God Himself will enter into that life and become associated with all the emotions and activities which spring from the sex element in our beings. Such men will come to thank God that He made them with sexual powers in their natures. They will thank Him that passion is a fact. They will say with utter conviction that love with all it means both for the bodily and the spiritual life is the greatest of all God's gifts to man.

Only to have experience of that quality a man *must* come to marriage undefiled. That is the fact that makes the struggle worth while. That is what Browning meant when he said it was

"worth

That a man should strive and agonize  
And taste a veriest hell on earth  
For the hope of such a prize."

God does not call us men to a meaningless struggle. The fierceness of temptation is *not* mere cruelty. The prizes in this part of life are great beyond all telling. If any man who reads these pages will but brace himself for the struggle and put forth all his manhood in order to win through, the day will come when he and a woman who is dear to him will thank God that he did fight, and will understand that it was abundantly worth while. She is waiting for you out there in the future. She hopes and prays that when you do find her, you will be such a man as can be honored and truly loved. She probably keeps herself for you, even though you have not yet met her, with some delicate and shy reserve. You will never really be worthy of all that she will give you, but you may at least prepare for her and yourself a great and holy experience. To know the full beauty of the thing that married life may be is nearly if not quite the greatest of human attainments. To spoil it beforehand is the most pitiful of all pities.

Wherefore get up and fight!

## **ADDENDUM,**

### **ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG MEN STRUGGLING WITH SELF-ABUSE**

It is in this form that sexual temptation comes into the lives of a very great many men, including many able, high-minded men. All the general things already said in this chapter are relevant to your case, but I wish to add some direct words to you because I have acute sympathy with you in your trial.

You ought, of course, to have been warned when you were very young, and then you might have escaped the danger. Possibly you slipped into the habit without at first realizing that it was wrong; and probably now you hate the habit, and even sometimes hate yourselves because of it. It is quite likely, too, that false and exaggerated things have been said to you about it and made you miserably afraid.

Now it *is* a bad habit. It is bad because you feel it to be unworthy and rather unclean, and it creates unhappy associations in your mind in connection with sex, which is a very unfortunate thing for you. And it is a perversion. It is an unnatural way of satisfying sexual craving, and, as you know, it leaves psychic disturbance behind it. The one perfect way of satisfying sexual desire is complete union with a



woman you truly and honorably love. That leaves behind it a feeling of complete satisfaction and rest. All other ways leave psychic disturbance. Further, this habit often leads to active homosexuality. I hear of men who talk as if homosexuality was quite a normal and right thing with men of a certain type. It is, in fact, *always* a regression (see quotation from Dr. Crichton Miller in chapter for girls, p. 107). Do get that fixed in your mind. It is an abnormal, unnatural thing which has definite and evil nervous results.

But let me get back to the problem of self-abuse.

The Student Christian Movement lately collected from a number of doctors, psychologists, and other experienced people, a body of valuable truths and suggestions about this matter, and I cannot do better than pass them on to you.

*Firstly*, what are the facts about its consequences? These have been exaggerated. Its effects are chiefly psychological. It does not affect the intelligence or weaken mental power. It takes long to weaken the body, and it is rarely, if ever, a cause of insanity.

On the other hand, it does destroy self-respect; it does leave men psychologically disturbed, and for that reason it affects consciousness of the presence of God disproportionately quickly as compared with other sins, and produces the feeling of loss of spiritual power. There are, in fact, abundant reasons for desiring deliverance, though there is no reason for panic.

As has been said again and again in this book, our sexual nature is a gift from God, with glorious possibilities in it of enriching experience. That is why it is so very important not to misuse it.

Now if you really want deliverance, you have first to realize that the seat of the trouble and of the cure is in the mind. (Occasionally there is a slight abnormality that requires surgical treatment, but that is exceptional.)

The content of the mind in ordinary times is even more important than at the crisis. It may be too late then.

You must prepare the ground by resting on God even when you do not feel the need of Him. Fill your mind with clean, healthy things, and expel lustful thoughts, even though they may seem to have no special physical effects.

Give full play to your affections—love of family, of friends, of men and women, and children.

Devote your bodily strength, and the life force that is in you, to great positive ends—the service of God and man.

Keep healthy. Here are wise practical details. Take plenty of exercise, but not too much. Men often fail when tired out. Avoid heavy meals—especially late at night. Take cold baths daily. Do not lie in bed after waking. Avoid quacks like the plague. Beware of the reactions that follow emotional excitement. Work off your emotions in positive ways. Emotionalism has danger in it.

Learn to pray for the right thing, not for deliverance, but for strength for victory. Learn to trust God in all things—in this among others.

If you want to prevent the thing from obsessing you, you must not let your failures obsess you. Turn your back on them. The only way to drive out one thought is to put another in. An attempt merely to shut down is doomed to failure. Concentrate on active life and service. The truth is, you cannot have the help of Christ just for the cure of this evil. Give yourself wholly to Him, and you will find He has set you free. You cannot bring religion in just for a part of life. If your whole life is in God's hands this trouble will disappear.

*Lastly*, a word to the man who is down and out.

God is strong enough and near enough for this never to happen again if you will let Him have the whole of you—not body only, but mind and heart and life. But if you do fail again, do not despair, do not blame God, and do not say or think that He has finished with you.

God's love is such that He will never turn from you if you turn to Him. God is no farther from the failures than from the successful. He cares as much for those who fail.

The real and ultimate danger of this thing is not danger to your mind and body, but the danger that it may come between you and God. Wherefore come back to God every time.

Remember, whatever the past has held, there are still great possibilities of happiness and victory before you through the power of God.

Others are in as great difficulties, and others who were in them have won through to victory. There is reason for hope.

We are not meant always to stand alone. Two are more than twice as strong as one. Perhaps you should share your difficulty. Only do not make it an excuse for getting mawkish sympathy.

## CHAPTER VII

### PROSTITUTION

*(A chapter for men)*

There are some things so unthinkable that they only continue because people refuse to think of them. Sweating and slums are two such things, but the supreme example in the modern world is prostitution.

It is not the prostitute who is unthinkable. She is only the tragic figure in the center of a devil's drama. It is society's attitude to her that is unthinkable. By men she is used for their pleasure and then despised and scorned. By women she is held an outcast, and yet she is the main buttress of the immunity of ordinary women from danger and temptation. She is the creation of men who traffic in lust and yet is held shameless by her patrons. She is the product of the social sins for which we are all responsible, and yet is considered the most sinful of us all. Often she was beguiled into her first mistake by the pretence of love, and because to that pretence she made a natural and sincere response. Sometimes she was cajoled into her mistake by older fiends in the shape of women. Sometimes she suffered physical violence at the hands of male fiends. Often she plunged into sin in desperation because in the modern world she could not get a living wage in return for honest work. Sometimes she made a wild, reckless dash towards excitement because she could no longer endure the stifling, drab, and hideous monotony coupled with privation which we allow to become the lot of millions.

To her men show only their worst side, and women generally their hardest. If she often regards both alike as devils, who shall blame her! Those who share her sin leave her to face alone the suffering that follows. For them society has a place even when their habits are known. For her it has no place except a shameful one. Of real love, of motherhood, or of family life she may know nothing. Even of normal human relations she remains often ignorant.

He in whom we profess to have seen God was ready to forgive and willing to love such women. We hold it wrong to forgive and impossible to love.

For a few short years in early youth she may have money in plenty, and then slowly she begins to sink. Her health becomes sapped. Often loathsome disease makes her a victim. As the shadows begin to gather she will often turn to drink that for an hour she may recover the delusion of well-being. Slowly but certainly the morass drags her down. Often she does not reach thirty. If she lives it is to face a state in which, toothless, wrinkled, and obscene, she is seen only by those who visit the murkiest parts of our cities. She dies unmoored and unloved, and is hurried into an unknown grave.

And she exists because men say they *must* indulge their passions and women believe it. She is the incarnation not of her own but of society's shame. She is the scapegoat for thousands who live on in careless comfort. Every man who touches her pushes her farther down, and our hollow pretence of social morality is built upon her quivering body.

Will you men who read this please think about her! Think till you are horrified, disgusted, and ashamed. Think till you realize this unthinkable thing. And then remember that she exists only because of us. We as a sex have created this infamy. We as a sex still continue to condone it.

And there is only one cure for it. It is that we should stop uttering or believing the lie that we must indulge our passions and should act upon the truth that continence outside marriage is perfectly possible, and that we owe it to women, to ourselves, and to God to achieve it.

# CHAPTER VIII

## A GIRL'S EARLY DAYS

By early days I mean the years between sixteen and twenty-one or thereabouts, and I am sure there ought to be a chapter in this book on this subject, though I am not at all sure that I can write it. I only make the attempt because I have been urged to try, and because a book that did not recognize how distressing the "emotional muddles" of this period often are, would be a very unsympathetic production.

Most men very quickly become clearly conscious of desires springing from their sexual natures, but most girls only do so very slowly. What a girl is conscious of at this period is a new stress of emotion. She finds herself easily elated and easily depressed. She has moods she cannot understand or manage, and vague yearnings after she knows not what. Sometimes she will give way to outbreaks of temper, and afterwards feel acutely ashamed. Other people say of her that she is "difficult" or wayward, or trying; and she knows it herself better than any of them. Sometimes she is irritable. Sometimes she will hear herself saying things she never meant to say, and will wonder afterwards why she did it. In society she often feels shy, awkward, and self-conscious, and then will hate herself for being like that. She may try an assumed boldness of manner to hide her shyness, and yet that plan is not a great success. She has longings for the society of others, and then having found social intercourse difficult, is tempted to withdraw into herself. She is very easily wounded in her affections, and often suffers from the effect of little slights of which the authors are quite unconscious. On some days she will feel that the world is a wonderful and splendid place, and life a glorious delight. And then on others life will seem mysterious and puzzling, and the world cruel and hard. She understands with painful clearness what Robert Louis Stevenson meant when he talked about "the coiled perplexities of youth."

It is during these years that girls wake up to the attraction of men, and yet they find that relations with men are difficult things to manage. The conventions of society often seem quite senseless, and yet the policy of defying them does not turn out well. And so, as I have said, this is a difficult period for many girls.

It is true that many get through it very happily. They may have good health, happy homes, plenty of good friends, and many interests. For them it is a time of adventure, romance, and vivid joy. They correspond to the common conception of the fresh, happy, charming girl. But many others do not get through happily at all, and it is because their case is common that this chapter is called for.

I have already said as strongly as I can that it is of enormous importance for girls to know the facts of life, and to get to know them from some clean and natural source. By the beginning of this period they ought to have been told about the wonderful and beautiful ways in which God has ordained that new human lives should be produced, and therefore they ought to be in a position to understand themselves. And if girls are not possessed of this knowledge I can only say that the sooner they take steps to acquire it in a wholesome way the better for themselves. Only take care to whom you turn. Let it be a woman of a reverent and wise mind with a large and wholesome nature. There are others.

Those who do come to understand themselves in this way will realize that the cause of their emotional complications is partly physical and partly psychological. Both body and mind are awakening, with the inevitable result that new instincts, emotions, and desires have to be reckoned with. That is a universal experience for all of both sexes, and is just the price of entering on a larger world. Life *is* much more complex and mysterious than we at first imagined. It may be much more varied and splendid than we at first supposed. And therefore inevitably it is also more difficult and more confusing. But it does really help us to realize that our early complex troubles have a natural and normal cause and that they are related to great possible gains.

At this point in life, further, the instinct for independence becomes often exceedingly strong. All the conventions of society and the received rules for conduct are apt to appear mere tyrannous annoyances, cramping the free expression of personality. Society itself seems rather like a monster threatening to absorb and confine us. To be compelled to consider others, and even to bow to authority, is to many very bitter. "I will at all costs be myself" is the natural cry of a human being at this stage, and because the world makes it difficult to carry out that resolve life has a strain in it. Yet here also there is something good. If each generation in turn did not thus demand freedom and self-expression the world would drift into senile decay. We cannot be independent of society. We cannot have an untrammelled freedom. And we all learn that sooner or later. But because the urge towards newness of

life does reappear with every generation we do move on, though slowly. And if the price of this pulse of life in adolescents is restlessness, irritation, and even occasional depression the gain is worth the price.

For girls the process is often specially difficult. The task that confronts a girl at this stage is the task of accepting herself "as a woman." I know it is not an easy task or so many girls would not be heard saying that they would rather have been boys. No doubt one reason why girls feel this is that often their parents, and especially their mothers, have shown a preference for the boys in the family and have accorded to them a favored position. The psychologists report that an "inferiority complex" has thus been formed in many a girl's mind. And thus a very real wrong is done to them.

And yet this is not the whole explanation of the matter. In many girls there is a rebellion against their sex. Many hate the physical signs of their developing natures. It seems to them they are being called to a part in life which they have no wish to play. And if particular emotional stresses accompany that development, that may seem to them only one further reason for being annoyed at the nature of things.

I am sure too that the conventional notions of what a woman should be must often prove very annoying, if not enraging. Many men still cherish the idea of woman as a sort of household ornament—gentle and "sweet". Many have not accommodated themselves to the notion that a woman should know the blunt facts about this hard life and this disordered world. Society often seems to expect of a woman that she should be submissive, patient, and merely gentle. And of course nature has ordained that many women should be strong, stimulating, and militant in spirit. Of a really great woman it was said to me the other day that she is really more like a flame than a "cow". But the "cow" idea holds the field in many places. Well! happy those who have a sense of humor and can laugh when society is very foolish.

I dare not enter farther on a discussion of what it means for a girl to accept herself "as a woman". In that matter men seem always to flounder into folly. Even women are not yet agreed about it. Perhaps it is one of the things that is only gradually being discovered at this particular stage of human experience. I am indeed sure that we do not yet know all that women are meant to be and are capable of doing for the world. And that being so I can see that the difficulties which lie about the path of life for women today are peculiarly trying. It may be a real privilege to be a woman during this particular period of discovery and experiment. But it cannot but be also rather a strain. The one thing that I can with certainty say is that a woman is called to be like Christ—like Him in His meekness which was the outcome of perfect selflessness and self-mastery—in His gentleness which was the product of sensitive love—but like Him also in His strength, His boldness, His resolute refusal to bend before evil, His positive activities in the name of love.

One particular feature in a woman's impulse towards independence I cannot pass by without a special word. The very suggestion annoys some women that they are not complete in themselves without any relation to the other sex. Being without any conscious desire for the companionship of man, and without any definite sex consciousness, they resent the idea that woman is not complete in herself. To those who insist that the sexes vitally need each other such women would reply that they are altogether exaggerating and over-emphasizing the sex element in life.

Well, about the fact that man is not complete without woman I have no doubt whatever. And I have no reluctance whatever about admitting it. Perhaps that fact gives me no right to dogmatize about the other sex, but a considerable experience has left me in no doubt about the matter. I do not mean for a moment that a great and useful career is not possible to women quite apart from marriage. I do not forget that many women have great powers of intellect in the exercise of which they are living in a world apart from sex difference. But I believe it to be a serious mistake for either man or woman to imagine that they have no clamant sex instinct hidden within the depths of their personalities. And if the instinct is there it can only be folly to try to obscure the fact. It has to be reckoned with if life is to succeed. In many women it only awakens after early youth is past. The exceptions in whom it never awakens must be very few indeed. If the attempt has been made to ignore it the subsequent troubles are apt to be only the more intense. In this matter we are confronted with an unalterable decree of nature. To rebel against it is only to be broken in the long run. In various and great ways the instinct may be turned to splendid uses other than the usual ones of marriage and motherhood. But the instinct is there, and if wisdom means understanding ourselves and handling ourselves bravely, then it *must* be reckoned with. To quarrel with the nature of things is mere folly.

Another special feature of the period in a girl's life I am thinking of is a tendency to intense and passionate affections for other women—a tendency to idealize some other woman till she seems the center of life and adorable beyond words. A very real danger lurks here, and yet I would like to speak with great care about the matter, because a true friendship is always one of the finest and most enriching things in life, while a *grande passion* for another member of one's own sex is a different thing with an undesirable element in it.

In girls about thirteen or thereabouts *grandes passions* for other girls or for school-mistresses are

very common, and so far from being harmful they may serve a very useful purpose. They generally pass away pretty quickly, and unless the older woman has been unwise they leave no bad effects behind them.

But among older girls they are a very different thing and often lead to serious trouble and unhappiness. What has happened in such cases is that an instinct which is designed to produce love for one of the opposite sex has been perverted to add an element of passion to what should have been merely a healthy friendship for another woman. And the result is an unhealthy type of relationship. It is unhealthy because, to begin with, in this way girls let themselves go and allow their emotions to run away with them; and that just at a time when it is most important that they should have themselves in firm control. And further, when members of the same sex employ lovers' language, and indulge in the imitation of lovers' endearments, there is something sickly about the whole business which healthy instinct condemns. I do not mean, of course, that when girls link arms or even embrace each other in moments of excitement there is anything mistaken. To some people such expressions of emotion are as natural as breathing. But *grandes passions* lead to much more than that sort of thing, and so become a serious evil.

It is in connection with this problem that psychologists have brought into use the rather ugly word "homosexuality", though it means nothing more dreadful than this tendency to put a member of one's own sex into the place that should be occupied by a member of the other sex. But I find a certain amount of talk going on which assumes that some people are of the homosexual type, and that it is natural and right for them to express themselves in this way. As a matter of fact homosexuality *is always a sexual perversion* and is fraught with great danger of nervous disorder. Dr. Crichton Miller says in *The New Psychology and the Teacher*: "From the point of view of psychological development homosexuality in the adult is a regression.... Clinical experience confirms the view that in the long run the man or the woman of the intermediate type is bound to pay the price of regression in one way or another" (p. 120).

Of course the essential defect of these passionate attachments between two women is that they can never fully satisfy. They cannot give a woman children, and they leave the mother heart in her starved. For this reason it is a primary obligation on each of the two to resolve that so soon as a man enters the life of the other she will at all costs make room for him, The cost of this may be very great, but love that is at all worthy of the name will not another from a path that might lead to marriage has misunderstood the very meaning of love. Women have repeatedly told me that the passionate relationships I am speaking of lead to grave unhappiness. They almost never last, and the one who breaks away may cause acute suffering to the other; while an attempt to continue them after the life has gone out of them results in a very poor and pitiful relationship. And yet all this leaves still open the question of how they are to be dealt with in actual life. One thing worth saying is—Be warned in time, and do not let them grow. When they threaten they can be turned into true friendships by girls who understand, and true friendship is always a bracing and strengthening thing. But I would not for a moment suggest that a "G. P." should be ruthlessly broken. That would often be a cruel thing to do which might cause great and even permanent damage to a sensitive nature. But if both who are involved in the matter will face the truth about it, they may succeed in passing on into a natural and healthy friendship which may be invaluable to both and a gain to society. If it be asked wherein lies the essential difference between a G. P. and a friendship I think answer has been given in the words: "Friendship is an other-regarding emotion and proves itself to be an uplifting force, while a G. P. is self-regarding, and consequently generally is socially exclusive and therefore harmful." A G. P. generally involves a desire to have somebody else all to yourself. That is the sign of the unnatural sex element in it. But a friendship leads to happy co-operation between two people in the work and recreation of the world. One of the tests of universal application in this realm of life lies in the fact that real love always wants to give, and that the attitude of wanting greedily to get is not true love. Many and many an unhappy girl who frets and torments herself because she does not get all she wants from some other woman would find the world and life transformed if she would but wake up to the fact that in her bit of the world there are other people who need the love she might give them. She would thus find a noble outlet for her emotions, become a boon to other people, and in the process discover her own happiness—possibly to her own surprise.

I know very well what is likely to happen to some girls who read these words and who are involved in a passionately affectionate attachment. I can almost hear one such saying, "Of course I see that these things ought to be said, and that some girls are very silly about their friendships, and it only makes me the more thankful that in my case everything is so natural, and right, and good."

We are all like that! We are extraordinarily slow to recognize in our own lives the evils and dangers which we can see so clearly in the lives of others. And so I would like to make a direct appeal to all girls, and to all men too, who are involved in these relationships. Do face the facts openly! Do look ahead! Do ask yourselves what you are going to do about these affairs as time goes on! You must know

they cannot last in their present form. You would be right if you even said that they to last. You may drift along, always postponing any definite action, and just enjoying the present while it lasts. But that is exactly the way in which calamity is allowed to enter people's lives. And you and she, or you and he, might forthwith face the unalterable facts I have been referring to, and take all danger by the throat and throttle it. You might do that *now*. That is to say, you and your dear friend might agree that you will at once get the passionate element out of your relationship, and forego the pleasure you have in that respect. You might begin now to learn true friendship, and get rid of what is really a sickly thing. It might hurt—it probably would at first. But none of us human beings need be the mere creatures of our feelings. Our true and lasting happiness always depends upon refusing any such slavery. If you do achieve a wholesome and true friendship it may enrich your whole future life. If you let things go on as they are you will have a very unpleasant memory to humiliate you.

I feel sure that certain general counsels apply with special force to this part of life, and in particular the one which bids us all live busy and positive lives. Brooding is not a wholesome occupation for anybody at any time, but, on the other hand, through hours of active effort emotion finds an outlet and our natures are restored to peace. Introspection is to many people an actual luxury, but like other luxuries it enervates. Reveling in their own emotions is a favorite hobby with quite a lot of people, but for all that it is a very bad one. There really should be no time for it. Our emotions are all needed as driving forces for the times of action. In particular the cultivation of a sense of beauty in art is one of the normal outlets for emotion, and even for sex emotion. Some happy people can themselves make music, and so express themselves. Most of us find that common kindness suggests that we should restrict our efforts in that direction to times when we are alone. But if we cannot play we can at least learn the art of good listening. And if we are not musical at all we can perhaps appreciate true painting, or great poetry, or fine literature. It all helps.

May I say a plain word or two about the shyness and self-consciousness in society which so torment young girls? The first thing I would say is that they will almost certainly pass away before long, and that therefore they need not be bothered about. Lots of the most effective and socially successful men and women in the world went through a painful period of shyness in early youth, and now only smile at the memory of those days.

In so far as that self-consciousness is produced by society of any sort, it is based upon the delusion that other people look at us and think about us a great deal more than they do. It is also due to a habit of minding what other people think and say a great deal more than the facts warrant. We are not so important as to attract much general notice, and other people are not so important that on account of their prejudices and conventions we should distress ourselves.

But in so far as discomfort in society is due to the presence there of members of the opposite sex, there is something different to be said. The whole contention of this book is that the attraction which exists between the sexes is a right and wholesome thing, and that the way of wisdom is to accept the fact of it quite simply. When that is done it is found possible to let that mutual attraction issue in friendship and camaraderie of a kind that enriches and dignifies life.

Of course all this is much easier for girls who have been brought up with boys. They learn to be at home with the other sex, not to be fussy and foolish, and not to trade upon their sex. But that sort of relationship to men is also quite possible even for those who were not brought up with boys, and in the attaining to it girls find their real peace of mind.

I would also like to put down here some thoughts about beautiful girls.

A beautiful girl always makes me want to do two things. One is to thank God for making so lovely a thing, and the other is to say a prayer that she may have special help given her for her specially difficult lot. For beauty is both a very great gift and a very hard thing to handle. Some of you must know that you are beautiful, and you are sure to find the fact exciting, delightful, and yet embarrassing. You have great powers—powers over other women and over children in part—and very great powers over men. You can, if you will, use that power to induce men to make fools of themselves. You can let yourselves slip into the habit of living on admiration and feeding on the pleasure it gives you. You can exploit your beauty to win through it things you do not really deserve. People will forgive much to a beautiful woman, and you can trade on that fact. You can get a great deal of your own way if you master the art of being charming as well as beautiful; and you can in that way use your beauty to your own undoing, and make it partly a curse to others. In fact you are certain to have to face many temptations which the majority of women escape. That is the hard part of your lot. All who understand know quite well that life cannot but be more complicated for you than for most, and you have a very great claim on their sympathy. But the way to avoid your dangers is not to pretend to yourself that you are not beautiful. Pretence never helps us. The way is to face the fact of your beauty, realize that you did not create it, and therefore need not be vain about it, and then go on to decide what use you are

going to make of the power it gives you. It can be used for God—otherwise He would not have given it. It can be turned into influence of a very wonderful kind. If you can induce men to make fools of themselves, you can also draw out all that is best in them, and inspire them for fine living. In plain English, when a beautiful woman is also a good woman she is one of the greatest boons to mankind. She can give great pleasure to others—but she can do more, she can stir the latent idealism in men and women in wonderful ways. She can move through the world as a source of gracious, kindly, and bracing influence. Of course, once again, the essential secret is to think of giving and not of getting, to get self into the background and live for love and service—to employ your great gift for the sake of the giver of it. I suspect that it must need a great deal of self-discipline— perhaps more than a man can understand. I am sure it must need a great deal of prayer. But it has been done, and can be done again.

And that leads me naturally to the last thing I want to say in this chapter. I have already said in the chapter specially addressed to men that the great help for the difficult early days of life is to be found in religion. [Footnote: Cp. p. 80ff.] And of course that is equally true for girls.

Religion means having a great and worthy interest at the center of our lives, which gives meaning to the whole of them. Being religious means that the essential and eternal part of us is coming into life, and it almost necessarily follows then that the other parts of our personalities slip into their proper places. It means having an object for our affections more than worthy of all our deepest emotions, and more than able to fill our empty hearts. Religion in the early days of life is generally very emotional. I believe that that is perfectly right and natural, provided we also make efforts to be sincere and to love the truth. Because it is emotional, its value as an outlet for feeling is very great. It does not remain at its first emotional level. Later on there comes an inevitable change when many think, quite wrongly, that they are losing their religion. But at the stage I am thinking of religion naturally and normally expresses itself in intense feeling. We are all hero worshippers at that stage of life. Hero worshipping, however, is apt to get us into trouble, for our heroes fail us in time. The one perfect hero who never fails us is Christ. He alone never disappoints, and to love Him is to have all the nobler chords in our beings set in motion. We are sure to despair of ever becoming worthy of Him. But no leader of men was ever so willing to take us as we are and make the best of us. To be near Him may mean being made to feel deeply ashamed. In His presence we are sure to feel small and mean. But that also is a good thing, and in spite of it He loves us. In other directions we seek with longing to find love, and often fail. With Him we may be quite sure of finding love. And He goes on loving to the end.

Being loved by Him does at last draw out the best in us. Inevitably we begin to want to be more worthy—to serve and love others for His sake—to know and love the truth—to find and worship beauty. And that means having a life full of splendid and worthy interests.

Emotional muddles may in fact be the lot of most of us for a while. But if at the center of them all there is an honest love for Christ, they cannot overwhelm us; and in the long run we are sure to emerge into the life that has both peace and power in it.

## **CHAPTER IX**

### **INVOLUNTARY CELIBACY**

Modern England has for many generations been a place so unhealthy for the young that a vast problem has grown up in our midst which seriously disturbs the normal adjustment of sex relationships. It would seem to have been Nature's intention that there should be slightly more men than women in the world, for boy babies outnumber girl babies [Footnote: The actual figures are 1052 boy babies to 1000 girl babies.] What it would mean if there were more adult men than women in the world it is hard to imagine. It would at once have enormous social consequences. No woman would remain a celibate except by her own choice. Men would have to behave themselves in order to win wives, and would cease to occupy the demoralizing position of being able to get wives whenever they want them. It would in fact mean a new world in many ways.

As things are, however, the unhealthy conditions of modern life produce a greater mortality among boy babies than among girl babies, and males come to be in a minority. This state of affairs has been greatly aggravated by the war, but it was serious even before 1914. It was then the case that the

women outnumbered the men by about a million. The number must be nearer a million and a half today.

The result is that over a million women have to face the prospect of a life in which their most deeply implanted instincts—the instincts for wifedom and motherhood—cannot find their normal satisfaction, and the problem thus created is one of the most difficult in the whole of life. It is, of course, nothing less than insulting nonsense to talk about these women as "superfluous women." Behind the very phrase there lurks the old delusion that women are only needed in the world as wives and mothers. As a matter of fact a great deal of the work that is most needed in our civilization—work in education, art, literature, nursing, social service, and other departments of life—is being done by these women.

But while that is true it is also true that the personal life of the unmarried woman presents acute problems of a most intricate kind. Probably only a woman can truly understand those problems or justly estimate their urgency, but no man with any insight or sympathy can fail to know that the lot of the unmarried woman involves secret stresses, unsatisfied yearnings, and sometimes hours of dark depression. She may be unmarried because she has persistently refused to try to be satisfied with any second best. As a witty woman friend of mine once put it, she may be unmarried because "the attainable was not desirable and the desirable was not attainable." She may be unmarried because a very true lover of early days went on before, and she has never felt able to put anyone else in his place. Or she may have loved truly some man who loved another. Or nothing may ever have happened to awaken conscious love in her, in which case it is still possible that her nature may cry out at times for the satisfaction of its primary needs. And while all this is true, she is conventionally supposed never to show by any sign that she would have liked to be married. However much she may suffer it is held unseemly for her to show that she suffers, or to ask for sympathy. She is often, and I think quite indefensibly, denied by social convention the stimulus of any really intimate friendships with men. She is made the subject of uncounted third-rate jokes. And if, as life goes on, she develops peculiarities of manner or asperities of temper—if she begins to lose vitality and grace, these things are noted with contempt by people who little imagine how much real heroism may lie concealed in the object of their scorn. I believe, however, that I speak for a very large number of men when I confess that nothing kindles in me quite the same flame of resentment at things as they are, as just this fact that so many gracious and kindly women, plainly made for motherhood and fitted for a fine part in life, should find themselves held in the clutches of this insistent problem.

It may well help all such to realize the fact stated above, namely, that the problem is no part of the eternal and designed order of things, but one of the results of our social misbehavior. In a very real sense the women who suffer in this matter suffer vicariously for the sins of all society. It is not they who are guilty, but all mankind. For all who mean resolutely to face the problem and to win through to victory, it is first of all essential that they should realize the fact that their acute depressions and their restlessness of mind have really a quite well-defined physical and psychological cause. Somewhere between twenty-five and thirty-five these depressions often become very acute, so that the whole horizon of life is darkened. Sensitive women often torment themselves by wondering what they have done that is wrong, for of course all depression is apt to take the form of a sense of wrongdoing. Further, at this period the religious sensibilities of many seem to suffer eclipse. They can no longer respond in feeling to any of the sublime religious truths. They find they cannot pray. Nothing seems to matter. The memory of earlier days when life seemed bright and religious faith was confident seems only to mock them. Many are beset by definite intellectual difficulties and so are tempted to a general cynicism. Envy of others will suggest itself, and though it be sternly repressed, it still adds to the general strain, while good advice from others will seem just the last straw which cannot be borne.

But one half of this problem has disappeared at once for many from the day when they faced the plain truth that the cause of trouble is physical. Physiological processes with certain inevitable psychological accompaniments are at the bottom of it. Because their natures have not received their natural fulfillment a complicated situation has arisen which cannot be easily lived through, though it may be in the end triumphantly controlled. And if it helps ordinary people to learn that sometimes when they seem to be suffering from a sense of sin they are really only being plagued by indigestion, it may very much more help women in this difficult period to know that they are only going through an inevitable physical readjustment. What is happening is that sexual desire—it may be in vague, unconscious, and very general forms—is asserting itself. Nothing could be more absurd than to suggest that there is anything wrong or immodest in that fact. It is quite inevitable. Indeed, the first step out of the trouble lies in accepting the fact and then in considering how it is to be dealt with.

What is the way out of this difficult bit of life? All said that can be said about the physical and psychological causes, a very real problem remains. There must be a way of meeting it which ends in complete victory, for women who have come through it victoriously are to be found on all hands. What has been the secret of their victory? I prefer to let a woman begin the answer. "I think," writes one, "that the only possible thing for such women to do is to have their eyes fixed on God, and to know that



in some mysterious and wonderful way He understands and meets all our needs. I think it needs a definite act—of our wills, our intellects, and our emotions—an act of consecration and self-offering to God, and until that is done there will be no peace." And then, after expressing her conviction as to the insufficiency of the policy of mere sublimation she continues, "I really believe that for women a real act of surrender—a joyful offering to God—is the only way."

I am sure the ultimate wisdom about this whole matter is contained in those sentences, and I am sure because there are numerous other departments of life in which similar problems assail both men and women, and in relation to which the way of self-surrender is the only possible way to life.

After all, it is not only unmarried women who have to face the experience of wanting passionately something which they cannot have. In various forms that challenge comes to most men and women whether married or not. Our desires demand one thing, and life with its imperious authority offers something different; and it is perhaps in that way that most of us come to the crisis of our lives. It is easy to break oneself against a situation of that sort. It is easy to spoil life completely by an obstinate concentration on the object that is being withheld—to lose life by insisting on finding it in one's own chosen way. Men and women alike make shipwreck of their lives in that way every year.

But there is another way. Our real life is life in God, and the way into it is always the way of surrender. To say with utter sincerity and absence of self-will, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" is to begin to find deliverance at once. We could not and should not surrender thus to anybody else. He alone perfectly understands. But when we have put ourselves into His hands without reserve, immediately life begins to arrange itself. With such surrender there comes a peace which nothing else can bring. I say it with acute sympathy for all strong-willed, high-spirited people, for whom surrender is very difficult. But I say it with an assurance that is based upon the unanimous verdict of the souls of all history who have found life. "I have learned," said one much harassed and persecuted man, "in whatsoever state I am therein to be content." He was content because in whatsoever state he might be he was always in the fellowship of God, and therefore in enjoyment of his essential life. He knew himself secure whatever life might bring, and even though life itself should end. He was inwardly in a state of profound peace and spiritual freedom, and that is why all the gracious powers of his humanity were able to find free and beautiful expression.

So it must be with all of us. We find our real life, and we become masters or mistresses in life only when we have given in and allowed the love of God to direct and sustain us. For the particular problem dealt with in this chapter and for all other painful and pressing problems of life, the way of victory is to seek and find the life that is hid with Christ in God.

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No doubt at this point two questions will arise in the minds of some. Firstly, some will want to say, "All that is very well for those who are religious, but how about the people who are not religious?" I have no answer to that question, because I believe there is none. Religion is not a sort of hobby that just seems to suit certain peculiar people. It is a prime necessity for all of us. In a great many other connections it becomes increasingly plain to all who have eyes to see that there is no solution for the problem of life except the one which God Himself offers to all seeking souls. We may refuse to seek Him, but in so doing we close the prison doors against ourselves. I am not surprised that in studying the problems of sex I find no answer to the most acute of them apart from religion. That is what I should expect. Is it likely that men and women who were made for God should ever find any lasting satisfaction or any way to victory in life apart from Him? And indeed, in the particular connection I am now writing about, it is the fact that not a few women have lived to be almost thankful for the problem of involuntary celibacy that once confronted them in so menacing a way. It threw them back on God, and their experience of Him has been so rich that they are thankful for the compulsion that drove them into His fellowship.

There is no mysterious hunger in the inner life of any woman—no restless longing ever torments her—no painful stresses ever make her life seem difficult—no weary loneliness ever makes the world seem desolate, but He understands—perfectly and utterly. And if it be love that a woman longs for, there is no love like unto His love—perfect in tenderness, in understanding and in power. Yes, God Himself is the final answer to the problem of all lives that here seem to be unfulfilled, whether they be lives of men or women.

The other question that will be raised will be put in these words: "You have said that in the dark hours that come to so many women religious feeling seems to be suspended, and yet you go on to say that the way of escape lies in religion," I know that what I have written may seem for this reason utterly tantalizing to some. I know that in general it is in times when we most need religion that it is apt to seem most remote from us. Most of us have been in that dilemma. But there is a way out. It consists partly in remembering that religion is not only a matter of feeling, and that when feeling fails us the

mind and will remain. But it consists still more in remembering that religion is not so much our affair as God's. God does not only answer the prayers of people who are feeling religious. If religion be what the experience of thousands declares it is, then we have reason to expect that our seeking of God will have results even when our emotions seem dead. We can at least direct our thought life. We can set ourselves towards Him by the deliberate direction of attention. We can think the true and right thoughts. And in that way a religion begins to come into life that is tenfold more abiding and sustaining than any religion that is a mere matter of feeling. It may need rigid self-discipline and really hard work thus to direct attention and attain to a regulated thought life. But then, I am not suggesting that there is an easy way through this problem. There is a way, and a way that leads to real victory; but it is no more easy than any other path that leads to a great goal.

I should like further to draw on the experience of women themselves to add some additional suggestions born of common sense and experiment. A very wise woman once supplied through me some hints to one who was going through this difficult period, and I am sure her hints are worth passing on to others. She insisted that no woman at this stage should attempt to live alone. Healthy friendship with other women is one of the greatest possible helps to success. As I have noted in a previous chapter, there is a danger that lurks not far away in this connection. But too much cannot be said of the helpful and bracing influence of friendships that are kept really healthy. Then, it is a mistake for women to live in institutions when that can be avoided. It really helps to have some room or rooms in the care of which the home-making instinct can find expression, and which may thus become a means to self-expression. More important still, my friend insisted that it is better at this period to work with people than with things. Other people always tend to draw us out of ourselves, if we will allow that to happen. They make demands on our affections. They keep us in touch with real life and its vast variety of emotions and interests. They make self-forgetfulness possible. Further, it is important for such women—as important as for all other people—to learn the truth that the way to win love is to give it. When people suffer tortures of loneliness it is essentially loneliness of heart. Like all other normal persons they long to be loved. But nothing is more futile in such a situation than simply to sit down and wait for someone to come along and love us. That way lies despair. What we can do is to awaken to the fact that all around us are people who also long to be loved, and that we have love to give them if we will but be generous. They may not seem very attractive people, but in that case they only need our love the more. Is it not being loved that makes people lovely! And when women rouse themselves to use their own love generously for others, they begin—always—to find the doors of deliverance opening.

A further very great step will have been taken when it is realized that the life force which is not going to have its normal and natural outlet need not on that account be wasted. It can be directed to other ends with enormous benefit to the world. I cannot hope to say anything on this point one-half so adequate or so helpful as the chapter Miss Royden has already written in *Sex and Common Sense*. Out of the fullness of knowledge she has gained by an amazingly sensitive sympathy she has there written the best account I have ever seen of how thwarted sex emotion can be sublimated to other ends, and made an immensely effective force for the progress of the race. In both men and women sexuality is just life force. If the natural method of expression be denied to it, it will still seek out ways in which to express itself. If it has been merely repressed unwillingly and incompletely the results, as the psychologists are telling us, are apt to be disastrous. But if the situation is openly faced, and honestly accepted—if a conscious surrender of the normal sex career be achieved—then it is possible to utilize the life force that springs from our sex natures for great physical, mental, or emotional activities, and that without any of the evil results that follow from mere repression. In fact by living an abundant life in natural, useful, and absorbing ways the problem becomes capable of a truly happy solution.

I have written the word "happy" deliberately. But I am not sure that at first this way out will seem happy. Useful it certainly will be, but all said and done I fancy that some residue of regret will be apt to remain, and that because of it women will be tempted to indulge in self-pity. And self-pity both for men and women is the most enervating of all emotional luxuries. Therefore, I wish to insert here a word of grateful testimony. If the sublimation of sex instinct seems to some women a poor and pale substitute for the normal career of marriage and motherhood, I am at least sure that for society at large it is a very blessed substitute. My chief experience of life has been in those places called slums, where life is always seen in its most drab and pitiful guise, and I can speak with certainty about this problem in relation to them. In the districts in which I have worked there have always been at least a few unmarried women who were spending with lavish generosity their whole life force in practical service and sympathy for needy children, harassed mothers, wayward men, and the sufferers of the district in general. No members of the human race are living anywhere with greater effect. No other women are called blessed with greater sincerity. Half a dozen in particular I can think of who in this way have done more for the redemption of society in such places than a score of happily married mothers could have accomplished. I do not know whether they feel that the sublimation of their instincts has been a complete success, but I do know that hundreds of grateful people have no doubt about it whatever. The whole world in its modern guise is crying out for such services as women alone can render, and if, on

the one hand, women are the chief sufferers through the confusions of human affairs, they have at least a wonderful chance of finding and applying the remedy. The world can never make good to them the wrong it has done them; yet they may, if they will, put the world inexpressibly in their debt. No doubt mankind does not deserve it, but the one perfect lover in history was willing to die for an undeserving world. It can never be other than a great calling to follow where He leads the way.

A woman of great experience tells me that here I ought to suggest that in that minority of cases where it is possible, an unmarried woman may with great advantage adopt a child. There are many children in the world to-day without parents, and these children have a greatly lessened chance of life. But when one of these children is adopted in the way suggested a great benefit is brought firstly to the child, secondly to society, and thirdly to the woman herself, who thus acquires a worthy object for all the passionate devotion she possesses. Having known this plan adopted in several instances, I have wondered why it is not more common, at least when financial considerations make it a possibility.

No doubt to take this course or any of the other courses here suggested will need courage. But all successful ways of life need courage. Life itself is a challenging summons to courage. There is no happy way through for those who sit down in fear or who give in to their own distresses. Fate is a tyrant only to those who will not face him with spirit. A full and satisfying life has to be snatched from under the enemy's guns, but it can be so snatched. Neither men nor women need give in though often defeated. "Unconquering but unconquered" may be the best motto that we can hope to deserve, but for all those who inscribe it on their banners a strange happiness does creep into the soul.

## **CHAPTER X**

### **THE ART OF BEING MARRIED**

#### **I**

#### **HOUSEHOLD HARMONY**

I have the greatest sympathy with married couples who never read any books or pamphlets containing advice to married people, and are determined that they never will. Once a man and a woman have left their respective homes and set up in one of their own their common life is so entirely their own affair, and they have such a clear right to resent all intrusions into it, that the policy of rejecting all advice beforehand has clearly something to be said for it.

And yet, because no one need read this chapter unless he or she likes, I put it in; and if any wife or husband does read it, I hope that in that case both husband and wife will do so. I really write it not so much for those who are already married, as for those still unmarried. It matters so much—so very very much—with what preconceptions and assumptions we approach wedded life.

Of course Mother Nature teaches the great art of living in the married state to thousands. Two sensible people endowed with some patience, some common sense, and a great deal of affection have every right to expect that without much difficulty they will find for themselves the right way in marriage. Uncounted couples who read no books and never heard of psychology have made a lifelong success of it simply by being natural, brave, unselfish, and really loving. Many such simply wonder when they hear others talk about the difficulties, dangers, and painful experiences connected with marriage. They never found these things in their marriages. The last thing I would like to suggest to the young is that they need be afraid. Personally I agree with the man who said that on his wedding day he had entered a new and splendid country for which he felt quite unworthy and that he had never since ceased to wonder and thank God for its beauties, its interests, and its delights.

Yet there are other couples—couples who have made mistakes, and now talk rather bitterly about marriage; and it is because I believe that even a little more knowledge and a little more patience might have prevented those mistakes that I offer the following pages with my congratulations and good wishes to all who are about to marry.

There are no absolute rules for the conduct of married life. There are only truths to be recognized. We are all apt at times to wish for absolute rules. We think they would make life easier. We even wish sometimes that Jesus had given us absolute rules and not simply principles. But in fact rules always turn out to be galling things. They are not for free personalities who differ enormously in constitution and temperament. The right way for A and B might prove to be just the wrong way for C and D. The problem is one which has to be worked out by each couple afresh. It is a problem of mutual accommodation between two persons each of whom is an original creation of God. It is the problem of taking two different life themes and working them into one harmony.

Nor do I think that we achieve much by thinking or speaking of "rights" in this connection—about "his" right to rule here, and "her" right to be considered there. No doubt husbands and wives have rights—inalienable and august rights. But married life is part of love's domain, and in that region the language of the law courts is out of place. When either of the two begins to think about enforcing or claiming rights something has already gone wrong.

And this I think is chiefly a point for men to consider. The conception of a husband as a sort of Czar within his own home still lingers, though it may not be openly proclaimed. Men still grow up with the idea that a wife should be a sort of submissive and very charming slave, honored by occasional demonstrations of affection, and that the whole household should be ordered to suit his lordship's convenience. Such men will protect their wives, give them money, make love to them, humor them, and honor them in public; and in return will expect something little short of sheer submission. Behind all this lurks the half-conscious idea that woman is man's inferior, and that idea really does remain hidden even in the minds of some who would repudiate it. The fact is that the ultimate value of marriage—the thing that makes it good fun, as well as a noble thing—lies in the fact that men and women are so different; that they have not the same powers, and can alternately take the lead in their common life. It is comradeship, and not mere occasional love-making, that they must achieve in order to be permanently happy, and comradeship is a relation in which each must be free to be his or her natural self.

Marriage *can* be made a cramping thing, and then in time it becomes almost an insufferable thing. But if each will give the other room to grow it can be an enlarging experience. It may contain the sum of the interests of two different people. If mutual learning is brought into it, it dignifies the lives of both. I believe in obedient wives. But then I also believe in obedient husbands. If I did not follow my wife's lead in some departments of life, I should be neither more nor less than a fool. And I believe that she is quite wise to follow my lead in some other connections.

What all this really points to is that the element of liberty is worth conserving within marriage with very great care. When a wife has no private means it is an essential thing for the husband to give her regularly a stated allowance and to ask no questions as to how it is spent. It is a good thing—a very good thing—to make certain that, if possible, a wife has a holiday now and then from the heavy bondage of housekeeping. It is even a good thing that she should have a holiday now and then from the charms and joys of family life. For we men are very like children in the way we come to depend on our wives. All our little woes must be brought to them—from buttonless shirts to the pitiful tale of our last defeat at golf. The children consult them daily about a hundred things as of right, and their husbands must often seem to them the biggest bairns of the lot. I quite see why women like it. But it must get very wearing at times. It surely is a good thing that now and then a wife should turn her back on it all, meet old friends, have days in which to enjoy herself without any bothers, and even for a few hours forget her exacting if charming dependents.

It is equally important not to forget a husband's liberty.

No doubt a great deal of cruelty lies to the charge of husbands who are out night after night, leaving their wives—already weary after a day's heavy work—to sit bored and alone, while they enjoy the company of their male friends, or hunt after their favorite pleasures. It is quite right that wives should refuse to tolerate such treatment. But the entire reversal of that policy is apt to work badly also. A husband should not drop all the masculine interests of his life, nor give up his old friends, nor resign from all the responsibilities that will take him sometimes out at nights. And a wise wife will not allow him to do it. Somewhere between the two extremes I have indicated lies the wise path in this connection.

Then is it not time that somebody boldly said that husbands ought to do some of the housework? I have no time to discuss the ethical problem raised by the households where paid servants do it all. They are a very small minority of modern households, and in all the rest the wives do a great deal of the housework—generally all of it. Some of it is heavy muscular work, such as carrying coals or moving furniture. The rest makes up an employment which is more constant, needs more brains, and calls for more administrative capacity than any man can imagine till he has tried to do it. Of course men say

they cannot do such work. Which is plain rubbish. It only means that they do not like doing it. Neither do many women. And men can do most of it perfectly well if they will only take the trouble to learn how it is done. I do not mean that I propose for men such jobs as matching wools, or making babies' clothes, or arranging the drawing-room. There are limits to our powers. But I do seriously mean that setting fires, cleaning grates, carrying coals, making beds, washing dishes, cooking, scrubbing floors, cleaning brass and silver, etc., etc. are things which the average man can do quite as well as the average woman. Why then should they all be piled upon the weary back of the woman? Because, you probably say, the man must hurry off to business in the morning, and comes home too tired at night. Yes! most of us really believed all that before the war, and then we began to make discoveries. One was that there can be a lot of time before a man goes off to business, and another was that the man is not more tired by 6.30 p.m. than the woman, and can do a lot of useful things if he has the will. And I urge this point not only because it is in the clearest sense only fair, but because until a man does in this way take his share of the home burden he cannot understand his wife's life, and cannot give her intelligent sympathy.

The instinctive male attitude to household details is often expressed in the phrase that they are "bally nonsense," or something else equally picturesque. But when a little experience has taught a man how *very* uncomfortable he would be if the details were not right, he is forthwith able to be a much more intelligent friend to his wife. I do not think fathers ever really know their little children till they have helped in looking after them at bedtime, in the early morning, and at meals. And I am sure that no man ever knows what a crowded and terrific thing life can be till he has been left at home alone for a whole evening to look after two or three. When he has undergone that searching experience he will forthwith respect his wife with a new sincerity.

It is extraordinary too what a jolly business housework can be when two people go at it together and get all the possible fun out of it. On the other hand, when it is all done by lonely people it can be vilely tedious. Thousands of husbands have no idea of this. If they searched their own minds they would find that their idea of their own homes is that they are places to be kept clean and comfortable for them, and their idea of their own wives is that they are women whose first duty is to minister to their comfort. Any suggestion that this may mean a very dull life for wives is met by a snort, and some muttered murmur about "poisonous modern nonsense." But in spite of that or any other more brilliant adjectives that may be employed the suggestion is unalterably true, and if, having made life as dull as that for their wives, such men find that marriage itself is not turning out well, it is high time they should wake up to the fact that they themselves are to blame.

And yet may some kindly Providence save us all from the women who never forget the house—whose domestic possessions seem to constitute mere extensions of their nervous systems, so that if you kick the fender you give them the jumps—who cannot sit still once they have seen a speck of dust, and cannot turn with free minds to any wider interest. They help to fill clubs and pubs. But they ruin homes. I want husbands to share the housework chiefly because in that way it will get done the sooner, and give both husband and wife some free time. If they want really to live they must take care to get away at times from all such merely domestic concerns. If need be let the supper dishes lie dirty, but out of sight, until to-morrow—if need be, let your husband wear a sock with a hole in it—put off cutting out baby's trousers, and even let your new blouse go without that alteration in the meantime, but on most evenings at all costs get some time to read, or enjoy music, or go out, or talk, or dream, or do nothing. The problem of civilization is unsolved for those who let the house tyrannize over them, and the problem of marriage also. All of which may seem rather trivial and unimportant to some men, but in my belief it is connected in a strangely intimate way with the success of life.

Of course the converse to all this is that wives do well to enter into their husbands' interests. It is often done with amazing success. I can think at the moment of doctors, lawyers, engineers, shopkeepers, scholars, writers, financiers, teachers, and ministers whose wives have entered keenly and with intelligence into all their cares, plans, and labors. And in every such case the friendship between man and wife has been very close, and the marriage truly happy. When this is not done, I often wonder why. I suppose some wives do not understand their husbands' affairs at first, and cannot be bothered trying to understand. I suppose that some husbands are too impatient to explain, and that others really cannot. If so it is a pity. Possibly some would rather not explain. I have often wondered what the wives of many modern business men think of modern business methods; and I suspect that generally they simply do not know the truth. But I repeat it is a very great pity when a wife has no relation to her husband's business. It means that he has a life quite apart from her. And if it be said that many a man wants to forget his business and all its worries as soon as he gets inside his own front door, it is equally true that often such men have worries they cannot forget, and that they would be stronger and happier men if they only knew what a woman's sympathy is.

All of which seems to me so very important—so inevitably important—that I cannot but think it should be remembered when young men and women are deciding about their marriages. Have you

noticed the lines on the face of that greatest of men—Abraham Lincoln? They were there in large measure because he married a woman who could not or would not share his real life.

## II

### PHYSICAL HARMONY

It is beyond all question that in many cases where marriage is not turning out happily the real cause lies in some failure to achieve real and true adjustment of the sexual relationship which marriage involves.

Here again there are no absolute rules. Miss Royden, for instance, has written a most notable chapter called "The Sin of the Bridegroom" in which with fine candor she points out how cruel it may be for a husband to suppose that on the first night of his marriage, and after a day of great fatigue, his wife will necessarily be emotionally attuned for her first experience of intimacy, and how fatal the results may be if he imposes himself upon her in an unresponsive hour. I am sure that every word in that chapter is true and important. I agree with the suggestion that every man should read it before he marries. But it is also true that many couples who did then experience intimacy can look back upon the first night of marriage as on a sacred occasion which they recall with wonder.

Yes, there are no absolute rules. But there are unalterable facts. And the supremely important one here is that sexual intimacy is only a perfect experience when it is a mutual experience. I think the delusion is nearly dead that woman is a passionless creature, who will never actively desire her husband but who ought to be willing to receive him whenever he desires. Happy marriages can only be built upon the grave of that misconception. It was held to be a view honoring to women. As a matter of fact it led to a great deal of cruelty. No doubt women differ greatly, but in every woman who truly loves there lies dormant the capacity to become vibrantly alive in response to her lover, and to meet him as a willing and active participant in the sacrament of marriage. And till that dormant capacity has been stirred into life sexual intimacy may be actually repulsive, with the result that children may be born who are not in the full sense the product of creative love, and that the relations of husband and wife may remain difficult and unsatisfying to both.

This is not what God ordained. There is an art of wooing which Nature teaches to many men, and would, I think, teach to all men if they were patient and willing to learn. It consists in a love-making that appeals to the mind, the heart, and ultimately the body, and through it alone can a woman be attuned for her natural part in marriage. It is her inalienable right thus to be wooed before sexual intimacy is asked for, and husbands who are too impatient to offer such wooing do her a real wrong.

There are times when a woman cannot respond, and a true husband must learn to recognize such times. Some of them are perfectly obvious. When a woman is not well, or is fatigued—when pregnancy has advanced beyond its early stages—when full health has not been recovered after childbirth—at these and at other times the conditions are not present for a true sexual experience, and in the name of his love a man must learn not to ask for what cannot be freely given.

None the less it is not always and only the husbands who make mistakes in this part of life. A woman must be at least willing to be awakened and made responsive, and many women have a strange power of controlling themselves in this matter. They can repress their natures even when desire has begun to stir. They can remain cold at will. And they do it for many and varied reasons. Sometimes their reasons are purely selfish—they cannot or will not be bothered. Sometimes they allow a sense of pique over some trifling grievance to inhibit their natural instincts. Sometimes because they shrink from the labors of motherhood they acquire a distaste for this whole side of married life. And meantime their husbands are men in whom ardent love naturally, inevitably, and rightly produces a desire for intimacy. They may be willing to be patient. They may study their wives' moods, and try to learn to be chivalrous lovers. But if day after day they meet with no response—if on the contrary they find their wives deliberately checking all response, is it not clear that a situation is created that cannot but threaten married happiness? Is it not inevitable that husbands so treated should begin to wonder whether their wives really love them? For love makes people unselfish, and equally it makes them understanding. On the other hand, when wives do understand, and learn in this respect to be generous, they bind their husbands to them in new chains of affection. In some husbands almost the strongest emotion they have towards their wives is a sense of profound gratitude for a generosity that made those wives willing to meet them again and again in love's high places, and allow them that ultimate expression of their passion through which nature is restored to balance and peace. And surely it might help wives to attain to that generosity if they would but remember that it is love for them that kindles passion, and that it is an ever-renewed sense of their lovableness that keeps their husbands so eager.

But there is another strange reason that keeps some wives physically unresponsive, and so prevents any perfect sexual experience. It is a reason that only operates with refined and spiritually minded women, and though its results may be very serious it seems to them a right reason. What I am thinking of is a sense that it is not quite right or quite seemly or quite refined to allow the primitive instincts of the body to awaken. In other words, such women are afraid of passion in themselves, and suspect that it is not quite consistent with their moral and religious ideals to allow it to have sway. And so they never frankly and openly accept their own sexuality. It may be natural enough in view of the terrible ways in which men and women have misused and degraded passion. It is almost inevitable when women have been brought up to believe that morality consists chiefly in self-suppression. None the less it is a mistaken, and ultimately an irreverent as well as a fatal misconception. It was Jesus who said, "He which made them at the beginning made them male and female and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh." There is a place in the holy life for the free, happy, and full expression of the instincts and desires that are rooted in our sex natures. The assumed inevitable opposition between bodily and spiritual functions has no real existence. We cannot spiritualize the body away. To neglect or simply to repress it is a course that comes to no good. What we can do is to accept, understand, and then use it rightly. And when we do so it turns out that the free and happy exercise of bodily function will harmonize with all the rest of our life till body, soul, and spirit attain to harmony and unity. I think this reluctance to accept our real natures is wrong and unreasonable, but my chief feeling about it is a sense of pity that women for reasons which seem to them good should none the less miss the joy and exaltation which might be theirs, and should compel their husbands to suffer also.

It is strange but it is true that the two commonest reasons for the failure of marriage in this aspect of it are a lustful view of it and a mistakenly spiritual view of it. A lustful view of it will lead people to be content with merely physical unity, though they are attaining to no union of their mental and spiritual lives. And that means that marriage is a very poor affair. But on the other hand this falsely spiritual view will lead to an attempt to leave the body out. And that is a course of folly for incarnate spirits. The real end of marriage is a unity in which body, soul, and spirit will all play a part, and nothing else really satisfies. It has been wisely said that "there are liberating and harmonizing influences which are imparted by sexual union and which give wholesome balance and sanity to the whole organism provided that union is the outcome of psychic as well as physical needs. . . . Through harmonious sex relationships a deeper spiritual unity is reached than can possibly be derived from continence either in or out of marriage."

The waiting-rooms of specialists in nervous disease are crowded by men and women suffering from nerve trouble through failure to attain harmonious sexual relations in married life. But many of them might have escaped that fate had they only been able to take the simple Christian view of themselves and their natural functions. It was a God of love who made us as we are, and we only interfere with His plans for us when we try on this earth to live as if we were out of it, or call that unclean which in His wisdom He has set in the center of our life.

### **III**

#### **BIRTH CONTROL**

Not only because the subject of Birth Control occupies a very great place in the public attention just now, but also because it does raise very important and real questions for married persons I wish to speak shortly of it here.

Some day, perhaps, the medical profession will do the public the great service of issuing some authoritative statement about the physical aspects of the matter, for there are issues with which only medical men can deal wisely.

And yet it is far from being only or even mainly a medical question. The moral and social issues involved in it are of great importance.

It is now a matter of common knowledge that it is possible for two persons to live together in sexual intimacy and yet avoid having children. And this has created new problems for the married and new dangers for the unmarried. Probably it has had a great deal to do with the recent increase of irregular sexual relationships outside marriage. The women whose sole motive for chastity was the fear of having children and so of being openly disgraced are now set free to sin against the truth without fear of that particular penalty.

I am not, however, in the meantime concerned with them. It is the problem raised for married persons that concerns me. About two main points I am quite clear.

In the first place, for two healthy young persons to marry with the definite intention of having no children is, I believe, an unchristian thing. If they cannot afford to have children they cannot afford to marry. If at the beginning they interfere with nature they spoil their first experiences of sexual intimacy, which should be spontaneous and untrammelled. I even believe that artificial attempts to postpone the arrival of a first child are a deplorable mistake. The first consummation of love should be closely followed by parentage. Some couples having followed the plan of postponing parentage have, when it was too late, found that by this course they had forfeited the possibility of that great privilege. Of course children mean very hard work. Of course they restrict the freedom of parents to pursue their own pleasure, and use up a large proportion of the family income. But these things are a blessing in disguise. Comparative poverty for young couples is a bracing and a useful discipline. Probably the cream of the nation consists of men and women reared in families of four or five, where the parents gave much individual attention to each child, and by self-denial helped them to a good start in life. When birth control is resorted to in order to avoid the labors of family life it is a purely selfish and quite indefensible thing.

I am thinking of course of healthy parents. Unhealthy parents probably ought not to have children at all.

The second point I am clear about is that for most couples to have as many children as is possible is equally indefensible. Most healthy couples could have far more children than they can do justice to. In fact the plan of unrestricted families results in a threefold wrong. It is nothing less than cruel to women. The overburdened mothers who were confined once a year or once in eighteen months, never allowed to regain full strength between confinements, and made prematurely old, are, I hope, a thing of the past. Marriage on those terms did mean servitude. Further, the plan is cruel to children. They cannot on these terms receive sufficient attention. They are not given a fair start in life, and in many cases do not even receive sufficient healthy nourishment. These things are of course in part due to the artificial conditions of modern life. But the conditions are there and cannot be ignored. And thirdly, the plan involves a wrong to society. We have great need of healthy well-trained children, but society as a whole suffers when children are brought into the world who cannot be properly cared for.

About this point I conceive there really cannot be any doubt whatever. And thus the problem of birth control forces itself upon our attention. It is a duty to women, to children, and to the state. The really difficult question is, "How is it to be achieved?"

One great Church in Christendom replies, "By continence, and by no other method." And there are many who arrive at the same position because they hold that sexual intimacy is only justified, and is only holy, when the deliberate purpose of producing children enters into it. As I see the matter we come here to the central ethical issue of this whole matter. Is it true that sexual intimacy is only right and beautiful when it is entered upon with a creative purpose, or is it also right and sacramental as an expression of mutual affection? Or put differently—granting that two persons have allowed their love to lead to parentage, and have loyally accepted the burdens of family life, may they rightly continue to live in intimacy after the point has been reached at which they know they ought not to have any more children? It is at this point that people of unquestionable moral earnestness differ acutely, I am compelled to take my stand with those who believe that sexual intimacy is right and good in itself as an expression of affection. It has, as a matter of fact, a good many other consequences than the production of children. It constitutes a bond of very great worth between two persons. It is in many interesting ways beneficial to a woman's physical system; and it brings to men a general balance and repose of being which is of enormous value. I believe, in fact, that in actual experience it does justify itself as a method of expressing affection.

The alternative for thousands of couples is not merely the cessation of sexual intimacy, but also abstinence from all the endearing intimacies which are natural and spontaneous in married life. They must not only sleep apart, but in many ways live apart. And this not only means pain of heart such as would take a very great deal to justify it, but also often leads to serious nervous trouble because of the strain which it involves. I have insisted again and again in these pages that continence is perfectly possible for unmarried men. But continence for a man living in the same house with a woman whom he loves, and with whom he has had experience of sexual intimacy, is a very different thing. It is possible for some—perhaps for many, and without serious loss. But for many others it is not possible except on terms which lead to serious nervous trouble. And for such persons, and on the terms I have indicated, I believe conception control to be the better way.

As to how that control should be achieved I have no special fitness to speak. I would advise any couple, faced by the problem, to consult some doctor of repute till they understand the matter, and then to find out for themselves what is for them the right course to adopt.



I know that for some people what is called the sublimation of sexual desire provides a successful way of dealing with the situation. They find themselves able without any emotional loss to divert to other directions and uses the energy of their sex natures. But it is a mistake to imagine that what is possible for one couple is necessarily possible for all. Attempts at sublimation often result in mere repression, and on the heels of that come serious troubles.

## CHAPTER XI

### UNHAPPY MARRIAGES

A good deal has already been said in these pages about the causes of failure in marriage, but I feel that a more definite dealing with the problem of unhappy marriages is called for.

I do not recognize any problem in those cases where marriage has not been based upon love. When a man or a woman marries for financial reasons, or out of a desire for a certain place in society, or because of a mere desire to settle down in life, then he or she runs an enormous risk, and there is nothing to be surprised at if trouble follows. So close an intimacy as marriage involves is really only tolerable when love constantly supplies reasons for patience, generosity and forgiveness. In fact by marrying for any other reason than love men and women only make the permanent and inevitable problems of life a great deal harder to solve. And a human life does always involve a problem either in or out of marriage. Life is a complex and perplexing business.

But if it be true that many marriages begin with intense love and yet after some time turn out unhappily, then a very real problem is presented to our minds, and probably what I have already said about the wonder of sex love, and its harmonizing influence on personalities, has accentuated that problem for some of my readers. There are many wives who once loved their husbands intensely, but who are now laboriously learning to endure them. There are many husbands who felt that they had attained to all that they longed for when they married, but who now are almost giving up in despair the task of living even peaceably with their wives. Many such people are heard declaring that love is the arch deceiver of the world, and that its power only lasts during a few short hours in the morning of life. For many the early and wonderful days of marriage remain only as a tormenting memory, so entirely has the color faded out of their lives. And I know that the pain of such situations is so intense that I would fain speak of them only with consideration and sympathy.

But none the less the broad fact has to be stated that in such cases it is not marriage that has failed but the people involved in marriage. There is nothing in the whole of life so beautiful or so holy but that it can be spoilt when mishandled, and love is no exception to this. I believe love is always felt as a call to unselfishness, but it is a call that can be resisted. And when it is resisted and two selfish people find themselves tied together for life, all the conditions of misery are present. Selfish people are nearly always unhappy people, and two unhappy people certainly cannot make a happy marriage.

And yet these generalities do not carry us very far. Unless we can discover in further detail why marriages fail, these things were better left unsaid. I believe, however, we can discover many of the reasons.

To begin with, a good many unhappy husbands are idle men. Having no hard work to which they must give themselves daily, they have to try to find interest in life in some other way. And because there is no other way they inevitably find themselves threatened with boredom. While their love was new it seemed to them that it would fill life for ever with romance and joy, but so soon as the first early stages of marriage were past they found it failing them. Such men almost always become moody or restless or irritable, and if they are much at home their wives have to try to humor them through their troubles. It is more than any woman ought to be asked to do, and more than any woman can continuously accomplish. If such men came home in the evening honestly tired through trying to do something worth doing they would find their homes a delightful solace. But life's problem cannot be solved by an idle man, whether he be married or unmarried.

And the same is true for idle wives, though there are not so many of them. When a woman has turned over to her servants all household cares and even the care of her children that she may run after

pleasure she has chosen to live on terms which never yet made anybody lastingly happy. We are by nature too big for that way of life, and sooner or later it fails to make us even content. Love will light up with a wonderful color lives that are given to honest work, but even love cannot make idleness other than a wearisome career. Then there are couples who have refused to have children. If the reason be that some possibility of disease has made it seem wrong to have children, it may be that both will learn to adapt themselves to this limitation and to achieve happiness in spite of it. Thousands of couples who are childless against their own wills have learnt none the less to live together in lasting happiness. But when childlessness is the result of a mere selfish policy, it often revenges itself upon the couple concerned. They have deliberately refused satisfaction to one of the deepest instincts within them, and though they may not realize it, those suppressed instincts destroy their harmony of being. They do not face the fact that they have such instincts, because they could not meet them with any adequate reason for suppressing them. They try to deceive themselves into believing that the instincts are not there, or they repress them from selfish causes, and life does not let them off. Love remains unsatisfied. Its august claims have been refused. And therefore it does not and cannot continue to bring them joy.

Another reason for unhappy marriages I have already spoken of in a previous chapter. Sometimes they were marriages of passion and not of love. Sometimes men and women allow themselves to be hurried into union by the driving force of an almost impersonal thing that is purely physical in nature, and though they think they are acting out of love, they are leaving out the larger part of their natures. Mind and spirit may have had no part at all in the transaction. And after such a step there is bound to come a painful awakening. After a while he or she will find that in the most intimate part of married life only the body is acting, and then two people who have got very close to one another in one respect may yet find that they are still in many ways strangers to each other. That must always be a most critical situation. I believe that a successful way out of it might almost always be found, if only the two concerned would use much patience and would learn mutual accommodation. But patience is not a universal possession either among men or women, and often rash and foolish things are said or done at such times which seem to break hopelessly the house of dreams which up till then had seemed so beautiful and so permanent.

If only men and women could learn that the love which makes happy marriages is *not* mere passion, though it involves passion, a world of troubles might be avoided.

The plain though unpalatable truth about a great many marriages is that, though there was love in them at the beginning, there was not enough of it. Often there was enough to make the man eager and delighted to enjoy his wife when she was happy, but not enough of it to make him able and willing to help her when she was depressed. There was enough to make each able to take delight in the charms of the other, but not enough to make either willing to forgive the faults in the other, and help him or her to conquer them. There was enough for sunny days but not enough for foggy ones—enough to produce laughter but not enough to beget patience—enough for admiration but not enough for understanding—enough for joy in the other's successes but not enough for helpfulness after the other had failed. Perhaps a woman will always seem in some ways a queer creature to a man. It is certain that no man has always understood any woman. And I suppose a man always seems at times a strange, childish, and primitive being to a woman, so that she also fails to achieve understanding. But when understanding has failed love is put to one great test. Nothing can get a couple through times when understanding has failed, except love. But love can do it when there is enough of it.

Nor is that the hardest thing love has to do. There come times when, because nobody is always good, and most of us are often bad, love has to face the plain fact of sin in the loved object. At such times to approve is impossible, and would be a real disloyalty. To break out into mere reproaches is futile and irritating. To do nothing is to let a seed of separation sink into the common life. Yet the situation can be met. It can be met by real love, because love can forgive. Forgiveness does not mean condoning wrong. It does not mean blindness, which is never a helpful thing. It means loving the person who has stumbled in spite of the fact, and even perhaps just because of it. It is at such times that one who has failed most needs love, and when therefore love gets a supreme chance. But if a husband or a wife has not enough love to take that chance, then marriage may fail.

And here I am not talking about exceptional cases. Whoever you are, if you marry you are going to marry a sinner—a man or a woman who will some day fall below his best self or her best self. And just because you love it will bring you acute pain. You would do well to ask yourself beforehand what you are going to do about it. And if you cannot feel that you could forgive and go on loving all the same, you would do well to think again. The whole story of some unhappy marriages is told in one sentence. There was love in them, but not enough to produce forgiveness. Yet the ultimate proof that true love is divine in origin lies just in the fact that true love *can* forgive.

All of which leads me on to the real reason why I write this chapter. Marriages often fail because people often fail, and people fail ultimately for one central reason—that they have not God in their lives.

I have read as much modern fiction as most people. And while I have plodded through elaborately told tales of the sufferings of married people, my amazement has grown that these tales are almost without exception the stories of people who had no conscious relation to God. Their authors seem to think it a most interesting thing that such lives should go wrong, and they base upon that fact the suggestion that life is essentially a tragic and rather disappointing matter. To me nothing seems more inevitable and more entirely explicable than that on such terms life should fail, and should fail alike for the married and the unmarried. What could be more simple!

The essential greatness of man lies in the fact that he is capable of fellowship with God. It is in realizing that fellowship that he truly comes to himself. In nothing less than that can he ultimately find satisfaction. The reason why all lesser experiences fail him is just that he was made for something greater still. These lesser experiences will carry him through the morning of life and past the usual time for marriage. But later on the unalterable facts about his nature begin to assert themselves. Though he does not always know it—often indeed does not know it—he begins to need his God. And till he finds God he is wrongly related to the whole universe. Though he will generally fight against it a certain sadness threatens to settle on his spirit. He will try all the old joys; and though he may pronounce them still good, a quiet voice within will pronounce them not good enough. He cannot live even on human love, and a disturbing force will begin to trouble him even when he is with the wife he has loved so well. And so marriage begins to fail.

I find the psychologists saying this with their peculiar vocabulary. They tell us that the individual has to achieve certain adaptations if he is to find his harmonious and balanced life. One of these is the adaptation to society; another is the adaptation to sex, and a third is the adaptation to the infinite. If for "adaptation to the infinite" we put the time-honored phrase "reconciliation with God," then psychologists and religious teachers will be found saying identically the same thing. And all three adaptations are necessary. Adaptation to sex alone is not enough. For those who do know God it turns out that their human fellowship based on love becomes so entirely at one with the divine fellowship, that the two almost cease to be felt as two and certainly the human fellowship is enormously enriched. But where the divine fellowship is a thing unknown a certain deep-seated weariness and loneliness will possess the man, let his human love be never so wonderful.

What thousands of people are demanding of the universe is that there should be some way of solving life's problems without religion. And life in every century has gone on demonstrating that there is no way of solving them except through religion. I am using religion in the largest sense, which is also the truest sense. I am not here concerned with the dogmas of any particular church, nor with the question of the ways in which religion shall express itself. The truth I am emphasizing is that without some conscious relation to his God man remains a stranger in the world and an exile from his spiritual peace; and that such men cannot be happy or satisfying husbands. And of course all that I have written as if thinking only of husbands is equally true for wives.

I have been the perplexed and sympathetic confidant of a number of people who with dismay and sorrow were finding out that marriage was failing them. In almost all these cases religion had been simply passed by as a thing hardly relevant to real life, and it has been plain beyond all question that the trouble in the sphere of marriage could not be mended till something had happened to the persons concerned—in other words, till they had learnt to seek and use the help of God. And often they know it for themselves. "I think what I really need is God," said one very troubled wife to me a few years ago. But she had begun with a long and moving story about her marriage. She indeed went on to ask how God can be found, and it may be that some of my readers will at once want to ask that question, I cannot attempt to deal with it here and now. The first great step towards finding Him is to realize that we need Him, and so to begin to seek Him. And for the rest I can only add that thousands upon thousands have proved in life the truth of what Jesus claimed when He announced "I am the Way." I have written this book largely because I have with reason and out of experience so great a faith in the possibilities of the love that is consummated in marriage that I would fain testify to others concerning it. But I would none the less like to warn any man or any woman lest he or she should imagine that by human love alone life's problem can be solved. Without God we fail in life, and the bitterest part of the failure for many is that even that beautiful and delicate thing marriage fails with the rest. "We are restless till we rest in Thee," and two restless hearts cannot be happy hearts even though they be joined together in the bonds of love.

# CHAPTER XII

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Let me begin this chapter with a query. Is not all the trouble in the modern world over the sexual element in life the evidence of something abnormal and distorted in the very constitution of modern society? Or put differently, would it not turn out that if only men and women were set in just and healthy conditions, given real education and sufficient means of self-expression, the sexual problem would be found very largely to have solved itself? I cannot offer any dogmatic answer to that query, though I have my own conviction that history will one day answer it with an unmistakable affirmative. What we can do even now is to notice that every maladjustment in our present social life tends to increase the amount of failure in true sex morality. All our callousness about social evils revenges itself upon us by confronting us with an increasingly menacing problem in this connection, and all honest service devoted to the increase of social health of any sort is also helping our moral progress.

And I wish to amplify this point because I hope some at least of the readers of this book will find themselves asking eagerly what can be done in view of the seriousness of sexual evil. If those who go wrong in sex matters are spoiling their lives at the core, which of us would not like to do something to guard the young from wandering, and to help to clean the modern world! Therefore it is a real satisfaction to be able to reply, as I do with complete conviction, "Anything you do to help to bring social justice and general health any nearer is also helping towards the solution of this one problem."

Let us consider some of the outstanding social evils from this point of view.

I turn first to the matter of *education* because it is the primary issue in every connection. Now education that stops at fourteen is hardly worthy to be called education at all. It is after that age that those interests awaken which provide absorbing life for boys and girls, and ensure them against the pains and dangers of empty-mindedness. It is also after that age that most young folks learn the ways and means of self-expression. Probably also, at least in the case of boys, the years between fourteen and sixteen are just the years when the discipline of school life is most valuable, and it is certain that during that period healthy games, played under the discipline of sternly enforced rules, do most to put boys into possession of themselves, and to provide a wise outlet for their abundant energies. Consider then what happens so long as we continue to send boys out of school at the age of fourteen. They go with minds unawakened and therefore empty. They face adolescence in almost complete freedom from control. They very often have far too little opportunity for invigorating games, and they do not know how to express themselves, though vital energies are vibrant within them. It is only natural that they should find orderly ways of life very dull, and that in pursuit of excitement they should take to hooliganism. Not having learnt to appreciate either literature or art, they either read nothing or read stories that are neither true nor decent. They respond only to what is highly spiced and have nothing in their minds to counter balance the meretricious attractions of suggestive stories and undesirable films. The truth about the people who are fond of "blue" stories is often (though not always) that those stories accurately indicate their intellectual level. And the uneducated modern boy is often at that level through no fault of his own. It actually is hard for men to whom the wonder and the splendor of life have been revealed to find room in their mental life for indecent trash. But till we really educate our boys we are sending them out into life unarmed against some of its worst features.

And if the general failure of education has this deplorable effect, what shall we say of the complete lack of any special education relating to sex in at least a majority of modern schools? I know that that is a very difficult matter. I know that disaster may follow from any attempt to do it in a general way through class teaching. I know too that it ought to be done by parents. But it is not done, and both boys and girls go out to face the dangers of life in town and country without the knowledge of physical facts which might guide them into safety. Actual immorality is indeed uncommon between the ages of fourteen and seventeen, but those years are often spent in a way that is the worst possible preparation for the struggle that is to come.

I have put my main stress on the fact that education stops at fourteen, because to my mind that is the outstanding defect of our system. But even the education we do give is ill fitted to attain its true end. It is not the fault of the teachers. Many of them do wonderful work, and long to be allowed to do better work. But with classes of from fifty to seventy the most heaven-born teacher in the world cannot achieve his purposes. It is certain that lovers of purity who really understand human nature cannot be among the panic-stricken economists who want to starve education.

Housing evils are mainly of two kinds. Houses are often dark, damp, and evil-smelling, which means ill-health. And houses are often too small, which means that human beings are packed so closely that privacy is impossible. Both results affect morality. A man below par in general health is far more susceptible to the lure of evil than a really healthy one. And the same is true of girls. There are to be found in some corners of our towns lewd and unwholesome-looking youths whose talk and whose actions are unclean and sordid. We perhaps shudder as we pass by and sense what is their moral condition, but if we knew the houses from which they come we might hardly wonder. Then plainly it is hostile to wholesome living when husband and wife cannot have a sleeping-place separate from the rest of the family, and when growing boys and girls share the same room, so that natural modesty is confronted with constant obstacles to its normal development. When I wrote some pages back about the disciplinary value of the daily cold bath, I could hardly forbear stopping at that point to comment on the fact that that primary condition for bodily and moral health is beyond the reach of millions. Our housing has not yet reached the bathroom standard for the majority of our people.

All these considerations are perfectly obvious and have often been urged before. But though I have known of many cases where moral evil has followed from bad housing conditions, I have known so many instances where in spite of bad housing conditions morality has been perfectly preserved, that I do not make so much of this point as some. I have yet to learn that morality is made safe by the most elaborate and healthy housing conditions. It is true that the level of morality is very low indeed in really overcrowded slums, but it also is true that the section of the population among which real purity is most common is the artisan section, and many of them have to contend with very poor housing conditions. The Royal Commission on Venereal Disease reported that while the class of casual laborers is the worst in the country, the next in the scale is the one described as "middle and upper classes". Traveling west in our cities does not mean traveling towards morality.

### *Sweating*

There are three main directions in which sweating tends to increase immorality. In the first place low wages paid to men make marriage very difficult, and sometimes impossible. And nothing could be worse for any community than that healthy and robust men should be debarred from marriage after twenty-one by purely material considerations. It is not impossible for a man to remain chaste through a lifetime of celibacy, but for all that a society that enforces celibacy on men against their will is making immorality a practical certainty.

A particularly mean form of this evil occurs in connection with the living-in system which is imposed by a good many big shops on their employees. I used to know a number of young men of marriageable age who were housed in a great and bare sort of barracks and given in addition a wage that was only enough to provide dress and necessary etceteras. If, desiring to marry, they said that they wished to live out and to receive the equivalent of their board and lodging in money, they got in those pre-war days £18 a year extra. Is it to be wondered at that in that section of society it was a common saying that "only fools get married"? But it was not a chaste section of the community. Men are very seldom chaste when they live in exclusively male communities.

Then, secondly, sweating makes for immorality because it means that girls are paid wages which are quite insufficient to support life. Some of them live at home with their parents and so get through, but those who have to support themselves become subjected to a terribly severe temptation to add to their starvation wages by the sale of themselves. It is still in this way that a considerable percentage of the prostitutes of the country is created, and the number of girls who, though not known as prostitutes, have sacrificed their purity because of financial pressure must be very great.

The word sweating also covers cases where workers are subjected to overwork, and unduly long hours; and therefore under this head I mention the influence of the strain of long shop hours. The improvement has been great of late in this respect, but still there are restaurants and special shops where the strain on girls is very heavy. And the result is that after work is over they are fit for nothing but walking about the streets in search of diversion. Many indeed who live in hostels have almost no choice between walking in the streets or going to bed. There is no need to say more. First girls are rendered nervously weary and yet eager for fresh air and movement, and then they have to face all that street life may mean. The recreations offered them in cinemas and music-halls are often calculated to give them just the wrong sort of excitement. And so first they are bored by monotony and long hours, and then played upon by rather low forms of suggestive art. It is here that girls' clubs and troops of girl guides meet the real needs of girls; and they probably constitute the finest influence of the right sort which modern life offers them.

### *Luxury*

One of the most serious evils in the modern world is that a great many men and women have far more money than is good for them, and that of these a considerable number are not under any necessity to work. Nothing in all the wide world is worse for a man than to have lots of money and nothing to do. It is among these men that the patrons of expensive vice are to be found. Of necessity such men are bored by ordinary life. For life without work in it is always boring. It follows that they must seek excitement, and a very short time suffices for them to get all the excitement possible out of innocent recreations. Wherefore in pursuit of something to stir them they take to the diversions that are not innocent, and often try to exploit their own passions to give color to life. Their expensive and luxurious ways of life constitute one of the worst moral forces in the community. They keep in existence to pander to their desires large numbers of subordinates whose lives are also worthless and without any productive value. It is because of them that the life of a courtesan seems to offer golden prizes to some, and the hope of reaping such prizes deludes many. Because this is a materialistic age their money gives them powers to which they have no moral right, and no more wholesome thing could happen to the whole community than that the necessary changes should be worked out which would make such noxious drones impossible in the future. It is for these people that sweated workers drudge and sweat. And then, under our curious and indefensible laws of inheritance, it is possible for wealth thus created to be passed on from generation to generation, creating for each in turn the worst possible conditions for true life. It is utterly unreasonable to hope that we shall ever as a nation attain to moral health until this evil has been dealt with. It seems to matter little whether such people are married or unmarried; in both conditions they make havoc of sexual life, and poison society.

### *Drink*

I have kept to the last the social evil which more than all the others put together tends to produce sexual immorality. As I have already said, it is a comparatively rare thing for a man to "go wrong" for the first time when he is entirely sober. It is Bacchus that conducts men into the courts of Venus. Mr. Flexner, who for scientific reasons made a comprehensive study of Prostitution in Europe, reports that in every country the whole traffic is "soaked in drink." There are inhibitions in our humanity which make sexual vice repulsive to our taste, and there are few who can get past these inhibitions until alcohol has deadened their better feelings. Man after man has told me that it was after some festive night when he had taken more wine than ever before that he first fell. Unmarried mothers have told me that what happened on the night that was fatal to them was that they were cajoled into taking champagne or whisky, and after that could not well remember what took place.

It is not too much to say that until we have grappled with the drink evil in our midst we cannot possibly hope to master this greater evil which follows on the heels of intemperance. This one consideration alone would make me an enthusiastic prohibitionist. We have tried life on the present terms and it has beaten us. We have allowed the common sale of a drug that is the proved enemy of our best life. It has damaged us physically, industrially, and financially. But its most deadly damage has been done in connection with our sexual life. It not only misleads the unmarried, but in many homes it is daily destroying all possibility of married happiness. No doubt the difficulties of temperance reform are very great. But the real cause of the delay of effective reform is want of will in the community as a whole. I cannot but think that if the deadly and intimate connection between drink and sexual vice were realized, the will to effective reform might appear among us.

When I consider all the forces which I have thus briefly reviewed, and remember that behind them there is the power of a central and universal human instinct, I no longer wonder that sexual follies abound in our country, and that we have not yet solved the problem of purity. What I do wonder at is that there are hundreds of thousands of young men and women who, in spite of all these facts, insist on living clean and pure lives. There is something in human nature that fights very hard for the true way of life. Boys and girls with bad hereditary influences to hamper them, and brought up in very unfavorable surroundings, do yet constantly refuse to succumb. Even those who have made mistakes constantly refuse to be beaten, and hold on tenaciously to the narrow way. Though the modern world has been deluged with novels written to display sexual irregularities in a romantic light, and to express contempt for Christian moral standards, and though no doubt thousands have been misled, it remains true that surprisingly large numbers refuse to be befooled in such ways. I believe the reason is that, strong as mere physical desire may be, love is a stronger thing still. And it is the power of love that keeps many right. In many men it is love for an ideal woman that does it. They keep themselves from evil because, though they may never have met her, they believe one day they will, and they want to bring her their best selves without any spot of defilement. In many girls love works in the same redemptive way. And perhaps in both what is really working is a mystic longing after the best that life can hold, and a half-conscious understanding that that best is only for those who preserve unity between body and spirit, and keep the body in bonds until the pure command of love itself summons it to freedom.

And yet it is infamous that the struggle should be so hard for so many. All of us who are ignorant or complacent or skeptical about the social evils of our time are sharers in the iniquity of those who fall. Many of us live in mean satisfaction, just because we ourselves have found comfort and security; that is how these evil forces are able to go on year after year leading thousands to their undoing. If the test of a real passion for purity lies in caring about the forces that make for impurity and caring to the point of suffering for those who fall, then I fear few of us have that passion in any really effective and holy form. And it will need passion to compete with the forces that lie behind evil social conditions. They are entrenched behind the power of money, and I know of only one passion that is stronger than money.

When will all who really love take up the challenge of this disordered modern world? We talk. We confer. We discuss social reform. But we do not love. And that is why Mammon is able to laugh at us, and go on dragging our boys and girls down into the mire.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FORGETTING THE THINGS WHICH ARE BEHIND

I have implied in this book that the very best in sexual experience is only for those who keep themselves unspotted in early life, and who come to the sacrament of marriage with no previous and lower experience of sex intimacy. I am even sure that the very best is spoilt a little by all previous unworthy thinking, and by all perverse practices.

I know that that will sound a hard saying to very many, for there are few who have fulfilled these conditions for knowing the best. It must seem to them that I am practically saying to them, "You can never now enter into the holy of holies." Yet I cannot alter what I have said, however acute may be my sympathy with those who have stumbled. I believe it is true, and no good ever came of hiding the truth. It is because it is true that I have such confident hope for mankind. Men and women do in their hearts want the very best, and when they come to know what are the only terms on which that very best can be had they will, I believe, accept those terms.

But this would be a cruel book, and a false book too, were I to imply that there is no way in which the past can be forgotten and forgiven, and no way into purity and joy even for those who have wandered. Were that so I could not write at all about this subject, for it would then be too tragic.

Perhaps the worst consequence of aberrations in thought and conduct is that they make it very very hard to be perfectly happy and unashamed when at last love calls them to enter into the inner chambers of marriage and romance. The shadows that rest at times on that part of marriage even for some very happy lovers are due to the fact that the man (or sometimes the woman) was once involved in something else before that was a little like it, and yet was haunted then by a sense of wrong-doing and so could not have a perfect experience. It is only to the pure that *all* things are pure.

But it is *not* true that the past need dog and spoil the future. It is not true that sin is irremediable, nor that its stains remain for ever. The essential and central thing in Christianity is the assertion that there is a remedy for the situation that sin creates.

I do not think there is any remedy to be found in simply trying to ignore the past—or in saying that our aberrations were only those of ninety per cent. of mankind, and were so natural as to be not worth bothering about. In such ways we may push the past out of sight, but we do not deal with it. It remains there though out of sight. For the fact is that such sayings do not quite convince us, and therefore they cannot kill the past.

Nor is there any remedy to be found merely in the forgiveness of man or of woman. Women are proverbially, and perhaps divinely, willing to forgive. But a woman's forgiveness does not necessarily make a man able to forgive himself. Nor does it always cleanse an unclean inner life. To many a man it has been just the fact that his fiancée or wife was so sublimely willing and able to forgive that has revealed to him his own unworthiness and made it sting the more.

No! there has got to be something much more drastic in our lives if we are to get free from shame and remorse. We have got to go down into that stony valley of humiliation where men and women face the naked facts before their God, and stop all attempt to hide or to deceive. We have got to stop the sophistries which are so dear to us, and through which we try to put the blame on others, or on circumstance, or on fate. We have got to face the fact that the evil things—whatever they were, either small or great—happened because we were weak—because we put pleasure before duty—because we gave in to lust, or evil suggestion, or a craven longing to please the flesh. Yes! They happened because we were weak, and that is a horrible thing to have to admit. Yet admitting it is the only way to regain contact with the truth. And what next? The next thing is that in that extremity we find God. It might seem that He would probably be the last one to be found through humiliation and the open admission of being impure. But in actual experience that is how He is found. That is His way—to meet the man who has discovered his own insufficiency—to intervene at the desperate minute—to reveal to incarnate weakness His eternal strength—to give a strange assurance that He Himself is about to enfold the man or woman in His power, and take charge of the future. And when that has happened a man knows what to do with his past. He can leave it with God, and then it loses at once all power to haunt him or put him to shame. It was unclean, but the cleansing fires of the divine love have taken it in charge, and its power is broken. That is something very different from trying to hide it or trample upon it. That is really killing it, and after that a man both may and can forget.

"If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." That is literally true even in this connection. Spiritually a man ceases to be the same person as the one who was once so weak and unclean. He has entered a new spiritual country.

Experience has proved all this over and over again. Men who in early youth were wild have by the grace of God become so essentially pure as to become capable of true and blessed experiences of love and all that love leads to with a fine woman. But it does need the grace of God. Those who attempt simply to forget and make light of their early follies do not escape from them.

And why should I not boldly say the same thing—exactly the same thing— about a woman? It is certainly true. No one seriously believes that the redeeming grace of God, which is sufficient for all other sins, fails before this one. No one who has understood Christ doubts that He can make a new woman, and a pure and noble woman, out of one who has stumbled. And yet curiously society has never learnt to forgive women. A man is allowed to forget the things which are behind. Generally a woman is compelled to remember them till the very end. I shall never forget being once at a meeting of men in New York where a very great American woman spoke to us all on this subject. She pointed out to us that society had never learnt to control the evils of this part of life because it had never learnt to adopt the method of Jesus, which was frank and full forgiveness. We have been afraid. We have thought it would be socially disastrous. But Jesus had no hesitation in His voice when He said to a penitent Magdalene, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more." Of course she sinned no more. There is in all the universe no constraining force like that combination of forgiveness and trust.

I am sure we cannot make our standard too high. I am sure we need to guard against all compromise in thought with its august demands. But I am equally sure we need to learn to forgive generously if we are ever to help those who have stumbled. Forgiving sinners does not mean condoning sin, else could there never be any divine forgiveness. What it does mean is loving the persons concerned. Till we learn to exercise that divine art, we do but shut the doors of hope against sinners and push them farther down.

Of course this means that for a pagan society there is no choice between a sternly cold and cruel morality on the one hand, and license on the other. For pagans cannot forgive. They alternate between a moral indifference in which there is no hope for anybody, and a cold and callous condemnation of sinners which is both hypocritical and cruel. We have all seen both policies in action and know how hopeless they both are. But in exact proportion as we learn to think and feel with Christ we shall learn to forgive, and so doing shall begin to have mastery over the evils in sex life that spring from ignorance, waywardness, want of discipline, and the misunderstanding of love. History is one long record of how by the force of law and by alternate severity and carelessness the human race has tried to find for itself the right path through this special country. But the record is largely one of failure. There is no way of success for a society that depends upon such forces. Here as in a dozen other connections the only way to life is that Christian way which the world has so largely repudiated. Mankind want to make a success of their life in this world—want to make the most possible of it—but they want it apart from the leadership of Christ, and so they miss it. He can show us the way of life if we will but listen, but no other can.

And His way is always and altogether the way of love—love that can tame the brute in us and make it a servant—love that can transform passion into a holy fire—love that makes men patient and women generous—that takes the common things of life and makes them sacred— and above all love that can



hate sin with fierce sincerity, and yet love and forgive sinners.

It is after this fashion that God loves us. We must so love one another if we are to make human life great.

There is another and a larger sense in which there is need that we should forget the things which are behind. We need as a race to escape from an evil past. Our greatest danger in this whole connection is the danger of moral skepticism. "Sex vice has always been common," men say with truth; and then with fatal unreason they add, "and always will be." That way lies sheer disaster. The whole situation calls for faith in man's future—faith in his capacity for purity—faith in love. And that faith is really but a part of any true faith in God.

In the past even Christian people have tried to evade the problem of sex. The truth about it has not been openly sought. Its challenge has not been bravely met. Its possibilities have not been realized. And therefore fears, sufferings, excesses, cruelties, and injustice to women have degraded our common life. The whole matter is central for our civilization. While we think and work for reconstruction we would do well to remember that there can be no happy and harmonious life for us till this whole problem has been solved—till we have learnt to enthrone pure love in our midst and by its passionate and cleansing power to subdue the brute and exercise our complete humanity to the glory of God. Love never faileth. It purifies passion and dominates the flesh. If we believe in God we needs must believe in the triumph of love; and that means a divine consummation at last to all our wanderings and struggles in connection with Sex.

## **APPENDIX**

### **A BRIEF SKETCH OF SOME OF THE PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTS**

**BY**

**A. CHARLES E. GRAY, M.D. (ED.)**

### **APPENDIX**

#### **SOME OF THE PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTS**

Of all the vital forces with which living things are endowed, the two most potent are the instinct for self-preservation and the instinct for race-preservation. This latter gives rise to the reproductive urge. So deep-seated is this instinctive force, that in many instances in the vegetable world, the threat of individual death results in a special effort of reproduction and the individual dies to live in the next generation. A force which is thus so insistent in the whole animal and vegetable world is naturally not absent in the human being, and it is well we should definitely recognize the fundamental power of this, in every normal man and woman. Not seldom the reproductive instinct is spoken of as a thing which can be put on one side and ignored. All experience and history prove that this is impossible, and that the attempt to do so ends in failure and disaster. But in civilized communities it is equally impossible to allow such a force to range unrestrained, hence the laws and customs of modern peoples. But mere assent to external authority can never achieve more than partial success. What is needed is whole-hearted agreement with an ideal which can only be attained by education of every individual in a real understanding of themselves and their responsibilities in sex matters. It is due to the fault of parents and teachers, rather than their own, that many men and women are to-day paying the penalty of having misused or abused this divinely implanted instinct.

#### *The Law of Bi-sexual Reproduction*

It is one of Nature's plans that in the genesis of a new individual two individuals should take a share. This holds good throughout the whole range of living things except the lower forms of plant and animal

life, such as fungi and animalcule. But, with one or two individual exceptions, as plants and animals evolve, the union of two elements, male and female, is needed to start the amazingly complex process of building a new individual. Thus in flowers the stamens, the pollen bearers, provide the male element which, through the intermediary of the pistils, fertilizes the egg in the vesicle. In the higher animals the egg or ovum is produced by the female, and is fertilized by the sperm-cell produced by the male. The necessary union between these two essential elements is attained in various ways. Thus the female salmon deposits her eggs on a convenient spot in the bed of a stream and the attendant male salmon then projects over them the spermatozoa. In the higher animals there is a further development, and special organs are evolved to ensure the conjunction of the two elements. I have not space to describe in detail the effect of this union of the two cells, generally spoken of as fertilization. It may be found fully recorded step by step in any biological manual. Very briefly, the sperm-cells, which are active, freely moving units, swarm round the egg-cell and one of them eventually enters it. The essential part of the cells, namely the nuclei, coalesce into one nucleus, and an active process of cell division and multiplication is at once started. The single cell divides into two daughter cells, then again into four, and so on. Very early in development, the cells, which at first appear similar, become differentiated into different types, but the whole ordered sequence of the development of an embryo is achieved by this cell division and multiplication. Each original cell contains a substance which, on account of its being easily colorable with artificial stains, is called chromatin, and this chromatin is believed to be the bearer of the hereditary qualities. The cell division is so arranged that each new cell receives an equal share of the male and female chromatin, and this process is continued in every case of cell division, so that eventually, in every part of our bodies, the dual inheritance remains complete.

But though both parents have thus an equal share in the cellular elements of the new life, it is the female whose reproductive organs provide for its nourishment and protection until birth takes place.

### *The Human Sex Organs*

In the female these consist of the womb or uterus, the ovaries, and a canal called the vagina which leads from the lower end of the uterus to an external opening, the vulva. The ovaries, two in number, are situated one on each side of the uterus. The uterus, which is pear-shaped, with the apex downwards, has three openings, one at the apex and one at each side at the upper part. These two upper openings are provided with a tubule extension, the Fallopian tubes, whose outer ends are fringed and lie in close relation to the ovaries. The ova or egg-cells are developed in the ovaries, and through a complex and elaborate process a single cell comes to maturity from time to time. It is then discharged into the open end of the Fallopian tube, reaches thereby the uterus, and if not fertilized is discharged through the lower opening of the uterus into the vagina. It is not known exactly when this discharge of ova takes place, but it is believed to coincide more or less with the monthly period. If, however, fertilization of the ovum takes place, it is not discharged, but remains in the uterus. The lining membrane of the uterus grows round and envelops it, and the wonderful process of cell division and multiplication proceeds which results in the growth and development of a child.

These various organs are situated in the lower part of the abdomen, within the protection of the bony pelvis or basin. This pelvis is, compared with the male pelvis, broad and shallow, to provide for the passage of the fully developed child at birth. The vagina is the passage by which, during the birth process, the child reaches the outer world, and it is also the sex organ by which, in the female, the union of the male and female elements, of which we have spoken, takes place in the sex act.

The male sex organs consist of the testicles, in which the sperm-cells or spermatozoa are evolved, of a coiled duct leading there from, and of the distinctive male sex organ, the penis. This last serves the double purpose of providing an exit for the contents of the bladder and for that emission of the spermatozoa which occurs in the sex act. There are also certain glands situated in close relation to this duct which provide a fluid which is emitted at the same time as the spermatozoa, the whole being termed the seminal fluid. It is thus clear that in both sexes there are essential reproductive organs, the ovaries in the one case, the testicles in the other, providing respectively ova and sperm-cells, and there are also organs for the purpose of securing the union of these two elements, namely the vagina in the female and the penis in the male. These two sets of organs form the primary sex characteristics or actual sex organs.

### *The Sex Act*

The special process which secures this union of the male and female elements is termed copulation or coitus. It takes place in all warm-blooded animals, as well as many others, but in man, with his highly developed mental and psychical qualities, it is a truly complex experience in which body, mind and soul all take their part.

Physically its central fact is the ejaculation of the seminal fluid by the male and its reception by the female, and this culmination with its psychical concomitants is spoken of as the orgasm. Before coitus is feasible, the organs designed for the purpose have to be brought into an appropriate state for its consummation. The penis and the vulva are alike furnished with erectile tissue. The penis has to be erected in order to penetrate into the vagina, while the female organs add their share in facilitating the act both by the erection of the tissue round the vulva and by the outpouring of a lubricating secretion which bathes all the parts. The mechanism of this is a nervous one, and its originating cause while partly physical is chiefly mental, due to the emotions aroused by love and courtship, and thus in every act of coitus properly realized, an essential preliminary is an abbreviated courtship. This initial stage has been described as the stage of tumescence, and is succeeded by the introduction of the male organ into the vagina. A motor nerve discharge follows which produces ejaculation of the seminal fluid and is for the male the climax of the orgasm. The female is, however, by no means passive; motor nerve discharges take place leading to rhythmic contraction of the vagina, and she experiences, or should experience, a similar orgasm to the male. The climax is followed in both by a feeling of satisfaction and repose which generally issues in refreshing sleep. It is to be noted, however, that in the female the whole process is apt to be slower than in the male. Her orgasm frequently coincides with the male, but often it comes later. If this is not realized by her partner, and inconsiderate haste be practiced, then, in place of satisfaction, a state of nervous tension may remain, which is not only psychically deleterious, but, if repeated, may lead to actual illness.

I have spoken of the sex act as it should be, a fine and lofty emotional experience of two people between whom is the bond of love. It is true that in the female an entirely passive part is physiologically possible, and it is also true that in the male, who is biologically the hunting and pursuing animal, spontaneous desires arise from time to time which are too often accorded a bodily and disharmonious satisfaction. Disharmonious because it cannot be too strongly insisted upon that the completely satisfactory realization of the sex act involves the participation of every side of human nature, spiritual and physical, and is the outcome of an intense desire for perfect unity with the beloved. Hence mere bodily satisfaction of sensuous desire must have a disharmonious and deteriorating effect, because it ignores a basal fact of man, namely spirit, and leaves that side of him starved and unsatisfied. And the same is true of all sexual aberrations and perversions. Though they may seem at the moment to be unimportant, the fact remains that they are sins against both the spirit and the flesh, and are followed inexorably by their own punishment.

It is argued by some that the sexual act should be restricted to occasions, when there is a definite intention of begetting children. This does not seem either reasonable or desirable. Nature's plans were certainly, in the case of human beings, not constructed on that basis. It would introduce an element of calculation and deliberation into what is naturally a finely spontaneous thing, and it would put a quite unnecessary, and in some cases, at least, a harmful, strain upon two people. As Havelock Ellis has put it: "Even if sexual relationships had no connection with procreation whatever, they would still be justifiable, and are, indeed, an indispensable aid to the best moral development of the individual; for it is only in so intimate a relationship as that of sex that the finest graces and aptitudes of life have full scope." This does not imply that married life does not call for the exercise of self-restraint and continence, in this as in other respects.

Those who regard marital relations as an opportunity for unbridled sexual indulgence are not likely to win success in an adventure of considerable difficulty in which all that is fine in man or woman will find full scope for development. But it does mean that sexual intimacy has a value in itself as an expression in the terms of the body of the love which unites husband and wife, and that, when duly controlled, it leads to health and general harmony.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MEN, WOMEN, AND GOD \*\*\*

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