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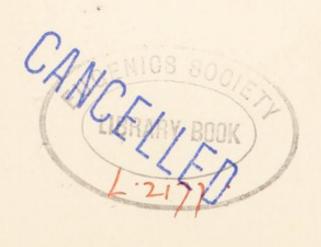
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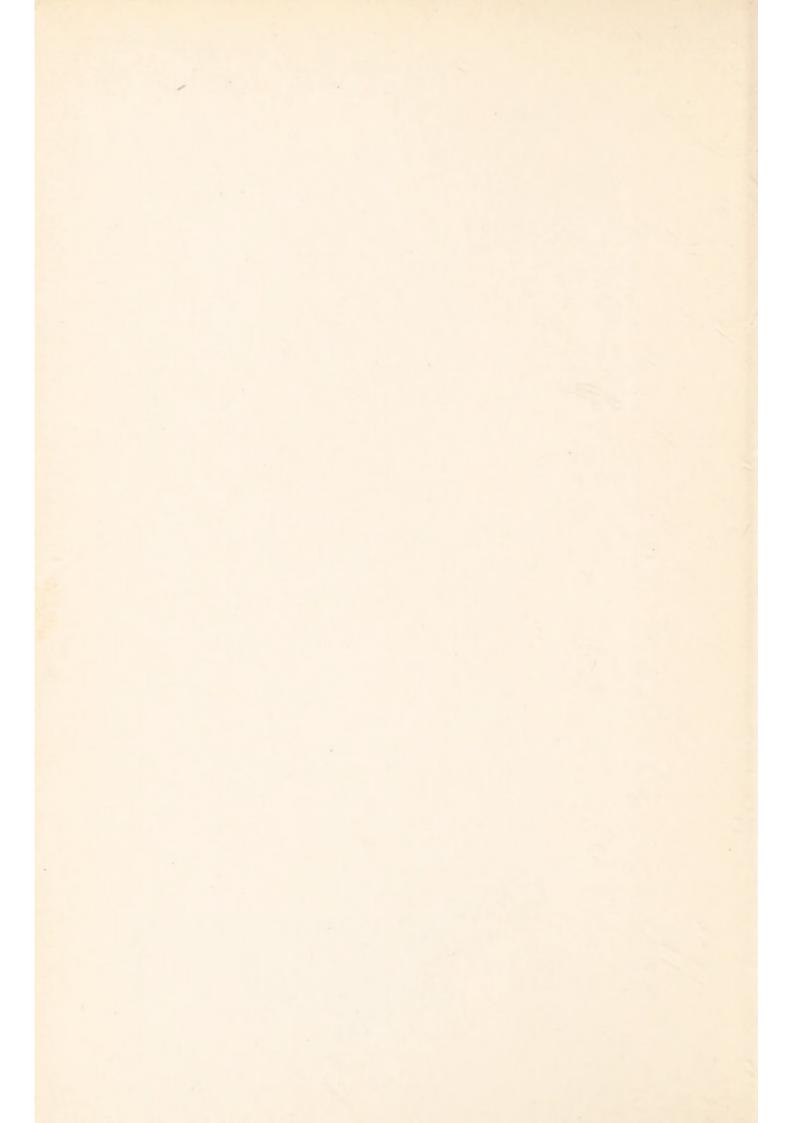
THE MARRIAGE CRISIS

Ernest R. Groves



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THE MARRIAGE CRISIS

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THE MARRIAGE CRISIS

BY

ERNEST R. GROVES

Author of

Personality and Social Adjustment The Drifting Home

> Co-Author of Wholesome Marriage

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GROVES
THE MARRIAGE CRISIS

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To

HOWARD W. ODUM

COURAGEOUS AND WISE AS A LEADER IN

SOCIAL WELFARE

AND A LIBERAL INVESTOR IN

FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

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PREFACE

The APPINESS is an illusive word, but although there is no general understanding as to its meaning, most people will agree that it is something that many want and few have. Failure to achieve happiness in marriage is frequent enough to attract especial attention. The extreme collapse of matrimonial experience as recorded in the divorce statistics is compelling evidence of the quantity of unhappiness now found among the married.

The predicament of the contemporary family seems at last to have gotten under the skin of the American public. As is usual in a social crisis, the facts are differently interpreted and two extreme solutions are recommended. One party pins its hope on a return to earlier conditions in the belief that what used to be represents the ideal. To force this going back they advocate stringent divorce laws and, from

every quarter, more coercion as an antidote to the dangerous freedom of the present.

The other party runs the other way with demands that divorce be made as free as possible, that domestic infelicity end at any time by the mutual consent of the two persons concerned. The members of this party insist that marriage become an individual affair, at least when there are no children to complicate the situation.

There are many people who, like myself, refuse, in spite of frenzied appeals, to join either group. To retrace our steps in matrimonial changes is as hopeless as to attempt a retreat to the tallow candle and ox team. On the other hand, no society has ever been able to reduce so socially consequential an experience as marriage and the family to pure individualism. Irresponsible freedom is impossible, because the values tied up with matrimony force the group to concern itself with a relationship inherently significant to society.

Contraception, in its present efficiency and popularity, adds, in the opinion of some, a new element that permits marriage, under the companionate conditions, to be a personal affair of no direct significance to the state. This attitude in its immediate and practical expression has concentrated upon the scheme of divorce by mutual consent as the method of reform.

Any automatic method of obtaining legal divorce is, all will grant, a decided change in our social habits, and one that we cannot be asked to adopt without much thought and coolheaded searching of facts.

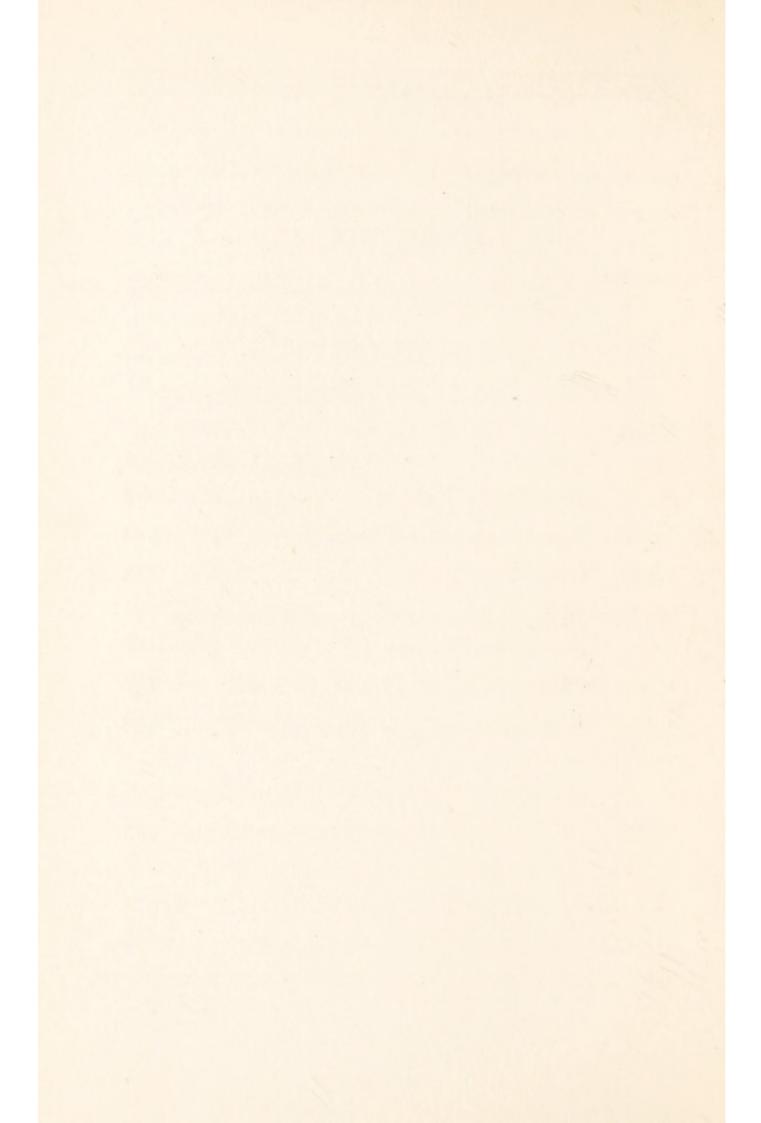
Will divorce by mutual consent, by solving our marriage problems, add to our happiness as a people and make our life together saner and more wholesome? With this question this book is concerned. It does not develop a merely negative position, but offers suggestions for helping the married, that, although devoid of any quick and magical solution for our matrimonial ills, are at least practical methods of increasing matrimonial success. If human experience yields any meaning whatever, it surely reveals that happiness along any line

is an achievement for which there can be no infallible social formula. The most that can ever be done is to establish the conditions that assist the individual in working out a satisfying destiny. This is as true of marriage as of other forms of human experience. What marriage and the home need is not substitutes, but a social situation that gives them a better chance to function.

ERNEST R. GROVES

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THE MARRIAGE C R I S I S

CHAPTER I

A TIME OF CRISIS

Strongly felt among young people than the wish to be happily married. It may perhaps be too much to say that all young men and women hope to achieve marriage happiness, but so few are without this yearning that one can safely say that normal youth usually looks forward to being some day happily married.

The seeming exception to this statement is the girl whose life program is so full she can find no place in it for marriage. If pressed she might say, "Yes, I intend to marry sometime, but not for a long time to come. I must first make a name for myself in my chosen line



of work. Then I want to travel and do all the things I won't have time for once I get married." Or, if a little less honest in her thinking, she might fool herself into asserting that she would never marry, she had so much else to do. Whichever position she takes, she is likely to make a sudden flop when "the" man appears, drop her graduate study or professional work like a hot coal, and dash into marriage with a breathless speed that measures the depth of her hidden longing for wedded bliss. She then realizes that from girlhood up she has both wanted to marry and dreaded the limitations she thinks of as belonging to marriage. Perhaps the idea of effecting a workable compromise between her craving for married life and her personal ambitions seems to her impractical, and she cuts the knot that faces her by denying its existence and proclaiming her freedom from the desire for domestic ties. Ignoring the strength of the urge that drives her toward marriage in no way lessens its power, as she discovers when inoculated with a romantic attachment for a possible mate, or when confronted with the inescapable fact that her marriageable days have gone by in fruitless pageant.

It has long been customary for many young women to conceal from others the strength of their desire to be happily married, partly as a precaution in case they never achieve marriage, and partly in the hope of gaining a heightened prestige by winning a desirable mate without seeming to exert themselves. This reticence to confess their feeling has misled no one, since it has been taken for granted that, however reluctant the individual may have been to express her matrimonial ambition, she like others has expected to find a desirable mate. In the past even the most licentious who have flaunted the conventions of society have expected finally to settle down and in a monogamous union win an abiding happiness in contrast with the fleeting pleasure of the days given to the sowing of wild oats. Literature has long expressed this common urge of youth, and the love story cul-





minating in marriage has had a universal appeal that youth has felt, beginning with the coming of adolescence.

There can be no question but that the matrimonial goal that has attracted youth has been what we still designate as conventional marriage. This marriage ideal is too thoroughly intertwined with social experience to be easily or lightly thrown aside. About it in the past has gathered romance that has deeply influenced the conduct of youth.

Responding to pictures and stories that put a halo around wifehood and motherhood, young girls picture themselves in the rôle of motherwife and daydream about this forthcoming experience until it seems already a part of their life. The presence of a little child then calls forth a rehearsal of the cooing sounds and caressing gestures supposed to be appropriate to the motherly character. In more subtle ways girls react to the situations into which they are thrown, according to the dictates of the ideal they hold of themselves as potential wives and

mothers. This is one of the few checks that have ever been effective in restraining young people from rash conduct.

The boy of 'teen age, in like manner, pictures himself as the head of a household and acts accordingly, putting on dignity and high manners overnight and treating the girl who dazzles him as if she were indeed the one woman in the world, as Booth Tarkington so realistically sets forth in "Seventeen." In more practical vein, the young boy thinks of himself as the mainstay and protector of his future wife, and plans to achieve great things in the world of business, that he may be equal to his distant family responsibilities.

For many no ideal has had such a command of behavior as this looking forward to a successful marriage. It is true that society has never used to the utmost the enormous impetus offered by this youthful expectation. But in spite of that no thought of future experience has rivalled in its impression upon character this normal expectation of young people that



somewhere there is for them the proper mate for a life union that will provide happiness.

Of course youth have not been so obtuse to the facts of life as not to recognize that many there are who do not achieve happiness through marriage. This, however, they have interpreted as a tragic failure, always to be considered abnormal.

This confidence of youth in matrimony as the goal of happiness has been, it must be confessed, roughly shaken of late, and there is abroad a considerable amount of pessimism with reference to the desirability of marriage. Much of this is not to be taken too seriously, since it is only a surface reflection of the skeptical trend naturally prevalent in a restless civilization such as ours. Accustomed to rapid change in manners, speech, and clothes fashions, young people think it smart to be always ready to exchange anything old for that which is labeled NEW. Since marriage as an institution is unmistakably ancient, it naturally invites their critical inspection and tempts them

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to experiment, conversationally at least, with up-to-date alterations in its form. Since it is easier to tear apart than to remodel, most of the criticism is bare condemnation that does not lead to suggestion for new ways of doing. The scathing comments of one person are glibly repeated by another, as an effortless way of making an impression.

To a considerable extent this expression of doubt regarding marriage is merely a current method of covering up the depth of feeling that most young men and women have regarding their hope of a successful marriage. In an age when sentiment dates one as belonging to the past, and must therefore never be publicly exposed, a hardboiled veneer is spread over any fundamental emotion whose intensity might prove embarrassing. Some, especially young women, assume this attitude in order to attract attention with the desire, which they may not fully make conscious to themselves, of having a more favorable opportunity to choose a mate. Since to be modern adds a flavor of distinction,



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they naturally seize upon any of the earmarks of sophistication as a means by which they can have greater opportunity to draw the attention that is necessary if they are to have hope of winning the interest of some young man who may become a possible candidate for matrimony.

Decrying marriage as it exists today gives the young couple a chance to discuss the intimate relations of marriage without their talk having a personal twist. Feeling that they share an attitude held, perhaps, by few of their friends gives them a sense of closeness that speeds up their friendship and makes of it something out of the ordinary. Thinking themselves different from the rest of the world, they slide into the way of imagining that for two such unusual persons to join forces will in itself constitute a new type of marriage.

Ever since man has had time to ponder his experiences there have been critics of marriage. It is not surprising that in our own time there should be considerable matrimonial

skepticism. Differing as they do in many ways, most of those who attack the institution of matrimony hold one thought in common. They tell us that the time has at last arrived in the ongoing of human experience when marriage, in the form to which we have become accustomed, is no longer desirable, since it has outlived its usefulness as a means of giving men and women the best way of achieving happiness. Their feeling was well-expressed by one who declared in conversation recently that, "Marriage is cracked, and we must put something else in its place."

It is evident to one familiar with the history of human experience that institutions do change and at times become ill-adapted to the prevailing conditions. It is only fair, however, before one subscribes to any substitution offered for the idea of a permanent and monogamous marriage, that the proposed change be scrutinized without emotion from every point of view, in the effort to discover whether it is likely to heighten or lessen our chances of get-



ting from life the largest and most satisfying amount of human happiness.

Social experience never runs so smoothly but that problems arise that are vexing and destructive of happiness. Whenever we try to get to the bottom of these problems we find ourselves concerned with people who are inadequately prepared for the demands of life and therefore unable at some point to adjust to their circumstances. Their failure may be in business, in parenthood, or in any of their other relationships. This lack of success is a hazard of living, and, although some social situations are more favorable than others, society by no scheme can rid itself of its problems, unless the time comes when human nature is different from what it has always been in the past.

It is not surprising to find that marriage is one of the points where the failure of individuals shows clearly, since it is the relationship that not only furnishes the supreme form of human satisfaction, but is also one that necessarily rigorously tests the personality of the individual. The existence of a quantity of maladjustment in any human relationship is properly a challenge to thought. If better ways can be devised, no one would dare obstruct social change. There is always need, however, of facing the fact that new conditions may lead to even more trouble, and that the changes proposed have not from the start any reasonable chance of being successful.

When a new type of marriage is advocated, there is the greatest obligation to consider with care the losses that must be expected as well as the gains promised by the advocates of the new proposal. At no place in the entire range of human experience would we expect more serious consequences to follow new departures than in marriage. Not only are we concerned with the marriage ideals, which we have already seen provide the most compelling motives in the lives of our youth, but also the relationship of male and female and the institution of the family in all its varied and practical interests

are involved. No one who has an adequate idea of the values represented in marriage would lightly enter upon change with the zest-ful confidence of children starting on a holiday excursion.

Marriage is the product of an unimaginable amount of human experiment, and represents an effort to consolidate and conserve various interests. However much individuals may choose to have marriage merely a personal undertaking of importance only to themselves, the record of human behavior gives unimpeachable testimony that marriage contains certain social elements that must in any scheme receive some recognition. The history of marriage also shows that, although it has made subtle and advantageous inner adjustments in its general form, it has persisted and, during historic times at least, has maintained as its standard the monogamous union.

It is not a sufficient argument for a new form of marriage to point out individual failures in matrimony. These experiences of failure are always to be found in human undertakings. They may be reasons for the examination of an institution, but they are not in themselves arguments for any specific solution. They cannot be made to enforce any new scheme until it be demonstrated that the existing failures are due to conditions which the new program will remove, and that as a consequence of the change no greater difficulties of adjustment are likely to come about. This is something that those dissatisfied with the prevailing form of marriage do not appear to realize. They forget that matrimony is as likely to register human failures as it is to produce personal unhappiness that is due to a defect in the form of the relationship for which the institution can itself be blamed.

Personalities so lop-sided as to be unable to function with satisfaction to themselves or anyone with whom they have dealings are scarcely likely to be transformed by the magic of marriage into balanced characters, ready for the give-and-take of everyday life at close quar-





ters. The marriage disasters represented by this group of inefficient persons should not be confused with the unhappy marriages of ordinarily capable individuals who meet successfully the testing of business and other social contacts. Even in the group of married people who hold their own in most of their associations outside the domestic circle, it is often true that with this goes inability to get on well with anybody for whom there is strong affection, because of early habits of overdependence or excessive self-sacrifice.

There is perhaps no place where familiarity with failure is more likely to pervert clearness of vision in judging that which is normal than in the sphere of marriage maladjustment. It would be as unreasonable and dangerous to build a hygienic program upon the needs of those that are ill as it is to devise a marriage scheme by constant attention to those who under the present form of marriage are not happy. To be reasonable we must discover why the individual is unhappy, whether he gives

promise of being more happy under a different scheme, and how many now happy would be less so if the proposed change were made.

It is especially unconvincing to have those who are themselves failing in matrimony advocate some plan that with its adoption would bring unalloyed bliss. We naturally distrust such advocates, not only because we realize that their proposal is often really a rationalizing process by which they prevent themselves from facing the consequences of their own inadequacy, but also because marriage concerns too many to be modified to meet the special demands of some individual who has had his happiness slip from him. In other words, anyone who selects marriage failures and largely disregards successes shows himself by his point of view unfit to direct people toward a wholesome type of marriage.

Even if the new plan promises to eliminate many of the existing failures revealed in marriage experience, a further question must be asked before the project is acceptable. What will be its effect upon those who are happily married and desire no change? Of course there are people so blinded by their knowledge of matrimonial failure that they assume that such success is so rare that it need not be taken into account in thinking of the form of marriage. This attitude merely reveals the critic's unfitness to deal justly with an institution of such profound influence on human welfare. It is always necessary in any social reconstruction to be sure that our effort to solve problems does not invite the coming of more vexing difficulties.

There are two types of questions that come immediately to anyone who is thinking seriously of proposing changes in the conventional marriage of our time. One of these is: What effect will the new type of relationship have upon the attractiveness of marriage in comparison with that which its orthodox form has had? The other set of question has to do with the prospects offered for happiness, once the undertaking becomes acceptable to the individ-

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ual male and female. These are matters that concern us later, since they must be treated in detail.

But it is well at the beginning to face the tests that must be placed upon any proposal which is designed to supplant the marriage to which we have become accustomed. Moreover, when we enter upon this discussion we need to keep in mind the average normal individual who needs only a fair opportunity to achieve happiness, rather than difficult and impossible persons who are so thoroughly out of adjustment that their effort to meet the obligations of any undertaking would produce excessive tension.

It is obvious that no one can arrive at a correct understanding of matrimonial difficulties if he considers them detached and makes no effort to understand the social situation that influences those who in matrimony meet with disaster. The most superficial investigation of marriage tragedies from this point of view reveals social conditions that are the primary



causes of discord and need changing if any sort of relationship of man and woman is to have a fair chance of success.

It is rather surprising that among these social conditions affecting marriage we should find a relative neglect on the part of education in regard to building up in the individual a preparation for what is surely one of the supreme undertakings of life. It is even more puzzling that our churches, concerned as they necessarily are with the tragic expression of human failure in matrimony, should take so slight an interest in providing instruction for marriage and for parenthood as an effective means of advancing the standards of matrimony and helping parents to cope with the problems set them by their children. It is only fair to add that in recent years the folly of this neglect is beginning to dawn upon those responsible for our moral and educational leadership. The policy of education and of the church in not attempting to provide specific instruction for the matrimonial

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career is but one illustration of a prevailing social condition that hampers marriage.

No scheme can be devised that will not suffer if unprepared and ill-informed men and women enter upon a special relationship of peculiar intimacy. Whether it be conventional marriage or some substitute more to the liking of our matrimonial skeptics, society will find a considerable percentage of failure if our educational institutions persist in giving little attention to the preparation for a relationship which in any form must make peculiar demands upon the individual which he cannot meet with success if his training has failed to give him the qualities required. It is only fair to give marriage a reasonable opportunity to function before we condemn it and attempt to find for it some substitute.

There was a time when the boy and girl living in a simple society received in the ordinary process of growing up in the home the preparation for home-making and house-keeping that enabled them to start their family life with reasonable chances of success. They gathered their preparation while assisting their parents in carrying the responsibilities of the family in which they were born. At that time their preparation for the earning of their living also was acquired as a matter of course. Now we give to the child a formal education, because the demands that are put upon him by modern civilization cannot be met with any hope of success if we depend upon incidental preparation. The situation is not different with reference to family experience. It also requires specific preparation, since the average American home does not in its ordinary routine give either the boy or the girl the necessary basis for the establishment of a family.

Our educational leaders have been slow to see this, and, as a consequence, although much thought has been given to the problem of developing the general intelligence of children, and more recently to the preparation for vocation, next to nothing has been done to help equip our youth for matrimony and family life. 35

gram of education.

This laissez-faire policy with reference to matrimony has put it at a disadvantage, and made the institution of marriage assume the blame for failures of matrimonial adjustment that ought rightly to be charged to a faulty pro-

It is evident that marriage is facing a crisis. On every hand it is receiving criticism from those who are convinced that it is not ministering as it should to human happiness. Its finality is no longer assumed by all people. Once it was the second inevitable step which man normally followed in the progress of his life's career. Birth, marriage, parenthood, and death formed the four great experiences of our earthly life. Now, according to the thought of some, both marriage and parenthood are not acceptable events in the development of a human life. For parenthood they do not as yet have any workable substitute, but they do have for marriage, and they are vociferous in their demand that marriage be discarded in favor of their new scheme. Before we pass

to the examination of their proposal, it is best to start with an understanding of what is behind the crisis through which marriage is seen to be passing.

First of all we need to understand just what is meant by a social crisis. So long as habit continues to operate without excessive difficulty, men and women go on living as did their fathers. When, however, a new situation arises so that habit no longer works smoothly, people have to cease their automatic behavior and give some attention to the causes of their difficulties. As a result they scrutinize their condition, critically examine their traditions and customs, and here and there experiments are undertaken in the effort to meet with greater success the new situation. Thus habit breaks down and has to be replaced by thought and conscious questioning of practices that once went on automatically. While society is passing through this period of new adjustment, we say that it is experiencing a crisis. Although it is impossible to measure the degree



of disturbance which marriage at present is undergoing, it is perhaps not too much to assert that it is in the throes of a crisis. This does not of course necessarily mean that marriage is in the process of being thrown aside, for it may denote instead that our social habits that influence marriage are a part of the human experience that is in the midst of change.

This ambiguity as to the cause of the crisis has led to two different interpretations. One group of observers have the common belief that marriage is in the process of dissolution. This group is divided as to what is bound to take the place of marriage. On the other hand, we find interpreters who insist that the meaning of the crisis is not that marriage is to pass, but that society is awakening to the necessity of conserving an association from which issue priceless human values. The change is not destined to be in marriage, but in the traditions and practices that have to do with preparation for marriage. They read the signs of the times as indicating that marriage is at last to have

an adequate basis for its task, since public policy has started upon the program of giving youth information that will help them in assuming an undertaking which is in its social consequences second to nothing man or woman attempts.

So much is at stake in the present controversy regarding marriage that there is great need of understanding what has brought us to the present crisis. It would be foolhardy to accept any remedy without first getting a clear understanding of the social situation which is showing its influences in this agitation with reference to marriage.

Later chapters of this book undertake to unravel the causes that have operated to bring us where we are. The analysis of the proposal to make marriage an experimental adventure is undertaken not from a love of dispute, but with a sincere belief that the implications of the policy advocated need to be brought to the light, since the new program has been presented with an emotional appeal that has won



the attention of many well-meaning people who have been over-impressed by present failures in matrimony and who have not asked themselves what are likely to be the consequences if the substitute for orthodox marriage is widely practised.

Such a discussion requires a clear statement of the issues involved in the two opposite policies with reference to marriage reconstruction. Since the term companionate has been widely used by advocates of the new type of marriage, its significance must be expressed without ambiguity, for society in a crisis faces trouble enough without adding misunderstanding of the varying solutions offered for its difficulty. It is fair also to ask that no discussion of this sort be left stranded in negation. There must be a positive program which assumes the task of helping men and women to meet with success the test put upon them in their search for a way of happiness out of the present marriage predicament.

It is just to the reader that he should know [25]



at the start that this book is written with confidence in the social value of the marriage which we rightly call the present standard. There can be no doubt that many are unhappily married. This fact is forced upon our attention from every quarter. What we also need to realize in any serious discussion of marriage reform is that there are also a multitude of men and women happily married, who maintain within the present institution a wholesome and satisfying relationship. After all, nothing deserves to be more impressive than health. This is as true in matrimonial experience as it is with reference to the physical body. Wholesome marriage has long been one of the most beautiful achievements in the life of men and women. If this fact is forgotten or ignored, we are ill-prepared to undertake any reformation of the institution of marriage.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSE OF THE MARRIAGE CRISIS

THAT is the cause of the disturbance that has become so evident in regard to marriage? The student of the family tells us that marriage is in the process of adjustment to the present manner of living of men and women. What he means is that marriage is changing because people are thinking and acting in new ways. When we discuss social life we mean the everyday activities and attitudes characteristic of people whose practices are in accord with the general habits of the time. It is obvious that if people marry at all they must bring to their matrimonial experience the habits of life to which they have become accustomed. If the practices of people in the ordinary walks of life change rapidly, this is

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reflected within marriage. If, on the other hand, society be relatively static or unprogressive, its stagnation and lack of variation permit matrimony to persist without any marked changes.

Whenever we speak of marriage as being in transition in an effort to adjust to new conditions, we mean that people who have changed in other forms of social experience are also changing in their matrimonial association. Sometimes it seems as if marriage, when it is spoken of as being in the process of change, is conceived of as something abstract that exists independently of the people who are married. It helps to clarify the problem if it be remembered that marriage merely means a special relationship of a man and woman, and that it changes only as they do in this peculiar association. Naturally if their manner of living has greatly changed from that characteristic of the preceding generation, in their life together as married people differences are also found.

When, therefore, the specialist who studies [28]

the family declares that marriage is going through a rapid adjustment, he merely means that the character of people has so greatly changed that its expression in the marriage relation is necessarily taking a new form. Such a statement does not in the least denote that marriage is being shattered, or that the family is in the process of disappearing. Because people who are married live in houses unlike those of their fathers, eat food that was to a large extent unknown to a former generation, dress differently and entertain themselves in recreations that formerly did not exist at all, or at least have greatly changed, it is inevitable that the form of their experience together as members of a matrimonal alliance should be characteristic of their time rather than of bygone days.

If, however, the statement is made that a new relationship is being developed to take the place of marriage, something quite different is meant than that marriage is in transition. Then marriage is being supplanted, rather than



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changed. When anyone asserts that he has discovered a better form of association for the yielding of the satisfactions and social values that have led to the institution of marriage, if what he advocates involves the giving up of any of the essential characteristics of marriage as we know it, he advocates not the adjustment of marriage, but its abandonment in favor of the substitute which he offers. It is not difficult to bring together the essential characteristics of present-day marriage. It represents the union of one man and one woman for life, publicly announced, and any attempt to change one of these three elements is an effort to construct a new type of relationship, different from that to which we have become accustomed.

Human nature has gone through a long period of experimentation with reference to the number of persons included in the matrimonial alliance. There have been group relationships, the marriage of one male and several females, and the opposite relationship of several males to one female. Although there is not complete agreement among scholars in regard to the standard form of marriage having been monogamy from the start, it is universally recognized that the conventional marriage of our time of one man and one woman has been the prevailing form nearly always everywhere. It is rare, indeed, that anyone seriously argues for a polygamous type of family, because the monogamous relationship is the only one that seems at all in accord with the habits or desires of most modern men and women.

The demand for a public avowal of the matrimonial association is likewise universally thought of as desirable. Even in simple tribes in savage society it was felt that there should be a public announcement of a marriage union. It is true that we have had in modern life what is known as common-law marriage, but this has resulted from the effort to protect the illegitimate child and the property rights of the wife, rather than because it has been thought of as the proper type of marriage. Public opinion

has been so hostile to common-law marriage that it has merely tolerated it as a necessary evil, less detrimental on the whole than the exploitation of women and the insecurity of children that would follow its prohibition. It has never seemed the proper type of marriage.

When we ask, "What is it that is changing matrimonial experience?" we soon discover the necessity of finding the characteristic influences that are operating in modern social life. One of the most important and impressive of these is an attitude of mind and a code of behavior which may be justly described as a pleasure philosophy of life. This is on the surface of everyday life and has become so familiar that we all have first-hand knowledge of it, and take it more or less as a matter of course. Widespread as it is at the present time, it is nevertheless a relatively new type of social habit, at least in the United States. This of course cannot mean that there ever has been a time when pleasure has not been eagerly sought by most

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men and women. It is rather that now a pleasure code provides ideals which are admired as well as followed.

In the past the virtues that have been most impressive have been bought by pain-experiences, and have been interpreted in terms of obligation and self-sacrifice. The ascetic trend of life has even gone so far as to make it seem to many that pleasure was inherently dangerous, even if not by nature wicked. This doctrine of self-denial is increasingly out of accord with the prevailing habit of thinking of our time, when the goals of life are conceived of as pleasure-giving and desirable because of the promised yield they offer in the joys of living.

It does not take much searching to discover the source of this remarkable change which has put aside asceticism and crowned with dominance the pleasurable interpretation of human life. Man makes his ideals under the pressure of stern necessity. When life is for many a hard struggle and survival difficult, society must put every ounce of its strength into magnifying the solemn duties of endurance, selfdiscipline, and self-denial. But when luxury flourishes, the opposite kind of ideals come to the front. The difference is that in the past it has been always a minority of people who have had the opportunity to develop the lighter, more cheerful outlook upon life. As a result of science and the increasing democracy of opportunity, the chance for a popular emergence of a pleasure-philosophy has come about. Human desire has always struggled against the more exacting code of conduct. It has always had the strong desire to feed itself stealthily from the tree of pleasure. And so the modern magician, science, just as soon as he revealed his ability to multiply luxury, has been put to work that life might be easier and more flooded with pleasurable experiences.

This change has not come about without a good deal of violence, as man has tried to adjust himself to a new allegiance. Tradition

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and preachment have lingered close to the earlier philosophy of stoicism and self-sacrifice. As a result the temptation to widen the distance between moral theorizing and everyday practices has been greater in our generation than ever before. Oftentimes morals have been interpreted in such a way as to make them seem inherently antagonistic to the rapidmoving current of pleasurable experience. In spite of heroic effort on the part of many to keep man captivated by the sterner virtues, the pleasurable philosophy has had its way and increasingly has dominated all classes.

There is perhaps no place where the new attitude has brought greater strain upon human nature than within family life. In the past family obligations have been a heavy portion of moral responsibility. In the thinking of many marriage and parenthood have been penalties inflicted upon man because of his human frailty which has led him to seek sex satisfaction as a means of getting pleasure. Even when thinking has not gone so far, it has been taken for



granted that he who married assumed a contract which, whatever it promised at the start, would sooner or later put upon him serious demands for self-sacrifice and moral endurance.

With the sweeping aside of the code of behavior anchored in obligation and denial of self, the means of control over matrimonial experience was lost, with the result that at first confusion, impatience, and collision of husband and wife within the relationship largely occurred. Cast adrift from their parents' certainty that difficulties in family life were tribulations to be put up with uncomplainingly, many young couples of today do not know what to make of their situation when they find obstacles to their pleasure-hunt cropping up; having entered marriage only for the sake of adding to their happiness, they may feel they have a right to break off their associations, since its returns in pleasure are running low, or each member of the new-fledged union tries to win more freedom by shifting responsibility to the mate.

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The new philosophy includes marriage and all its consequences among the pleasurable undertakings of life. Unless marriage could be made to provide more pleasure than single life, little reason was seen for its becoming a part of any individual's life-program. The same attitude was taken toward the coming of children to the married couple; they were expected to decide this question for themselves, according to their judgment of whether or not children would make their life pleasanter.

In so far as marriage denied human satisfaction to the pleasure seeker, it was called in question by those who felt its promise to have been elusive. Financial strain, whether caused by the wife's living on the husband's income or by the handicap either one of the pair suffered on account of having to consider the interests of the other when professional advancement hinged on readiness to move to a distant city, was quickly translated into a hampering of opportunities for pleasure. Or it may be that the close daily contact of married life cre-

ated trying problems of personality adjustment, as when the mates were temperamentally very unlike, so that life together lost its pleasurable tone. Just as soon as the married couple found themselves unexpectedly facing the obligation of self-sacrifice even in mild form, inner protest was felt by those who were entirely committed to pleasure-seeking.

Tested in this way by impatience and even immaturity, the stability of marriage was threatened and could be maintained only by a rapid change-about in the point of view of those who entered matrimony.

The present marriage crisis cannot be interpreted merely as a reflection of the prevailing pleasure code of behavior, significant as the popular philosophy of life is in revealing the present predicament of matrimony. The development of an effective knowledge of birth control and its rapid dissemination is a social factor of the greatest importance. The means of limiting birth is not, as many suppose, something entirely modern. Nor is it true, as so



many believe, that science has at last found fool-proof methods of preventing birth. What is true is that the last decade has greatly widened the spread of information as to how birth can be limited, and with this popularization of birth control practices has gone an increasing skill in their use—a new and better technic.

There is, however, much that we do not at present know regarding these practices, for experience has not been tabulated over a long enough period of time to answer conclusively what effect any one of the various types of birth control methods has upon the physical health of those who use them. We are still more puzzled when we ask the question, "What will be the consequences socially of the spread of information concerning the prevention of birth and its extensive use?" Facts are scanty, and as yet only spasmodic efforts are being made to gather the data necessary to know what are the results of the birth control propaganda. Problems of morals are involved, for [39]



as we shall see the standard code was built at a time when sex relations carried with them enormous risk of pregnancy.

Although there is little knowledge in a scientific sense even in regard to the medical aspects of efforts to control birth, there is no lack of passion and dogmatism in discussions of the subject. These expressions of emotion at least reveal the revolutionary character of the discovery of more effective methods of limiting birth and warn us of the disturbance bound to follow if science finally discovers, as is not unreasonable to expect, absolutely dependable methods of birth control. If this happens, one of the most momentous inventions in the social history of mankind will have been brought about—one that will have large consequences, either for human good or ill.

At present, however, it is necessary to notice that even the idea of birth control has an immediate effect upon matrimony which at the present time is considerable, and apparently an increasing number of men and women are



marrying with ideas of matrimony and definite programs of family life that are based upon the common notion that birth control is already accomplished, and that no married couple need fear the coming of children who are not desired.

Only those who persist in a self-chosen blindness to the facts of human experience believe that the inventions which increase man's power necessarily contribute to his happiness. As a matter of fact, every great invention has carried with it possibilities of both good and evil, and most frequently the appearance of an epoch-changing invention has been followed by the suffering and misery of many. Such was, for example, the case with the steam engine, which broke down the prevailing economic activities and instituted the more productive factory system, which in its beginning not only demoralized society by the rapid changes it brought about, but offered great opportunities for exploitation. Again at an earlier time the discovery and use of gunpowder shattered the social structure of the time and brought about the demoralization of civilization itself before man settled down, better disciplined to cope with what still remained a dangerous instrument in the hands of human passion.

It is foolish to suppose that an effective birth control can come without creating considerable disturbance in the field of matrimony and in the relationship of the sexes. There has never been a time in the past when this would not be true; it cannot be otherwise now. No one should see this more clearly than he or she who assumes leadership in the popularizing of birth control practices. The partisan who refuses to anticipate the dangers of this innovation is playing into the hands of his opponents by refusing to recognize one of the clearest teachings of history.

The coming of birth control has removed from marriage the element of potential parenthood, which in the past was one of its fundamental features, and in large measure the justification for society's insistence that matrimony 8



and the acceptance of social responsibilities. Now we are told that, by taking out the risk of undesired parenthood, marriage ceases to be of social significance and becomes merely a private matter of concern only to those persons forming an alliance. Although it is easy to state this distinction briefly in a sentence, when one contemplates the differences involved, it becomes apparent that the change requires a reversal of attitudes and public policy without parallel in recent centuries.

Those who turn their attention to what has been called race suicide are choosing the smallest problem connected with the advent of birth control. While it is clear that already birth control has operated to create a difficulty with reference to the source of the growth of population, there is no immediate risk of race suicide. A majority of the students of population believe that it is desirable to slow down the rate of growth which has been characteristic for a century and more. From this point of view





birth control is merely accomplishing what sooner or later was bound to be desirable.

Assuming that birth control offers a happy solution of the Malthusian woes that punish society for excessively multiplying its population, there still remains the possibility of a new type of problem arising. If society in the past has been fearful of too many births, there is nothing to guarantee that in the future it may not be equally concerned over a dangerously low rate of increase. For with the coming of birth control a new element is injected, which may entirely reverse the ancient risk of too many people. But even the severest critic of birth control propaganda would hesitate to assume that race suicide is close at hand.

It is the social rather than the biological aspects of birth control that are of greatest immediate concern. Birth control permits marriage to be incorporated in the pleasure philosophy already described. It invites men and women to undertake a sex union which from the beginning is thought of as devoid of

social obligations. The appearance of birth control is opportune if it is desirable that matrimony become an unmixed pleasure-giving experience, but it is necessary to notice that this cannot come about without sweeping aside nearly everything that society has constructed in its effort to conserve the family of the past. Civilization has been family-based. The home has been without a rival in its influences on social thought and practices. Even marriage has received a competition from parenthood that has forced it to take a secondary position in the life career of the majority of men and women. With birth control this condition is reversed. The character of marriage itself is changed by the effort to commit it absolutely to pleasure-seeking.

Once we face the changes birth control must bring us, we see how largely it is responsible for the present marriage crisis. Nearly every element of social experience has to be adjusted to the new situation. Much of the legislation that has been passed defining family responsi-



bilities, conserving the interests of children, and regulating marriage behavior is out of accord with a marriage program based upon birth control. Marriage stability not only becomes more difficult to attain, but even, in the thought of many, no longer desirable, except in instances in which children are born, when the marriage status changes to that of parenthood.

Behind the legislation that is thrown out of plumb is the mass of conventions that represent society's automatic and most effective means of regulating sex behavior. At least these must find new motives and a different foundation, since they have been built up in an era when birth control in its modern form did not exist. Conventions cannot be reformed without a reconstruction of moral principles. This appears especially in regard to the responsibilities of citizenship that have in the past been definitely tied to the family. Marriage faces a crisis and birth control is largely responsible.

CHAPTER III

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

THE rôle of marriage in modern society is not simple. Like all other social experiences, it has become complex, and the function that it has at present is not one, but many. Unless this is understood, it is impossible to realize how prevailing social conditions are operating upon marriage and family life.

During the historic period three major interests have been protected by the institution of marriage, and each of these in modern times has influenced the social attitudes and regulations that have defined matrimony. These have been the rights of property, sex, and affection. Since, obviously, marriage has had its economic, its physical, and its love aspects, the prevailing social conditions of any period have





determined the relative importance of each of these elements, and have influenced the way in which they have been recognized in the matrimonial relationship.

In our time the economic side of marriage has very greatly changed. Although it has not lost its importance, it has ceased to have in any great degree a unifying, stabilizing influence upon matrimony. So long as the family was an economic unit of production, as it has been until very recently, the common economic interests of the family group tended to hold them together and make their association, from one point of view, a business partnership. Although in a lesser degree this situation is still found in many rural families, where farming is done on a small scale and all old enough to work co-operate according to strength and ability in the making of a living, for the great majority, especially those living in cities, the family as an organization performs a diminishing economic function. If both husband and wife work, their labor carries them away from



the home and decreases considerably the investment of time and thought that they can give to family matters. If the husband works and the wife keeps house, he becomes the producer, while her task makes her primarily the consumer of the family wage he procures by his work. It is easy to see that within the economic sphere the desire for pleasure and the insistence upon self-expression easily become the source of discordant points of view, which range husband and wife and even children and parents as contenders who struggle to get their fair chance at the family pocketbook rather than co-operators who by working together make possible the maintenance of family life.

Thus the economic interests that once tended to draw together the individuals of a particular family group are now frequently the cause of emotional separation, suspicion, jealousy, and open antagonism. At the same time that the economic interests have changed their character, pleasure-seeking has multiplied desires, so that the demands put forth by each individual

are greatly in excess of mere elemental needs and ordinary comforts. Personal cravings are for many so far in advance of the resources of the family that even the necessities of rent and food and the other responsibilities that fall upon the home may seem obligations that limit the ambitions and opportunities of individuals. Not only has new strain been put upon the family by the reversal of its economic significance, but individual desires have been stimulated in contrast with those that used to be satisfied by the family group working together, so that the family experience has relatively decreased in importance, and even in attractiveness.

It has come about that the family has been shorn of much of its economic function, while the maintenance of the home appears a burden that along economic lines checks individual self-expression. As a result, family life ceases to be a means of economic production, and is an end in itself that is required to furnish individual satisfactions to outweigh the cost it im-



poses. This switches the thought of many from taking family life for granted, as was natural when the family group was indispensable for economic production, to a constant recognition, which easily becomes irritating, that the family is a source of expense which hampers the pleasure-seeking that the independent individual may pursue. In this way there has come to be a critical attitude toward marriage and family experience, as it is felt that they impose burdens which those free from family responsibilities do not need to carry.

This change of attitude has made it seem that marriage is something society imposes upon individuals as an obligation they have to accept in order to enjoy the physical pleasures of sex. The strength of physical passion has been interpreted as the motive which leads men and women to assume the liabilities of matrimony. Thus until recent years, even though marriage had ceased to be an economic partnership, there appeared no way of escape from accepting the responsibilities of family life, un-

less the individual could either check his sex desires or find an illegal and socially reprehensible way of satisfying them. From such practices issued prostitution. Although those who took this attitude toward marriage were often led after several years of matrimonial experience to believe that the burden they received was greater than the pleasure, yet even so marriage was conceived of as something that made sex pleasure possible in ways that were safe and just.

It is apparent that the introduction of the idea of birth control completely changed the situation of those who had found in matrimony merely a legalized method of getting sex satisfaction at the price of home obligations. The new possibility of having sex pleasure without children at once created a rival of the orthodox family, based on the assumption that sex could be satisfied without risk of children, venereal disease, or social criticism. As is so often true of changes in social attitudes, the rival of orthodox marriage went on for some

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time without being recognized as something different from the orthodox family experience.

Eventually the new status became so clear that for the sake of exactness in discussion of matrimonial problems it was imperative that it should be given a term to distinguish it from ordinary family life. Dr. M. M. Knight baptized it with the term companionate marriage. This apt designation was at once accepted by the students of family problems, and became a part of the social science vocabulary. The companionate marriage merely meant the union of a husband and wife who from the beginning were determined not to have children. If they were interested only in a temporary companionate, then it was their choice to go without children for a time, and later, perhaps when the economic stress was not so great, move over into ordinary family experience.

It is of the utmost importance, in understanding the crisis of modern marriage, to notice that the companionate as a term was precisely used and meant only a childless marriage. It did not, in the slightest degree, suggest that this union was to be more temporary than that of the man and woman who purposely sought to have children. In an earlier book, "Social Problems of the Family" I have used the term, arrested family, to describe the companionate, since it represents a relation that has gone beyond the single life but has not matured into what formerly was the normal development of marriage. The word companionate brings out clearly the motive in this union; our thinking of this status as one that does not progress to full maturity emphasizes its social consequences.

Each of the fundamental aspects of modern marriage—economic, sex, and affection—has appeared in the control processes that have accompanied matrimony. Especially in the earlier stages of marriage property rights have a large place in marriage regulation. Here exists a great difference between the rights of men and the rights of women, due primarily to the fact that woman was conceived of as



when the economic interests of the husband and wife led them to a closer sympathy, bringing the woman nearer to equality, although their common interests were recognized both by law and public opinion, the influences of the economic aspects of marriage did not show less in matrimonial regulation. The laws of inheritance illustrate the effort that was made to recognize the economic significance of marriage and the family.

The influence that sex had in building up regulation is so noticeable that, as has already been suggested, many individuals have conceived of marriage as a sort of social license that the state granted which permitted the enjoyment of sex pleasures. The consequences of having children born without responsible parents made social regulation of sex imperative. As sex experience before marriage under the prevailing code also greatly decreased the chances of marriage for the girl, since because of what had happened to her she was

generally regarded as damaged goods, society felt the need not only of making marriage the approved type of sex intercourse, but also of preventing as far as possible by public opinion and by law the intercourse before marriage, which so endangered the social rights of the unmarried woman. In the effort to safeguard her and to define the penalties to be imposed upon the man who was responsible for her illicit conduct, legislation and the interpretation of the court often appeared to treat the matter in the spirit of property rights, as if the guilty individual had stolen from the woman possessions that had commercial value. This commercial flavor was so pronounced that even the breaking of the engagement, which would somewhat lessen the woman's availability for marriage by debasing her standing as a candidate for matrimony, required, when proven in the court, the payment of money to wipe out the damages inflicted.

However, with the loss of the economic function of the family, there began to be a de-





creased emphasis upon the property aspect of courtship and marriage. An example of this is the growing criticism of the practice of giving alimony with divorce when the woman has no children or is well-prepared to take care of herself. The earlier purpose of alimony, which was at one time so necessary because the wife had no other means of support than that which she received from the husband, has been so perverted that the gold-digging type of woman embraces marriage so as to obtain a divorce later as a means of obtaining a permanent investment that will enable her to enjoy luxury without responsibility. Even the breach-of-promise case is looked upon with suspicion, since it is increasingly felt that ordinarily a change of attitude regarding one's expected marriage provides no just ground for the payment of damages.

It is to be expected that the popularizing of birth control practices should also lead many people to demand a change in the conventions that have been a primary control of sex con-



duct. Since these regulations are interpreted as having come about merely to protect society from illegitimacy, it is maintained that they are no longer needed. It is argued that because science has produced methods by which the goal that nature has set up for sex can be circumvented, the intimate relations of men and women are merely their private concern, of no interest to the state, and that marriage is not necessary when its purpose, the building of a home for the protection of children, is non-existent.

According to this interpretation, marriage has represented in the past a form of fear control, which is no longer needed, since science has obtained control of conception.

It is needless to say that this application of a pleasure philosophy of life to behavior is not merely a matter for theoretical discussion. No one at all familiar with what is actually happening questions the fact that already a number of men and women, not by any means all members of the class we call youth, have shaken

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off any sense of social responsibility for their sex conduct, and feel free to follow their inclinations in so far as they do not become parents. It is easy to exaggerate the size of this group, just as it is common among its critics to forget the serious sex problems of the past and the notorious failure on the part of many men to maintain the monogamous practices which have been construed as the moral conventions. Sex has never been an easy problem for society to handle, and it would be surprising if no complications followed the introduction of such a tremendous social innovation as the effective means of regulating births.

It is only fair to admit that marriage has been conceived of by many as merely a legalizing of sex relations fixed upon by society as the only available means of protecting itself from the coming of children who would not be born to responsible families to receive the guidance and protection that have been thought of as the proper obligations of parents. To those who conceive marriage in such terms the neces-



sity of matrimony disappears just as soon as science furnishes individuals with the means by which they can have sex intimacy without danger of nature's using their sex hunger to provide offspring.

It is impossible to realize the force of the birth control idea in breaking down former standards. One fails to see how rapidly the idea of contraception has passed through our population. In comparison with the usual process of social change, the movement has gone forward with extraordinary rapidity. Also it must not be forgotten that unlike many social changes it has, at least as far as the young are concerned, broken away from any class confinement and become the possession of all sorts of people. Although its influence at present is most clearly revealed within what we generally call the middle class, in another generation it will surely be the common knowledge of all the people and even became acceptable as a practice to a great many.

As this new attitude spreads, it brings the [60]

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question to those who think of marriage as primarily a legalizing of sex relations, "What is the need of matrimony to those who have no intention of having children, but who merely wish to make use of sex to obtain the pleasures of the body? The state has no interest and ought not to interfere—at least it should demand nothing more than a public avowal on the part of the two interested persons that they have entered upon a peculiar sort of comradeship which they are free to end according to their inclinations."

Even this public declaration is opposed by those who insist that sex, now that it has been freed from the risk of pregnancy, is no longer a matter of social interest which requires any sort of regulation or public commitment. Logically they affirm that sex conduct as a means of pleasure-seeking, when carried on in such a way as not to assume an offensive form or to become some sort of exploitation, is purely a private matter, of concern only to the individuals who have formed an alliance.





So far, our analysis of marriage has left out the most important element in the composite interests that gather about present-day matrimony, the factor that we designate affection. The term itself in its fullness of meaning is modern. Marriage like every other human experience has had a historic development and advancement in quality and significance. Interesting as are its beginnings, as far as we can decipher them from the meagre evidence that remains to us, it is the present attainment of marriage that has the greater meaning.

There is no point of departure in the historic evolution of marriage which permits us at a certain point to say, "Here emerges affection." But even if it were present from the very dawn of civilization and played during the elementary stages of society a minor rôle, yet from the beginning it contained possibilities of growth which were destined to make it in the course of centuries the chief element of marriage. It represented a new order of interest of a type that permitted richer fruitage than was possi-

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ble either to the economic or sex interests of marriage. It was especially endowed with the power to incorporate the other primary interests so that they would become tributary to the affection which offered the chief satisfaction. With the occurrence of affection, matrimony would furnish a new line for achievement which contained not only limitless possibilities, but also a centralizing motive that could draw together economic and sex interests.

It leads, however, to a misinterpretation of the facts to assume that this development was an orderly procedure, with the appearance of affection a final culmination which appeared at the proper season of growth and put into the background the other major interests of the marriage experience. The temptation to suppose that the development was consistent and progressive is so great that affection is frequently thought of as the climax that corresponds to the final rush forward of the successful army directed by skilful strategy. We have, as a matter of fact, no evidence to deny

in the very earliest period of matrimonial association the element of affection, but at that time it must have had the minor rôle in comparison with economic and sex motives. From the first the experience of affection, however slight and lacking in self-consciousness, opened up a new line of human satisfaction that ranged over territory inaccessible either to material needs or sex passion.

It is because of its striking quality of going forward into new levels that affection has become in modern times the commanding motive of matrimony. Not only does affection offer the individual man and woman a type of experience that cannot be exhausted, but it also draws the other interests within itself so that they become allies of affection.

It is not true that all marriages are constructed on the level of affection or that all who enter marriage are led into the experience by the motive of affection. The most casual observation reveals that this is not true. The economic motive still has for some the compel-

ling attraction. Almost any person knows within his acquaintances some who have married for money or for distinction. There are unions that are primarily commercial transactions just as certainly as when women were purchased as property. It is even more common to find persons who married merely because of physical attraction. They were brought together by sex and, as this physical interest wanes, separation at least in sympathy becomes inevitable since they have no other basis for their alliance.

Not only are marriages based upon material and sex interests out of accord with the general thinking and practices of the people of our times, but under the tests of everyday contact these marriages disclose an abnormal amount of hazard. Even when they hold together for a length of years they yield bitterness and regret to all except those who travel on the lowest levels of human experience. Thus affection has come to be not only the most deeply motivating of the matrimonial interests, but



also the one that withstands the wear and tear of matrimonial experience. Having in largest measure the quality of wearability, affection has come to be regarded as the essential element of a genuine marriage.

There is no hope of improving or reforming marriage by any scheme that hampers affection or pushes it into a subordinate position. If means were devised by which marriage would more often become a means of financial prosperity, this in itself would but slightly increase the happiness of the married. Only those content with a substitution of comforts and luxuries for affection would find their union satisfying if the marriage experience remained merely a means of material success.

In appraising the rôle of sex there is a tendency on the part of many to ignore the significance of affection and suppose that by catering to the lesser demands of human nature satisfactory matrimonial experience can be attained. Sex not only represents, as far as marriage is concerned, a more powerful mo-

tive than money interests, but one which is most prominent in any union of a man and woman wherein any degree of mutual attraction is felt. In view of the great number of matrimonial failures, there is a decided temptation to isolate the difficulties of sex adjustment and to forget that, in the happy, modern marriage, sex does not stand by itself as an attraction, but becomes incorporated within the larger and more enduring motive of matrimony, affection.

Since most marriage tragedies disclose an insufficient basis for affection and reveal that the matrimonial impetus consisted from the first primarily in sex, a favorite suggestion repeatedly made in one form or another through the ages, until it has no longer any possibility of originality, is that some sort of trial marriage be instituted. As the motive that brought together the majority of these unhappy couples was clearly that of sex, the question naturally arises, "Why not permit them to find out by a preliminary trial whether or not their interest is strong enough to endure?" It is as-

sumed that preliminary testing will permit the individuals concerned to plumb their capacity for living together, so that the hopeless alliances will be speedily weeded out, and those possessing the qualities necessary for their individual matrimonial success will prosper and eventually become firmly welded together.

In the recent past this has been largely an academic suggestion, since there were serious difficulties that made any such matrimonial trial impractical to carry out. The possibility of the coming of the child blocked the trial scheme. With the popularizing of the idea of birth control and the constant improvement of the technic of contraception, it is inevitable that there should be a revival, aggressive in spirit, of this old idea of trial marriage. At last with freedom from unwanted pregnancy the way appears open for a temporary trying out of the matrimonial alliance. With the removal of danger of the coming of children who would be left without parental responsibility by the

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dissolving of a union, the time has come, it is argued, when matrimonial success can be made certain by merely providing an experimental prelude to final and conventional marriage, and allowing those who fail to withdraw.

Softening the opposition that is bound to arise when the suggestion is made that marriage become a trial experience, the incorrect use of the word companionate conceals the essential element in the new proposal, so that, dressed in the garb of the companionate marriage, the old-time solution of matrimonial ills by trial marriage reappears. The program is further protected from criticism by avoiding the frank advocating of a trial contract that has so often been recommended in the past, but instead merely suggesting that a way be made by which those unhappy in their marriage be permitted by mutual consent to break the alliance. With the noisy reiteration that characterizes the born showman reappears the perennial solution of matrimonial ills, the experi-



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mental marriage, with only the added novelty of a slippery use of terms that confuses the issues and conceals the essential problems involved. <<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<<><

CHAPTER IV

SHALL WE MAKE MARRIAGE EXPERIMENTAL?

HERE is nothing new in the idea of providing for youth a trial marriage. term, however, has been more popular in the past than it is at present. Indeed, the one peculiarity of current agitation is the insistence among some of the critics of marriage, who are again offering as the one and only solution for marriage difficulties a trial marriage, that what they propose is something quite different. This indisposition to use the term that in the past has always been courageously accepted confuses those who wish to face present-day marriage problems and their solution honestly and find their way through the present controversy with straight thinking. Therefore, it behooves us first of all to ask, "What is trial



marriage and how could it be practically brought about?"

Nearly thirty years ago Mrs. Elsie Clews Parsons in a book on the family offered the suggestion that the time had come to establish for young people an early trial marriage, and she stated conditions necessary to constitute such a union. In view of the situation as she saw it, she wrote that it would seem well "to encourage early trial marriage, the relation to be entered into with a view of permanency, but with the privilege of breaking it if it proved unsuccessful, and in the absence of offspring, without suffering any degree of public condemnation." 1 This is perfectly clear and it contains three conditions. The relation was to be entered upon with the thought of permanency; it was to be broken if unsuccessful, provided there were no children born; and there was to be no public criticism because of the failure. It is plain that when these conditions are provided, marriage has become a trial. In its

¹ The Family p. 349

practical working out, however, there is one more question that has to be asked: "Who is to decide that the marriage has proven unsuccessful and how is it to be broken?" Of course, the couple themselves are the only persons who can determine the success of the experiment, and necessarily in justice to both the alliance must be severed only by mutual agreement. Thus it becomes evident that only the addition to the companionate of a means of severing, by the mutual consent of the individuals concerned, the alliance that has remained childless is necessary in order to have a trial marriage.

The companionate marriage, as it has been understood by the scientist, does not necessarily involve the idea of being more temporary than orthodox marriage, but it does provide, obviously, a better opportunity for a trial marriage. All that needs to be added to the companionate is the opportunity for separation by mutual consent and a public attitude that tolerates without disfavor the experimental type of marriage. With these additions the companionate

changes and becomes something else. However unwilling the advocate of such a type of marriage may be to use the term trial marriage, his scheme provides its conditions, and what he offers can be rightly designated by no other description.

There is, of course, in the beginning of every marriage an element of uncertainty, for matrimony always has the hazard that belongs to intimate, personal association. This risk of failure is taken account of by the state, which provides a divorce procedure as a means of releasing those whose marriage has ended in tragedy. This recognition that marriages do fail, with the consequence that in some cases at least the couples separate, obtaining from the court a release from the obligations they had assumed, is quite a different thing from the establishment of a new sort of marriage, which is frankly experimental in character.

Granting that orthodox marriage has a distressing rate of failure, the question arises, "What will be the effect upon human happiness of frankly building a matrimonial program that provides opportunity for trial, so that those who enter may from the start be assured that they assume no obligation to live together longer than they desire, and that by their own volition they can at any time separate and go their several ways?" In answering this question it is necessary for us to notice also that the trial marriage, once popularized, must meet the test of average character, just as ordinary marriage has to do at present, and cannot have the advantage that now comes from its being maintained primarily by those who feel a special obligation to meet the testing of peculiar conduct.

Once marriage as a trial becomes acceptable to public opinion, it must reflect the general attitudes and motives characteristic of the population. This impresses me, since, although all the trial alliances I have known have been formed by persons who have had exceptional preparation for life and enjoyed unusually favorable circumstances, not one such union

has yet proved satisfactory over a two-year period. It is not difficult to discover the cause of disaster in alliances that are frankly experimental. They tend to magnify sex attraction and by their concentration upon physical motives they obstruct the development of affection, which in modern society increasingly builds the foundation of matrimonial security.

The difficulty that arises when trial marriage is put to the test is an old trouble that has always cropped up, but, as marriage has moved more toward the basis of affection, the consequences of this dominance of sex interest grow greater and lessen the chances of success of the experimental union.

It is unfortunately true that at present many marriages are based upon nothing else than a sex interest. Of those who start marriage with no other resources than physical attraction, some eventually achieve affection, many for the sake of their children or other advantages tolerate a relationship which is only partly satisfying, while a large number, perhaps a major-

confess their failure. Nothing is more certain with reference to matrimony than that mere physical attraction provides a very insecure foundation for a life union. No one familiar with human nature will doubt that the experimental marriage invites alliances that are predominantly or even entirely based on sex attraction. Strong as is sex attraction, it is by itself a precarious basis for permanent comradeship. When not allied with mutual interests and affection, it is naturally a transitory impulse that weakens with the passing of time.

The advocates of trial marriage have often insisted that the earlier period of maturity ought to be given over to sex experimentation. From this viewpoint it would be the business of trial marriage to open up opportunity to enjoy sex without any burden of social obligation or any commitment to mutual responsibility. Seldom is any thought given to the effect of this program upon the development of permanent affection. It is merely assumed that the



new order can be added to the prevailing matrimonial conventions without disturbing in the least the sources of affection which eventually have to furnish the enduring satisfactions of marriage.

In practice the experimental alliance invites the living together of persons who have no other expectation than the opportunity to satisfy themselves in sex relations. They have no reason for hesitation in joining, for they make no serious commitment and assume, from their point of view, no serious responsibility. There is no need of their trying out one another's character. They can accomplish that in the most intimate of human associations. No demand is put upon them that they consider seriously their differences of race, class, religion, or taste, or any of the complicating conditions that have to be so well provided for in a successful orthodox marriage. Why take thought, where no permanent risk is involved? Indeed, for many the temptation would be to establish an alliance with persons whom, on

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account of poverty of mutual interests, they would not dream of permanently marrying.

For those whose sex conduct rests upon a fear basis, the coming of contraception offers a much desired freedom. If the risk of undesired pregnancy is taken away from sex intimacy, why should there be any attempt made by the social code to control sex conduct? If marriage is merely, or even primarily, a legalizing of sex comradeship, why should not all marriage unions, at least until children are born, be purely private enterprises to be begun and dissolved by mutual consent? Wherever such questions are asked and answered, people are divided into two different groups. One group, by its reaction, discloses that it conceives of all sex morality as based on the fear of the consequences of illicit intercourse; while the other group sees in sex restriction a necessary means of giving expression to affection.

Those in the first group are forced to reconstruct their thought of proper sex conduct in a radical way, just as soon as they are convinced



that at last science has made possible the control of birth. They react at once with the feeling and thinking of persons who have been emancipated, some voicing their new attitude, while others respond to the new opportunity in actual practices. Although this group that senses its new freedom are of one mind with reference to the coercion of the past, when questioned as to their program for marriage, they split into three distinct parties. The first and most numerous says, "Sex is purely a personal affair, and no one should marry who does not want an orthodox family with children. Since I am merely interested in sex, I want no part in any sort of social contract or legal commitment. What I like about my sex affairs is the freedom that I have and give. I will not tolerate any restriction, and I do not intend to enforce any responsibility." In personal attitudes, this group ranges from those who are so thoroughly sexed that they are literally mere body borrowers, to those who are captivated by the appeal of a comradeship which they idealize as a friendship that requires no legal security nor any sort of moral pressure.

The members of the second party are fearful that with the removal of the fear of consequences of illicit intercourse human nature will reveal such an overwhelming instinct for sex experience that there will be, unless man is protected from himself, a universal debauchery. Conceiving that society is in danger of becoming a victim of a raging epidemic of sex license, they offer a temporary and provisional authorization of sex union, which, without imposing any serious responsibility, will at least give the relationship of the couples concerned social respectability and public recognition. These persons are especially impressed by the need of having some term that can cover the crudeness of mere sex craving and give it a sense of sanctity. So long as it is publicly recognized and made legal, they care not that the relationship is so overweighted with the physical that it has no hope of reaching the higher levels of human association.



There is still another party made up of those who think of marriage as always having been so exclusively a sex experience that its happiness rests completely upon the achievement of sex satisfaction. Believing as they do that the possibilities of sex response cannot be figured out in advance, but must be demonstrated through actual experience, they demand that marriage be made experimental, and that the union of husband and wife be conditioned upon the pleasure each receives from the relationship, thus providing that either at any time can bring to an end the pleasurable contract which they have made with each other and which the state has merely recognized and recorded. To these individuals marriage has always been a social injustice, since it has attempted to enforce a life contract when there was no evidence that this would furnish to the persons concerned the happiness they had the right to demand. Since the opportunity has been provided for the trying out of sex attraction, that the satisfactory unions may be sifted from the

unsatisfactory, why should society not make use of the new resource that science has provided? In the past, on account of the children that were likely to come from any experimenting, public opinion was too fearful of the risk involved to allow trial marriages. Since the conditions have fundamentally changed, this old attitude is untenable.

The second group, made up of those who think of marriage primarily as cohesion, rather than compulsion, do not find in the coming of contraception anything that challenges their basis of marriage security. To them the imperial power that maintains marriage is not society's fear of irresponsible sex, but the hunger of normal men and women for intimate and love-satisfying fellowship. They are not unfamiliar with the fact that many who marry are mere sex seekers, but they believe that this is a perversion of genuine marriage, and one that leads to a large percentage of matrimonial failure. To them there is no hope of increasing human happiness by attempts to standardize

sex relations to any union that is conceived of as primarily physical. As they look backward they see in the relationship of men and women the increasing significance of what we now call love. Upon this element they construct not only the ideal of matrimony, but in it they discover the sole promise of matrimonial success for most men and women as human culture continues its advance.

With reference to contraception there are found among them two different attitudes. One division—and undoubtedly this group is rapidly increasing—see in contraception the means by which love can make sex yield its largest quantity of intimate response without overloading financial responsibility or giving to the wife greater burdens than as mother she can reasonably assume in relation to her other interests. Thus contraception for this party becomes a matrimonial resource and makes it easier for love to flourish to the advantage of husband, wife, and children. The danger of unwelcome children, or the coming of children

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oftener than is physically wise for the mother, or the having of a family too large to give each member a just opportunity for self-expression is, thanks to science, removed. By this increase of power, love is better able to command the situation, and sex is less liable to become a competitor of love rather than an element consolidated in the affection.

The other party sees in contraception a moral menace which endangers love by relieving it of its obligations, especially that of multiplying and replenishing the earth. To them contraception is antagonistic to religious precept and a temptation to selfish indulgence. They insist that efforts to control birth by any other process than abstinence from sex intercourse are an attack upon the purpose of marriage, and bound to do injury to moral character and therefore eventually to the source of love itself.

In this conflict of opinion that characterizes the present marriage crisis, two facts stand out prominently of such importance that they must be recognized in all discussion. The first is that with the coming of the idea of contraception an impetus is given to those who seek sex as an experience by itself. This, of course, is nothing new in human history, nor are we, in view of the vogue of prostitution in the past, permitted even to say that sexual license flourishes now in larger measure than formerly. Sex intercourse affords great pleasure to normal men and women. Religious teaching, legal enactment, and the record of human experience in literature and in history show us how tremendous has always been the temptation to seek the pleasure of sex without social responsibility. Public opinion is increasingly and more efficiently intolerant of prostitution. The emergence of a new type of sex-seeking is bound to have an attraction which will make it a major social problem. The size and form of this new expression of an ancient motive must be determined by the social situation as a whole. Sex practices cannot be separated from the general moral attitude, social reactions, and in-

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tellectual experiences of the period. The rôle of contraception will be fundamentally a reflection of social standards. Like every human resource that provides new opportunity of control, it will be the source of both good and mischief, in the proportion that the prevailing state of society determines.

The other fact is one that many people, in their discussion of the present marriage crisis, forget. Contraception has not removed, but rather increased the need of a distinction between bare sex comradeship and the fellowship of affection. When prostitution was in vogue the difference between mere physical sex and love was clearly recognized; as prostitution gives way to a new form of sex-seeking, with its inevitable exploitation, the necessity of distinguishing between this and love is all the greater. The emergence of affection is too great a social achievement to be obliterated in the effort to conceal the strength of the human desire to exploit physical sex. However tolerant public opinion may become with reference

to temporary sex-seeking alliances, there must be an uncompromising insistence upon the part of all clear-thinking people that this is not true marriage, and must be kept in contrast with it.

It is this distinction between sex alliance and love that the trial marriage program erases. It invites those who are merely seeking physical sex to enroll for their experiment among those who are seriously attempting to achieve matrimony. Claiming that they wish to preserve men and women from widespread license, the advocates of trial relationships are willing to confuse the human values represented in two diametrically opposite attitudes of mind and different social purposes. The civilization of the past furnishes many illustrations of the same attitude expressed with reference to pros-The passing of legislation that lititution. censed, regulated, and inspected prostitution has been interpreted as removing from the vice much of its evil, and giving it a social respectability that, according to the famous statement of Lecky, enabled it to be an ally of the family. Experience, however, demonstrated that no legislation in the slightest degree changed the essential character of prostitution as an exploitation of sex for commercial purposes, with consequences detrimental to social welfare. Merely altering the legal status of a social experience has little if any significance in determining its influence for good or ill.

If marriage has reached the point in human evolution where it represents something more than the authorization of sex intercourse, nothing can be more important than sharply to distinguish its present achievement from a mere sex union. The passage of legislation encouraging sex experimentation as a special type of marriage can only confuse youth as to the purpose of matrimony by clouding the distinction between physical passion and affection. An added enticement to those tempted to enter upon a merely physical alliance must surely in many instances prevent the maturing of desires that would reach out toward the more satisfying goal, affection. If contraception is bring-

ing about a considerable amount of sex intimacy between men and women who under the former régime of fear and habit abstained, let us at least meet the problem squarely without the use of terminology that conceals its true character. If human evolution has reached the point where true marriage must be based upon affection, it is at least honest and courageous to insist that temporary sex alliances, even if widely tolerated by public opinion, present something entirely different, which must by no means be confused with genuine marriage.

It is important that the standard marriage should be based upon affection, not only because this represents the true goal of modern marriage, toward which the evolution of matrimony has irresistibly moved, but also because the only check that can be put upon the exploiting of youth by the use of the resources of contraception must come from the restraint born of love. Only those who exaggerate the weaknesses of human nature and fail to perceive its strength grow panicky because of

the undermining of the fear basis of sex con-He who justly surveys the entire territory of human experience as he sees it from his place of observation realizes that affection already is proving itself competent to deal with the transformation of sex morals that contraception appears destined to bring. It will not tolerate any encroachment upon the territory which it has occupied. Even if legislation were written in the deliberate attempt to level down matrimony to an exclusive sex relationship, the experience of the men and women who had entered the fellowship of affection would lift it again to its normal position. would repudiate any program of temporary alliance, for in practice it would be found contrary to their needs. The security and wholesomeness of marriage in these days is centred upon the maintenance of the standards and attitudes that issue from affection and that encourage its development.

CHAPTER V

THE EXTRA HAZARD

TARRIAGE is one of the supreme ventures of life, and in common with all human undertakings it has elements of hazard. It is the universal desire of all who are interested in advancing human welfare that this element of hazard be reduced to its lowest terms. If some form of trial marriage were practical as a means of removing the hazard from matrimonial union, the proposal would deserve serious consideration. The better motive that has led to the suggestion of some sort of trial marriage always has been the belief of those favoring a trial marriage that this would in some way reduce the hazard. Experience, however, has disclosed the fact that this hazard is inherent in marriage, and cannot by any preliminary or probationary scheme be lessened.



If the period for trial be given a definite duration, the testing experiences of genuine marriage do not appear until this period has come to an end. Thus the trial proves, when put into practice, merely an extension of the engagement period which not only cannot lessen the hazard that belongs to the later and final commitment in matrimony, but actually tends to lessen the success of marriage, because it has so largely encroached upon the resources that belong normally to wholehearted and confident marriage. The couple during their period of trial are tempted to overstress the attraction of sex, and to neglect the development of common interests and frank understanding which must so largely prove their support in establishing a permanent relationship. It is psychologically impossible to give to another completest abandonment when it is mutually understood that the intimacy is experimental. Thus the halfhearted start along the matrimonial highway hampers the strengthening and expression of love, frequently spoiling what



had every evidence of being a permanent commitment by aborting the development of affection.

If the trial continues indefinitely with the understanding that there shall never be any time when the relationship may not by mutual desire be broken, all the handicap belonging to the limited trial persists, and in the most favorable circumstances the atmosphere that gathers about the association is one of doubt, constant scrutiny, and abnormal sensitiveness. It requires only a step for either member of the experimental undertaking to enter downright suspicion. The difficulty comes from the fact that there is an inherent incompatibility between love and uncertainty. This does not mean, of course, that love, however genuine, always leads to matrimonial success. But it does signify that where uncertainty and the idea of experiment enters, love is antagonized by an extra hazard beyond that which normally belongs to all intimate association.

Love in its best form does not demand exclu-[94] sive possession, but it must have a feeling of certainty with reference to the response it gets from the person beloved. When affection comes face to face with doubt, it becomes self-conscious, scrutinizing, and, if not jealous, at least restrained. Thus the admission at the beginning of a matrimonial alliance that only a trial contract is contemplated removes at once the trust and eagerness to give all one has to the mate, which is a characteristic attitude at the commencement of orthodox marriage.

If the trial is conceived of as merely an effort to discover sex adaptability, it offers nothing additional to the physical experiences that it permits. Actually it is at best merely an engagement relationship which permits a fore-tasting of sex pleasure. There are many illustrations, both in savage and European culture, of interpreting the engagement period as one permitting sex intercourse. This has not always been, however, for the purposes of experiment, for public opinion has usually required that such sex behavior in engagement be fol-



lowed, as a matter of course, by marriage. These sex experiences have been thought of as preliminary, rather than experimental, in their relation to formal marriage. At present this anticipation of marriage intimacy is not so uncommon as formerly among young people. In every period it has existed, with perhaps the exception of a few exacting cultures, and it is, therefore, not strange that with the prevailing confidence in contraception we should have it now to a greater extent.

The effect of such pre-marriage intimacy upon later matrimonial success depends mostly upon the character of the individuals concerned and their final reaction as they later look backward to their engagement relationship. At best it throws no light whatsoever upon the resources possessed by the two persons outside of sex, the resources upon which they must depend for their later happiness. The risk is, of course, that the relationship be switched exclusively toward sex, since this part of their matrimonial experience is the only element that



they can anticipate in fullness, so that if affection is not aborted and the engagement broken, the marriage relationship, when once it starts, has an element of anti-climax, associated on the part of one or both members of the association with a feeling of regret. The consequences appear to be influenced by the time in the engagement when complete sex intimacy started. The nearer it is to the marriage ceremony, the less its menace as an emotional influence upon the later matrimonial fellowship.

A liability that any kind of trial marriage must assume is the tendency it encourages for an attraction between a young man and woman to run quickly into sex intimacy. This will shorten the period that at present is used by most young people to explore the personality of the individual in whom they are interested. Sex interest will intrude upon comradeship and usurp the attention. The young man and woman who are physically stimulated by each other are notoriously unobservant of defects and inclined to overrate good qualities; so over-

whelmed are they by their delight in simple bodily nearness that neither one has much desire to discover any interest or emotional bias of the other that is not directly concerned with their relationship. This inability to estimate traits and indifference to the need of finding out whether the two have any common ground for association outside their sex life is so pronounced, even in ordinary courtship, that the lovers often have to rely on remembered early impressions when they try calmly to appraise each other. In the more intense physical excitement of trial marriage this is even more true. The result will be that the trial period will give a couple opportunity to know each other physically and little more. As passion exhausts itself the deficiency of understanding will appear and there will seldom be desire or opportunity to start afresh the aborted relationship. The all-too-frequent staking of all on sex attraction, a misstep that already spoils many marriages, will be stimulated by the assurance that an alliance which can be dissolved

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by mutual consent carries no risk to caution one to avoid making a mistaken choice.

This preliminary trial results, when it is conscientious and deliberate, from the fear of sex incompatibility, born of the notion that physical sex is especially intricate, and that the unsophisticated assume great risk of not having the conditions for a happy union. The danger actually lies in lack of information, rather than in lack of experience. The difficulty of the male who has been extensively introduced to sex by his experiences with the prostitute discloses how easy it is to be familiar with sex as an experience and still lack the insight necessary for successful sex relationships in marriage. The frigidity and lack of sex response on the part of many women, which has led to the common idea that sex fellowship is especially complex and capricious, is the result of imperfect comradeship, due mostly to the man's misunderstanding of woman's sex life because his commercial experiences have not made him acquainted with the normal response or even





given him an inkling as to what he has been denied. His wrong sort of experience causes him to have from the beginning a sex experience which leaves his wife, whether conscious of it or not, at least unsatisfied, perhaps blind to her genuine physical desires, and at the worst so disgusted as forever after to be incapable of any more responsible offering than toleration to what she considers his legal rights.

Sex happiness demands not anticipation but knowledge, and a bad start, however early experienced in the association of a man and woman, proves of no more advantage than the same sort of failure does after the marriage ceremony. What is needed for a successful sex comradeship in matrimony is not an early and experimental start before the wedding, but the gaining of reliable, specific information with reference to normal sex intercourse by both the man and the woman, and a frank discussion between them in which they tell what they have learned. What is needed is not preliminary trial, but insight, and, if they are des-

tined to meet some unusual problem, they have greater hope of success if affection has wholeheartedly committed them to their matrimonial venture than if they are looking for trouble, believing that their relationship needs to be tested by a preliminary experience before they join their lives with confidence.

The attitude of mind that makes use of experiment in dealing with the problems of marriage necessarily tends to exaggerate difficulties that, met in good faith with a spirit of confidence, would appear in their due proportion. It is as true in marriage as in all other undertakings in life that doubt tends to find encouragement by magnifying the dangers that are trivial and by finding in experience an uncertainty that has no substantial existence. This appears clearly as soon as one imagines what sort of contract would be necessary in order to carry out the experimental marriage that some advocate.

What hope, for example, of matrimonial success would come to persons, who, claiming

to be in love with one another, would dare to say, "Because of my doubt that we shall be happy together and my fear to give myself in a union without reservation, I consent to attempt an experiment. It is to be perfectly understood from the start that I am seeking what I regard as a proper measure of happiness. If I am not satisfied—and I alone am judge of this—I shall at any time break the association and return to the independence that I had before my marriage. Unless it be agreed that I assume no responsibility and always remain free to follow my inclinations without reference to how my marriage partner feels, I refuse true marriage. By my marriage I am only announcing my association. I am not surrendering my absolute freedom to do always as I desire. I make no vows; likewise I make no demands." It is hard to conceive of any expression that would be more contrary to the spirit of love or more detrimental to a propitious beginning of a matrimonial career. Yet in experience it is just this which characterizes



the attitude of those who seek experimentally, to discover their fitness for marriage.

The problems of a trial marriage would never be confined merely to the realm of sex. An avowal of lack of complete confidence is always irritating in an intimate association, whether it be matrimony or friendship. The testing attitude also develops impatience, unwillingness to compromise, and a stubborn insistence upon one's own way. It is a common observation among those happily married that in the early days of their career together differences of judgment and difficulties of adjustment arose, which later appeared trivial, but at the time required on the part of both a willingness to make real effort, that their undertaking might be successful. The idea that after all they are merely experimenting lessens the eagerness of both marriage partners to make any special attempt to succeed, and creates impatience in dealing with any sort of problem or encourages the taking of opposite points of view.

It would be surprising if matrimony did not



have need of will to win, since everywhere in life substantial human values have to be obtained by effort. The knowledge that a public commitment has been made by marriage, although in some cases it leads to an excessive struggle to make an impossible marriage successful, usually is a conserving influence that tends to create tolerance, patience, and the determination not to fail. A promising affection is too precious to be lightly thrown aside by a failure to work out the necessary conditions for its success. Indeed, the experimental attitude toward matrimony usually brings about a readiness to accept failure with slight protest.

If all that is contemplated in the alliance is an opportunity, so long as inclination lasts, to enjoy together the pleasure of sex, it matters little what sort of procedure the man and woman go through before they enter their association, if they start destitute of the affection necessary in these days for successful marriage. All they seek is an excuse for the



physical relationship they desire to establish. To them experiment means little in any case, since they are lacking in the conditions for a successful marriage.

It is quite otherwise, however, with those who are genuinely in love with one another and who are trying sincerely to follow the dictates of affection. Supposedly it is for this type that the experimental program is being advocated. If they receive the proposal in good faith and believe that in fairness to each other they should enter a preliminary experiment before their final commitment, they are surely tricked into adding to the normal hazard of marriage an extraordinary and unnecessary burden. They begin by withstanding the sense of confidence and perfect trust that goes with their attitude toward one another, and then later attempt a critical appraisal of their association. They start out of accord with affection, and continue during the first and most significant period of their adjustment as investigators rather than lovers. It is difficult to respond with one's best when confronted with doubt. It is impossible to express love generously and naturally when conscious of being critically observed.

It sounds easy to make a trial of affection, merely because there is a failure to see how definitely any experimental attitude reacts upon the affection itself. The great fallacy of advocates of any sort of experimental marriage is the idea that the trial program can be annexed to affection without in the slightest degree changing the latter.

It is essential always in dealing with marriage problems to keep in mind that the great objective is the increasing of the union based upon affection. The one question, therefore, that arises immediately when any new program is advocated as a means of reconstruction of marriage is, "What effect will it have upon affection?" Will it tend to strengthen or lessen affection as a motive in marriage? Will it provide better conditions for the flowering of affection, or will its general trend be to make it 8



harder for affection to express itself in matrimony? This is the test of every proposition that looks forward to a decrease of matrimonial failure. The promise of better married life lies not in a new method of discovery of failure, but rather in providing happier conditions for the emergence of affection.

The question will be asked by some, "Do not marriages that are frankly experimental on the basis of sex often eventually become happy marriages motivated by affection?" Such a transformation sometimes occurs, for in the relationship of man and woman there are many extraordinary exceptions to the general rule. There have been instances, for example, in which a man has come to feel a genuine love for the woman with whom he entered purely commercial sex relations as customer and prostitute. On the other hand, there have been cases in which the prostitute herself has come to have a keen affection for a man with whom she became acquainted in her trade and who by thus resurrecting her better nature has made



her situation intolerable and brought about a desire on her part to climb up to the level of affection. Such occurrences are extremely rare.

It is likewise true that, although marriages not at first based on affection may fail to degenerate into mere sex union or a partnership maintained for economic or social advantage or the responsibility of children, this happy result is extremely infrequent. It is easier to fall down to a mere physical level than it is to carry sex upward and consolidate it with the stronger and more inclusive bond of love. It would surely add enormously to present hazards in matrimony to attempt to standardize marriage to mere physical attraction by coaxing couples into a temporary alliance on the strength of physical passion as a means of leading them eventually to an affectionate, lifelong fellowship.

What is the effect of this thinking in practice upon the development of affection? Such is the crucial question. In so far as it encour-

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ages the idea that sex by itself can be made a sufficient basis for happiness in a matrimonial alliance, it becomes deceptive by turning the attention of those seeking matrimonial happiness from the only goal which can bring them what they seek.

Marriage now, as in the past, has a large sex importance. But the entire trend of human development has been to make this less and less a thing by itself and to make it contributory to a larger, higher, and more gratifying relationship which we commonly call love or affection. It is no kindness to youth to send them on a false pleasure hunt with a subsequent disillusionment and perhaps bitterness. Affection between men and women contains sex, but it also has something in addition, and that something-plus is the very basis of the modern marriage.

The general acceptance of the trial marriage idea and the removal by public opinion of all restrictions will not in the least change the fact that human nature increasingly demands affec-



tion for the building of an enduring sex comradeship. Although no matrimonial program has the power in the slightest degree to erase the essential characteristics of human nature, it is nevertheless true that standardizing matrimonial thought to mere sex attraction draws the attention of some from the profounder desires by catering to the impetuous interests of sex as felt in the first flush of youthful immaturity. It is here that the mischievous effect of trial marriage shows itself. No distinction is made between a seasonable satisfying of sex and a serious effort to organize a life fellowship upon the basis of affection.

The fact that many who marry do not at present achieve an affectionate marriage does not remove the fact that such a marriage is normally desired and alone brings a sense of matrimonial success. Because some fail to find in orthodox marriage a satisfying affection, it does not follow that they can be made happy by drawing them into a sex alliance that they establish perhaps with hope, but not with con-

fidence. Happiness is never obtained by concentrating upon a substitute for the condition that is essential.

The common romanticism of youth may be basically stimulated by body changes that are accompanied by maturity of sex; but, whatever its origin, it has characteristic qualities of a psychic and social character that look forward to the finding of affection. The disappointed, touched often by the feeling of envy, easily become cynical and insist upon pointing out the root, rather than recognizing the flower of the Even the prostitute ordinarily experience. cannot drown out the tremendous urge to find someone that can respond to the giving of affection which irresistibly flows out of the personality. It is human to seek love. The fact that this profound craving so frequently is imperfectly satisfied does not give assurance that the way to happiness is to treat human love needs lightly and provide for youth a preliminary substitute, a temporary alliance that will remove any need of sex control. The immedi-



ate pleasure easily becomes the enemy of the final happiness. Although trial marriage is rich in sex appeal, it is contrary to the spirit of love.

The wider the contact made, the larger the mutual interests, the more embracing the forms of fellowship, the better equipped the husband and wife for the necessary ordeals of intimate, constant association. Nothing can do away with the inherent hazard that belongs to a matrimonial alliance, but any program that caters to the fickleness, the irresponsibility and self-seeking of those driven into union merely by sex desire sacrifices the need of love to the demands of passion, and enormously adds to the hazards inherent in marriage.

CHAPTER VI

THE DANGERS OF EXPERIMENT

I T IS frequently assumed by advocates of radical changes in legislation which would permit experimental marriages that the only obstacle in the way of making such marriages successful at present is the hostility of society toward this type of union. They argue that if public opinion and the laws made it possible for couples to separate by mutual consent, there would be no greater difficulty in the way of making trial alliances successful than is now true of orthodox marriage. These agitators know full well, if they are at all familiar with the actual practices at present, that there are a considerable number of experimental alliances, estimated variously as to quantity, already established in our largest cities, especially New York and Chicago. Many of these are the direct result of recent agitation for an experimental type of marriage that can be dissolved by mutual consent.

Those that I have come to know of in some detail have been formed in good faith with all the prerequisites that could be brought to the undertaking if it were legalized. I am assured that, except in special instances when the man's or the woman's occupation is such as to involve knowledge on the part of their employer of their private affairs, there is not the slightest obstacle created by the absence of legal approval. Surprising as it will seem to some readers, although these couples continue to use their own names, they can maintain their intimacy without difficulty or inconvenience, even when they occupy the same apartment. Of course, changing the law would popularize and make more common this experience, but that in itself removes only the handicap which results from present conventional hostility to a conditional form of matrimony.

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There are difficulties, however, and they are inherent in the nature of the experiment. It is contrary to fact to charge the high percentage of failures in these trial alliances to an adverse public opinion or to their illegal status. It is especially important that our youth understand, if they are at all captivated by the thought of experimental marriage, the dangers that at present exist to make the trial alliance risky. There is so much said about birth control that it is becoming a common notion among the inexperienced that science can guarantee sex intercourse without the slightest risk of pregnancy. That this is not true is demonstrated by the final result of some of these experimental marriages. As soon as one talks with a young person familiar with experimental alliances, he discovers that the individual knows of several cases of abortion in the set represented. One does not have many conversations of this sort without being impressed that there must be an enormously high percentage of unsought pregnancy. The testimony

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of physicians who are in a position to know the facts has been, so far as my experience is concerned, in accord with this belief.

The statements made with reference to the efficiency of present contraceptive methods are confusing to a layman who wants to know the facts. The general consensus of opinion has seemed to be that, although contraception does limit birth, no method now known or practiced is so absolutely reliable as to justify the illicit intercourse of the unmarried. In a recent investigation of problems connected with successful marriage, I have the anonymous and frank statement of couples with reference to their practice of contraception and its success. These returns come from a group that is highly selected, composed of intelligent and well-informed persons.

Sixty-five reported that they were in the habit of using contraceptions; two that they had made use of them occasionally. Thirteen replied that they had never tried artificially to control births.

With reference to the success of their methods, forty-five reported complete success, nineteen had been partially successful, one had absolutely failed, one, when pregnancy was desired, had discovered that contraceptives had been unnecessary, and one person failed to answer the question.

The statement that the use of contraceptives was partially a success means that the individuals concerned know that they had birth-control failures, but assume that at other times their efforts were effective. This appears from such replies as these to the question, Have your birth-control methods proved successful?

"Yes, but not in the case of the last child."

"One failure in the case of our fourth child."

"Not entirely. The children have not been close together, but probably the second and third were accidental."

In interpreting these statistics it must be noticed that a part of those who claimed success had been married only two or three years and stated merely that thus far they

had had success. Also it is reasonable to assume that more than one couple would find, were they to seek children, that conception was for them difficult or even impossible. On the other hand, we have no information of what methods were used and whether by more upto-date knowledge the proportion of success would be increased. This study at best reveals that among an especially intelligent group the percentage of failure was too great to justify complete confidence in contraception as now practised.

It may be answered that youth are more sophisticated and better informed than their elders, and are therefore acquainted with superior methods of contraception. There are, however, no facts to justify this statement. The conscientious and reliable physicians who as specialists distribute contraceptive information are more available to the married than the unmarried. What youth has in such cases is confidence. They are sure that they can control birth until they fail. In other words, their

lack of experience and lack of knowledge give them no idea of the accidents that occur often enough in present contraceptive practices to bring both to the married and the unmarried who practise them an impressive quantity of failure. The most unfortunate thing about recent agitation is the strengthening of the idea among the young that absolute birth control has already been achieved.

In addition to the accidents that are liable in the use of any method of contraception, we have also the problem caused by idiosyncrasies that makes it in the case of married persons important that each couple obtain reliable information as to how they with most success can attempt to control birth. If society, without better methods of contraception than are now in vogue, attempts to legalize and make customary experimental marriage, it will be driven by the consequences of its policy to legalize abortion. In removing the ban on abortion and providing opportunity by which one at her own desire can be rid of her unborn child, the



present Russian government has at least been consistent, for divorce by mutual consent creates the necessity of abortion.

At this point the advocates of trial marriage insist that we remember that they also urge removing the legal ban on contraception. as if they assumed that this changing of the law would entirely remove the dangers of undesired conception. They appear to think that science has some absolutely reliable method of contraception, which it cannot distribute because the law will not allow it. It is difficult to see how anyone familiar with the actual facts can believe this, or suppose that any miraculous result would follow the legalizing of contraception. Science is free in other countries; science is by its nature international. What is known anywhere in the world is soon known everywhere among whose who are interested in any special scientific problem. Moreover, present laws, both federal and state, do not prevent birth control; they merely limit in certain ways its application. For example, the law hampers, and even at times prevents, the establishment of free clinics for the poor where contraceptive information can be available. Judging from the widespread knowledge and general practice of contraception in the United States, it is difficult to see how anyone should suppose that change in the law, desirable as it may be, would bring about any fundamental difference, except possibly the more rapid extension of contraceptive practices among the lower classes. It is not even fair to assume that the lifting of all restrictions would bring a very considerable increase in birth control among these classes. Lack of inclination at present influences their behavior as well as lack of knowledge, and changing the law will not necessarily quicken their desire to follow scientific methods of avoiding pregnancy.

Contraception, like any other laboratory technic, requires exactitude in the provision of undeviating conditions. To be even fairly successful, it depends not only on the knowledge of those who practise it, but on their punctilious



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attention to detail. This means that temperament as well as training is a factor in the use of such birth control methods as now exist. Only those who are capable of foresight and self-control in times of intense emotional upheaval can make practical use of the contraceptive knowledge science now has. Numbers of ordinarily intelligent, middle-class married couples, past the days of their youthful flare of passion, and thoroughly acquainted with all that science has to offer in the way of contraceptives, bear witness to the incompatibility between sexual excitement and scientific precautions, when they admit in confidence that they did not want any children, and were especially determined not to have more than one, but have a family of three or four because, "sometimes, it's too much trouble to use preventives." Others, with less intelligence or conscience, and more money, have confessed to having an abortion practically every three months because they "didn't want to bother to be careful." The fact is that birth control has

become familiar in all sections and classes, and appears to be increasingly practised. Contraception cannot be made safer by merely legalizing the distribution of information with reference to it.

When the advocates of trial marriage are brought face to face with the element of risk that such an alliance at present necessarily represents, they call attention to the fact that if children are born divorce by mutual consent is, according to their program, no longer permissible. If this fact were given in their discussion the prominence it well deserves, and attention frankly directed to the percentage of failures that now accompany all use of contraceptive methods, it would certainly impress youth and lessen the approval the new matrimonial scheme now receives. It is hardly fair to invite youth to what in most cases will be merely a temporary sex experience without admitting that their undertaking carries risk of a permanency they may not desire, but cannot rid themselves of by mutual consent.



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If the theory were largely carried into practice, it would in present circumstances lead to a considerable number of unions that would, in all essential characteristics, be forced marriages. Nothing is clearer in the entire range of matrimonial experience than the disastrous result that follows the forcing of marriage upon individuals who do not seek it, because they have been sexually intimate and have become or soon will become parents. The social worker is familiar with the pathetic consequences that follow the insistence that individuals marry because in no other way can they save their reputation. Forced marriage in the lower classes frequently leads to desertion, while in the classes more economically fortunate eventual divorce or perpetual domestic conflict is the common result.

We must not forget, of course, that there are those who are not satisfied merely with abolishing conventional marriage but who are also eager to rid society of the menace of family experience. The latter will have a ready answer,

when it is objected that trial marriage will in a proportion of cases bring unsought children, and thus prevent the possibility of separation by mutual consent. Their suggestion is that the children be given over to a public institution and the parents remain as free as they formerly were to dissolve their sex partnership. Nothing but pressure from an anti-family complex explains the conviction of those who feel that the injury children receive from contact with adults incapable and unwise is merely the result of parental affection, and that if children from birth could be kept away from their fathers and mothers, other adults would have no contaminating faults to do them injury. Any scheme to send children to institutions after the manner of Rousseau will appear too impractical even to youth to attract their attention. There is nothing more certain in the present trend of society than that it is not headed toward the orphan asylum.

From every angle temporary marriage with the possibility of being dissolved by mutual



consent is built upon an unjustifiable confidence in present day birth control practices. The false impression that its advocates create in the thinking of the youth who become interested in their scheme is the most practical consequence of recent agitation to tempt young people who are not in a position to marry, who have no desire to marry, and who have not even chosen their life partner, to enter upon a preliminary pleasure experience of sex satisfaction alone without realizing the risk they are assuming. It is hard to see how any person familiar with human nature, the strength of youthful passion, and the adventurous spirit of the inexperienced could have expected any other result. The thoughtful young people of today are seeking a greater proportion of marriage success than has been experienced by their parents, but to invite them to take a new roadway which has concealed dangers is not leadership but treachery.

At first thought the proposition of divorce by mutual consent may seem exceedingly [126] simple. But when subjected to analysis, some serious difficulties appear. Since there is undoubtedly an element of risk due to the possible failure of contraception so that an unexpected child may come from the union, there is need of protecting the wife for at least nine months after the time of separation. To force the woman to assume alone the care of an unsought child would be cruel to her and detrimental to social standards. Society under the freest divorce system imaginable and with the utmost indifference to family values would be forced to safeguard the interests of the child, and unless practical means were enforced of fixing and maintaining responsibility in cases where children were unexpectedly conceived, divorce by mutual consent would issue in distressing problems similar to those associated with family desertion.

The advocates of divorce by mutual consent would also be surprised by another problem that would often prove vexing. After marriage it would be discovered by many couples



that the husband and wife had come together with different desires and contrasted ideals. To one the union would represent merely a sex opportunity, temporary in its urges, while to the other it would be from the first a genuine expression of affection. Soon one would demand release, to the consternation of the other. The partner desiring separation would insist that the contract was unjustly and sefishly interpreted by the other, if any effort was made to insist upon a continuing of the matrimonial alliance. Thus in practice it would be found that the new divorce scheme would simmer down to the giving to either member of the union the privilege of separation at any time, or produce an antagonism that sooner or later would make living together impossible. The marriage would be keyed not to responsibility, but to privilege. The fickle or pleasureseeking individual would have no motive for developing the sense of obligation which at present is so thoroughly emphasized by the orthodox marriage ceremony. Although it is human to shirk responsibility, experience demonstrates that the acceptance of obligation is not only a discipline that makes personality, but a source of satisfactions that wear well when tested by life. Divorce by mutual consent caters to immaturity of purpose, and, by encouraging an easy-going indifference to consequences, antagonizes the development of a more serious commitment in matrimony.

It is fallacious to assume that because separation is made easy it therefore becomes less tragic in character. The distress of the divorce situation at present is not the difficulty of separation, but the confession of failure of adjustment. Unless matrimonial association is to be a mere legalizing of sex intercourse, frankly temporary and destitute of social significance, a divorce, whether obtained with difficulty or with ease, remains a mark of tragic failure in relationship. The only way in which separation can be made an incident of little consequence is to rob marriage of its social values and services, and make it a mere excursion in sex. The



more society takes this attitude, the greater the obstruction the individual will meet in trying to bring to the surface his deeper cravings that, if permitted expression, would lead him into parenthood and the conditions of stable marriage. The program would necessarily lead, not to a weeding out of marriages bound to fail in adjustment, but toward an easy acceptance of failure. No union born of affection or even with the promise of love can be broken by whatsoever means without registering upon any personality, save the type of person that is destitute of ideals and morally indifferent, a sense of loss through tragic failure, with its risk of bitterness and cynicism.

Thus divorce by mutual consent will not only offer for many a new opportunity for sex exploitation, but will also tax the better motives of the individual by exploiting his temporary passion and willingness to gamble, heedless of possible consequences. This assault upon the resources that make for serious matrimonial commitment would most unfor-

* DANGERS OF EXPERIMENT *

tunately be made upon youth who, because of lack of experience coupled with vigor of physical desire, would be easily exploited, and furnished every opportunity to think of marriage for mere physical passion as the same thing as marriage for affection; and any failure would only lead them the more strongly to emphasize the experimental character of matrimony and to withdraw hope of any more satisfactory outcome of married life than opportunity to indulge sex.

CHAPTER VII

WHO MUST PAY?

THE risk of experimental marriage must now as always fall upon the woman. Changes in legislation regarding marriage or even differences in public opinion cannot prevent the woman assuming the greater liability if she enters an alliance that can be dissolved by mutual consent. In recent years there has been a trend toward giving to woman a greater equality and a larger freedom than she has ever before enjoyed. The new matrimonial experiment antagonizes this general development by forcing woman again to assume conditions that push her into a status of inferiority.

Even under present conditions the woman faces an intense competition with her sisters as she looks forward to a matrimonial career.



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The attention she now gives to adornment and to the dictates of fashion reveals how sharp is the competition she has to face in trying to provide herself with a life mate.

Any form of trial marriage will strike her from two angles. In the first place, caught by the spirit of rivalry, she will be tempted to enter upon an experimental alliance if the opportunity be provided, since she will feel that it is the only way by which she can have a fair chance to get and to keep the man in whom she is interested. Any reluctance upon her part to take the step will endanger the association she already has, and in her opinion provide an opportunity by which her rival may get the hold on the man which up to the present she has had. Indeed, the matter will frequently be presented in such a way as to challenge the seriousness of her interest, and her consent to the experiment will be given because in many instances she will detect upon the part of the man a subtle threat of breaking his comradeship and seeking elsewhere the relationship



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which he desires. Thus it will come about frequently that the choice of the woman to accept an experimental alliance will be her response to the duress she feels, rather than because of her firm conviction that the proposal is the best way toward her happiness.

On the other hand, the severance of any relationship which has been established will throw her back into the field of matrimonial competition handicapped by the public admission of her failure in the matrimonial undertaking, and also by the fact that she has grown older in the process of the experiment and now has to meet in competition not only women of her own age, but younger women also who attract the men forming the class from which she is likely to find her second matrimonial partner. In comparison with the woman the man has much less at stake, and if any trial marriage he enters does not pan out he merely drops his obligations and, when the whim starts, enters another alliance. The fickleness and desire for variation potentially present in many men would be





drawn out and exaggerated by their lack of any serious motive for assuming obligation. Eventually they might change and settle down to a permanent commitment for life, but not until they had largely exhausted their craving for sex adventure which they had enjoyed at the expense of the women who entered experimental alliances with them.

If it be objected that the man cannot leave the woman without her consent, there is need of realizing how little this condition can operate, since, as has been said, the man will feel that his dissatisfaction is reason enough for the breaking of an alliance, and if the woman's refusal is the only obstacle to his freedom, he will stand against her and feel justified in making her life miserable. Since his freedom is entirely in her hands, he will bitterly resent any restriction she attempts to continue, and their living together will be practically as impossible as it would be for business partners to continue their enterprise after they had developed hattred for one another and an intense feeling of



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bad treatment. The necessity of obtaining the woman's consent would merely place her in a position where she would have to accept all the penalties of enforcing upon him a legal obligation which he had found irksome. Her veto power would in most instances prove merely theoretical, and, except in cases where she insisted upon punishing the man whom she had learned to dislike, she would find the granting of permission for separation a lesser evil than the futile effort to insist upon the man's continuing an alliance from which he wished to escape. There would be no reason for continuing the shadow when the union had lost its substance.

The question naturally arises, "How many of the marriages that have now achieved happiness would have been dissolved in the early days of matrimonial adjustment had there been in the past a social code built upon divorce by mutual consent?" No one knows, but men and women of experience have estimated that it would have been as high as fifty per cent.



It is important to recognize that such marriage separations would not all result from recklessness, impatience, or fickleness. The conscientious and high-minded would furnish their quota also. Trivial failures, real or imagined, would be lifted to the plane of moral testing, and even affection would scourge some with feelings of abject defeat, by making them feel unworthy of the marriage partner, incapable of contributing adequately to the new venture, until the offer to separate would seem the only honorable way out. In the turmoil of emotion this suggestion would be misinterpreted by the matrimonial partner as an expression of discontent and desire to break away, and all too quickly steps would be taken toward the divorce from which, because of pride and misunderstanding, escape would be difficult when diminishing feeling permitted sober second-thought to arise.

Doubtless, as is now true in many cases of the divorced, many men and women would be so disgusted with their unsuccessful attempt



that they would not seek a second marriage. This attitude would be more likely to develop among those who had sought the alliance with very serious motives and less of mere sex desire than among those whose only motive for the marriage was sex passion. The latter would have received in full measure what they had from the first expected, while the others would be more likely to feel that they had been cheated, and in a multitude of cases to lose courage in attempting the same thing a second time. Here again the woman would suffer more than the man, since her expectations as far as home life is concerned are, under normal conditions, greater than those of the man. She is the potential mother, and, at least for the immediate present, we must expect that during girlhood she will have had instilled in her in greater measure attitudes of mind which will cause her to seek in family life the expression and satisfaction of cravings that have been embedded in her deeper nature.

It is the woman that needs greater security [138]



and normally she seeks it. It is obvious that conventional marriage has developed in part to provide this protection, which is based not upon the necessity of weakness or inferiority, but upon the unchangeable fact that according to nature it is the female rather than the male whose interests predominate and are conserved in a family relationship. Any situation that heightens her insecurity in marriage removes from the woman the just support that society has built up with considerable effort to provide for the woman conditions that make it reasonable to ask her to assume the burdens of marriage and motherhood.

They are a part of life and fall upon the backs of the married and the single alike. Easy divorce may change the proportion of these burdens and distort the responsibilities assumed by the man and the woman, but nothing can take away conditions that belong to life itself. What society has been trying to do in the recent past and what it must continue even more



to accomplish is the more just distribution of these necessary burdens, so that the woman may not be sacrificed while the man carries less of the load than belongs to him.

The fact that the young woman may disclaim any desire for security and insist that she is as eager as the man for trial merely reveals that she has not yet learned from experience the price of her experiment, nor the need she has of social protection if she embarks upon the matrimonial sea. Although she may not incur any economic liability by her experiment, and can easily drift back to employment with the dissolving of her matrimonial venture, she must still face the result of her marriage excursion as a candidate for permanent marriage. attack is not upon her financial security (although as a matter of fact in many instances it would not be possible for her to return without considerable loss if she had left a promising line of employment to enlist herself in housekeeping responsibilities) but upon her efforts as an individual trying to find a satisfying af-

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fection which would permit the blossoming of the desires that belong to her as a woman and a human being.

The importance of time in the period ordinarily given over to the finding of a mate is often unappreciated. At best the woman does not usually have many years during which she can in favorable circumstances seek the life partner whom in her heart of hearts she usually desires. Any experience that tempts her to turn aside from her major purpose during her period of matrimonial competition is likely to cheat her of the opportunities she demands. There is perhaps no subtle danger of greater significance connected with the proposal to have divorce by mutual consent than the risk lest this mean for many the forming of alliances that are taken lightly because they are thought of as merely temporary. In this process time is consumed, and, with the breakdown of the alliance which was not expected to last, the woman finds that she has been wasting her resources and is distinctly handicapped in the



competition which she now more earnestly carries on to discover the person who can give her the permanent association that she has learned is her deeper desire. It is the woman that must pay for any lessening of matrimonial security and commitment, and it is she who is less able to meet the liability.

The modern woman whose deeper cravings have been awakened seeks in matrimony affection, and any policy that tends to turn her aside from the goal of her desire can at best provide her with a poor substitute for her fundamental urges; yet this is just what a program does that encourages her to accept a temporary and uncertain relationship, since it takes her attention away from the endeavor that properly belongs to her to find somewhere a love that is born of confidence. To be sure, this attitude of certainty does not always prove equal to the wear and tear of life, but to start with misgivings in a spirit of experiment adds enormously to the hazard that inherently belongs to marriage, and the woman who accepts the invitation to

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try out attraction loses valuable time which she cannot afford to squander in sex pleasure.

There is of course the possibility that the woman who enters into a trial relationship on a purely sex basis will smother all cravings for experiences of a more fundamental and enduring type. She surrenders her expectation to achieve a marriage of affection and loses any desire to have children. The fact that she finally attains a cynical attitude and even a hostility toward conventional marriage does not demonstrate that she started destitute of the desire that most women, when they are perfectly honest and clear-thinking, admit to be their fundamental urge. It is common observation that human nature can pervert its strongest motives and lose the sense of its greatest needs by accepting substitutes that gradually undermine the deeper cravings. We are familiar with the easy way in which ambition or the inclination for freedom and leisure and luxury can kill out the desire to have children, even among those who enter orthodox marriage with genuine commitment. The temptation to crush the normal demand for affection and for children is increased by any sort of marriage that is undertaken in the spirit of doubt and with the mutual understanding of husband and wife that they are merely trying out the interest they have in one another.

In this process of levelling down matrimonial desire the losses necessarily fall most upon the woman. Whatever her final attitude and however indifferent she becomes to children, the fact is that she represented in the earlier period of her marriage a potential mother, and her biological failure leaves her without the realization of impulses that would have awakened with the coming of the child, through which she would have entered into the deeper satisfactions of the human career. Not all women can expect to have children, nor have all the moral right to give birth to offspring. But it is one thing to surrender motherhood from sympathy or conscientious self-denial, and quite another to become the victim of an easy-going pleasure-seeking policy which tempts one away from the more substantial satisfactions of life.

The experimental marriage is an exploitation of the woman. Either it encourages her to believe that she is getting more than the contract calls for, an unqualified response of affection, or it captivates her by offering freedom for sex experience under standards that lead her to forget her profounder needs.

It is difficult at best to drink of the fountain that gives forth the satisfying waters of life, but it is at least important that youth seek a clear understanding of the possibilities of life. A marriage started in the atmosphere of uncertainty is out of accord with the confident spirit of youth, and represents sophistication and cynicism. There is no place where it is so true as in matrimony that he fails most who expects least. Since normal marriage concerns the woman more than the man and offers her an opportunity to function in a way denied the male, it is she who, by accepting a series of

relationships, is the greater loser, whether she realizes it or not, in the richness of opportunity that belongs to affection and to parenthood.

The marriage of expediency we have learned to frown upon when it is conceived as an economic opportunity. The challenge brought us by the evolution of the family is that of making marriage for sex expediency equally distasteful to normal human beings. In this task the interest of the woman is primarily represented. If she surrenders the struggle to attain affection because of the strength of her physical impulses and the opportunity she has to satisfy them without committing herself seriously to matrimony or waiting until she finds the life mate who wishes her without conditions or reservations, she makes an irretrievable mistake and contributes her experience to the cynicism and pessimism which antagonize the development of marriage for affection in the spirit of confidence and with the will to achieve success. Affection does not take kindly to the



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idea of experimentation, and in so far as marriage becomes a trial, it encourages unions that cost women their fundamental birthright.

The following statement, presented by permission, has come from a young professional woman married a little over a year. "I went through college without having or desiring any sex familiarity with men. In my last year I did enter upon homosexual practices with my most intimate sorority sister. After my year's professional preparation I grew more and more restless for these experiences which evidently had meant more to me than I realized.

"In my work I came in contact with men more often and naturally than I had at college and the professional school, and I took every advantage of my opportunity. I wanted to like men, for I feared I was hopelessly homosexual and I knew I desired to have children. Concerning marriage I was less sure. Soon I had to decide upon some policy as to sex in my friendships with men. I was curious and I

also wanted to find out whether I was always going to keep thinking of what I did at college.

"My first relation with a man came about gradually and rather naturally. Once I broke the ice I drifted into several such experiences. Finally I grew fond of a man. With misgivings I allowed him the same freedom I had the others. We went together nearly a year. I grew eager for marriage, and several times he and I talked the matter over. I wanted to marry; he did not. He said, 'I like you better than anyone else I have ever met; but suppose someone should come along that I would like better? I don't want to tie myself. I want to be free for whoever comes along next.' He tried to have me go on, but after one long talk I decided to leave him. He tried to argue with me, but I began to wonder whether he really cared. Anyhow he was soon going about with another girl. I made up my mind that what we had done was a mistake. I really believe he loved me at first. He seemed



different from the others. I made up my mind not to repeat my mistake. And I didn't. My husband and I never went so far when we were keeping company. He made no effort to change our relationship, and I was determined not to. We met some months after my break with the other man, and within a year we were married. Sex freedom in my case didn't work out."

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## CHAPTER VIII

TRIAL MARRIAGE NO REMEDY FOR ILLEGAL SEX UNIONS

THE recent revival of the idea of divorce by mutual consent has come about, according to its sponsors, from the desire to find a means of checking a widespread and increasing immorality among youth. According to some extremists society now must choose, since the popularizing of the idea of contraception, between allowing divorce by mutual consent and general promiscuity among our young people. To most parents this is an unpleasant dilemma, and they rightly insist upon proof that they must accept such an alternative.

Those who insist upon an experimental program to meet the present crisis apparently [150]



take it for granted that fear of becoming unmarried parents has been the only reason for sex restraint among young people in the past. Now that science has so largely removed this danger, they say, a well-nigh universal license will result, unless an easier and more attractive sort of matrimony can be devised. A marriage that does not carry with it any sense of finality or irksome obligation will, the argument runs, attract those who at present are tempted to form illicit unions. No social innovation could be proposed of more significance, and surely society cannot be asked to consent to the proposal in the spirit of panic. If we are confronted with a social crisis, the farther we keep from hysterical frenzy the safer will be our decision.

One thing is certain: many of the advocates of divorce by mutual consent are proclaiming the doctrine, not as a remedy for illegal union, but as a defence for the alliances they are maintaining or favor. Anyone who is familiar with the conduct of a considerable portion

of the youth who have committed themselves as disciples of those crusading for an experimental type of matrimony knows that they favor the scheme because it justifies in their own thinking the illicit relationship they are maintaining, and which, were they free to exchange it for a trial marriage, they frankly confess they would not change. What they like about the new idea is the influence it is having upon the loosening of standards and the building up of the spirit of social tolerance. They detect the practical influence of the scheme and welcome it, not because to them it is the remedy it is said to be, but because they recognize that it is a clever and effective means of attacking the conventional code which they do not accept.

Some of these young people who have recently enlisted in the crusade for a more lenient form of matrimony are honest enough in private conversation to admit that the new scheme offers nothing to attract them from the freedom they are already practising.



They already have what they want, which is merely an opportunity, without responsibility, to have sex pleasure. What motive have they for entering into any sort of public commitment, even though they would be as free to leave marriage as to enter it? They desire not the means of testing their affection, but merely the opportunity to enjoy the pleasure of sex together. Any public recognition of their relationship, any legal definition of their status, adds nothing to their pleasure program. But, on the other hand, if it in the slightest degree suggests constraint and the curtailment of freedom, it antagonizes what they are seeking. Indeed, a great part of the applause that has come to the advocates of divorce by mutual consent has been the product of the relief that has been felt by those who have gone the limit in their freedom or by those who enjoy thinking of what they never intend to do, when arguments are presented in favor of a new marriage code which they interpret as justifying their own position.

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Other young people welcome the crusade, not because they sincerely favor the change or feel any need of justifying their own conduct, but merely because, however conventional their behavior may have been, they feel an antagonism to their parents and elders which has resulted from lack of appreciation and sympathy on the part of the older people. From this viewpoint youth finds in the new marriage scheme an emotional outlet for pent-up feeling and an opportunity to proclaim their revolt; they take advantage of the chance they have to jar the complacency of the older people whose negative and dogmatic program irritates them and stirs up the desire to antagonize. These young people talk one way and think another. At the very time they clap the address of the speaker who is advocating a new marriage code, they are eagerly hoping to find a life partner and have no intention of practicing pre-marriage freedom or entering upon an alliance in the spirit of experiment. In their heart of hearts they are not

in the slightest degree unlike their mothers in their expectation of finding a life partner whose affection they can trust.

Perhaps the following case given by permission best illustrates the general attitude of those maintaining an illegal union, when offered the proposal to marry with the provision that at any time they so desire they can separate by mutual consent. The young woman who gives the testimony is a college graduate, successful in her profession, very alert mentally and extremely frank and outspoken. is now entering upon the sixth month of her intimate association with J. Her first alliance was with an unmarried man and continued for about one year, ending in a quarrel and final separation. At present she is living with a married man, the father of three children, who is separated from his wife, although he still partially supports her and the little girls. The husband and wife each insist that the other obtain the divorce which they both deem desirable, although the young woman who has be-「155 ]





come the husband's self-chosen help-mate is not interested in his being divorced, since in no circumstances does she contemplate marriage.

"Yes, I am interested in the talk about the so-called companionate marriage because it advertises what I believe in especially—making birth control better known and giving young women courage to experiment. I am not at all attracted by the scheme of divorce by mutual consent, because I already have that and something better. I see no reason for any public ceremony, nor is there from my point of view any advantage in legalizing our relationship. I believe that two people can live together without being married and have the same attitude toward the problems of their united lives that two married people would have. The ceremony, itself, does not affect the attitude of two people toward each other. It is merely a form of economic security for the woman, as the marriage law stands today. I could not live with anyone if I felt the need of legal protection. Therefore, for me the



ceremony is undesirable. The fine thing about the association between J. and me is its freedom. I would be afraid even with divorce by mutual consent that J. would assume a degree of proprietorship, an attitude of possession which would drive me mad and make me leave him at once. I will not tolerate any claim whatsoever. Nor do I wish to insist upon any obligation on his part which he does not freely take over without the slightest degree of outside pressure.

"The beauty of our present relationship is that we are doing just what we want with no compulsion about it in any way. I would not even be willing to allow J. to have any jealousy. If I choose to go with other men, I shall. Of course I give him the same liberty. I may not wish to be intimate with other men while living with him, but I at least want to do just as I please. Marriage which permits divorce by mutual consent will not suit those who really want security and a legal marriage, while for those who are finding satisfaction in

the way I am there will never be any reason for going through a ceremony which would mean nothing different from what they now have. They want either security or freedom, and women like me insist upon having freedom. I would not dare to tie up with any man for life, and I think the way I feel is characteristic of those who are doing what I am.

"I believe that the methods of contraception have been developed to a point where, if used correctly, pregnancy is impossible. I would not have a child unless I planned for it. I feel, however, enough confidence in anyone with whom I might live to have a child without marriage. Of course, the father and I might drift apart, but marriage did not prevent that in the case of J. and his wife. Sometime, when I can afford it, I may have a child, but that will not change my way of living. I should still work. I could not be happy without my work.

"No, it is not at all difficult to live together, providing one is in a city and rents an unfur-

nished apartment. On account of the law, the landlord hesitates to rent furnished rooms to the unmarried. Of course we would want more than one room anyway, and we prefer to furnish our apartment ourselves. I love housekeeping, if I don't have too much of it, so long as it is not an obligation, merely something that I choose to do while going on with my real work. I cook for J. and do his mending, just as if we were married. Like all the rest of our relationship I enjoy it because there is no ought to it.

"I have had my share of trouble [the problem which brought the young woman to me for consultation] but so far as my living with this man is concerned, I am making the best possible solution of my situation. I admit my first experience was not a success. I don't believe it was because my plan was wrong, but merely because I chose a man that was bound to disappoint me. I know I made a mistake, but it at least taught me to use better judgment, and I know I have done better this time. However, I don't make any prophecies as to the future.

"My mother does not know what I am doing, but my older sister does, and she approves. My mother couldn't understand, and there is very little sympathy between us anyhow. No matter what I did she would find fault with it, and if she ever comes to know what has happened, she will have to make the best of it. I am not going contrary to my own beliefs, just because I run risk of shocking her, though I do try to keep it from her, she would make so much of what people would say. As a matter of fact, in my set our relationship attracts no There are too many others doing attention. the same thing. J.'s wife, who wants us to marry, says that she cannot let the children come to see J. unless he gets a divorce and marries me. My hostility to marriage is just as important as her attitude. If he can't have his children see him here with me, he must go elsewhere to meet them. I don't intend to be forced to marry against my belief.

"I don't believe the agitation for changes in the conditions of marriage will get anywhere. Those who really want to marry prefer the security that the law now provides. But I do think that out of the discussion will come a more general understanding of the way such women as myself feel. It will help a lot of people to know that birth control makes possible the freedom they prefer, and it will be hard to force marriage upon those who do not want it. Of course I realize that at present I could not do as I am doing and live in some places. Fortunately I do not have to live in such narrowness. I am happy with what I have. Some day I may feel differently about marriage, but it is impossible for me at present to imagine being willing to have any sort of legal Even if the law permitted a marriage that could be broken at any time, it would not interest me."

J. D., who is also maintaining a temporary alliance to be severed at will, has this to say with reference to the foregoing statement:



"That expresses my opinion also, except that I would emphasize the fact that, when I am really ready to settle down and have children, I know I shall seek the security of a real marriage. So long as there is any doubt, there ought not to be any marriage at all. I am glad that the idea of divorce by mutual consent is being advanced, because it is hitting conventional people a good whack and making them awake to the fact that there is such a thing as birth control, and that the code of Queen Victoria's time has been put out of business. We do what we want. Of course, we don't all agree.

"My point of view is still an exception. The companionate marriage with divorce by mutual consent means nothing to me personally, since my present way of doing satisfies me, and I don't see any reason for thinking of it as marriage or calling it that. People I know living in the same way do not grow into marriage, but eventually drift apart. Most of them look forward to marrying some day

and many of them do, but they seldom marry each other. I suppose as you grow older you feel differently about the matter. When one comes to feel sure of the need of the other person, marriage seems natural. I think the agitation is doing lots of good, and surely it will lead more to do what I have done. I don't think it will change marriage. No one who wants to get divorced at present seems to have any difficulty, but it is a mighty poor start to set off on the wedding journey with a return ticket already bought. What I want now is freedom. Some of my friends say they've had enough of that. They want security and they marry."

Undoubtedly, whatever may have been their motive, the advocates of divorce by mutual consent have popularized the idea of birth control and temporary sex union. The attention this subject has been receiving has stimulated the curiosity of youth, and to some extent at least has made them feel that society was repudiating its former standards and making the



new freedom the kind of conduct approved by forward looking people. If one had deliberately attempted to find a way of popularizing birth control and bringing it to the attention of young people far and near, nothing would have promised more success than what has actually happened. Once the taboo was broken and interest aroused, information both reliable and untrustworthy with respect to methods of preventing conception spread rapidly and is now familiar in large measure even to children.

Of course it was inevitable that with this rapid dissemination of new ideas the normal sex curiosity of the young should be overstimulated with the consequence that the sex problems of the past are overshadowed by the new adjustment difficulties of modern youth. The idea of irresponsible union has been carried to an age level where the wildest advocates of divorce by mutual consent would not dare to approve marriage. From every angle the sophistication of children in the early years of

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adolescence is bound to be socially detrimental, and this result at present is the chief fruit of recent agitation.

It would of course be unfair to charge the entire popularizing of birth control to the recent discussion, as if it had come about from the proposal to institute a marriage that could be dissolved by mutual consent. But this recent interest has heavily contributed to the sophisticating of youth and children, and it deserves to be held largely responsible for the recent spread of the idea of sex freedom in the adolescent group.

It is of course easy to exaggerate, and undoubtedly we do magnify the sex license of our young people. We have no statistics by which to establish the facts, and in the circumstances we cannot expect to have reliable information. Opinions expressed are frequently unreasonable generalizations, but it is clear that there has been an increase, especially in the children and youth of the middle class, in sex experience.

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It is, however, my conviction and that of most students of the problem, including specialists connected with the American Social Hygiene Association, that this is very greatly exaggerated. The reasons for this have been most cogently given by Professor Maurice Bigelow of Teachers College in his article on "Youth and Morals," in the Journal of Social Hygiene, for January, 1928. As he says, there are five explanations of the present exaggeration of immorality among youth. First, there is the ignorance of many older people as to what was true in their own childhood. They happened by fortunate accident not to know the facts that were familiar to doctors and others in the local community. In the second place, many specialists have been so interested in abnormal cases that they have lost sight of the normal and have advanced extravagant opinions. In the third place, some have found sensationalism a means of private profit. In basing their conclusions upon a few selected cases, they have found in yellow

journalism the means of swelling their pocketbooks, while falsely claiming the desire to help youth. Then there is another group, always to be found where there is any sort of sex discussion, who seek in gossip and exaggeration a source of emotional satisfaction, a species of sublimated promiscuity. Finally, as Dr. Bigelow admits, there are some places where locally the morals of youth are at a low ebb.

This situation, however, is not something new, as any sociologist or educator of experience well understands. I remember, years ago, a small New England village which had a situation so terrible that the doctors of the community appealed to the state department of education for assistance in solving their problem, and I know that in this particular instance the investigation carried on proved that the village was suffering from an epidemic of sex immorality expressed in various forms. Yet the parents, if they had been asked, would with few exceptions have declared that their children were entirely ignorant of sex experi-



ence, so quietly had the immoral practices been carried on.

What the elders often mistake for evil-doing is the frankness characteristic of the youth of today. It is with reference to freedom in conversation and in ordinary association, rather than in sex relationships, that the great change shows itself between the past and the present. The youth of today do not conceal their interest in sex, nor do they as much as in the past accept the taboos that have so long prevented the normal and familiar association of boy and girl. Such freedom as is now commonplace would in the past have represented a complete abandonment of all sex restraint, and it is not strange that many parents interpret the present freedom from the point of view of what it would have signified in their time. This, however, is most unjust to youth, for the difference represents nothing more significant than a change of dress.

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## CHAPTER IX

THE NEW FREEDOM A CHALLENGE

BY briefly retracing our thought we see the nature of the present marriage crisis and its social significance. 1 Under the impact of modern industrialism and recent scientific inventions, former habits of thinking and living have changed, taboos have weakened, for many people there has resulted a decrease of domestic experience, and for some a loss in their sense of the values of the home. The product is a freedom and a cynicism that challenge the intellectual and moral leadership of our period.

The sound of tradition snapping is being heard even within the dormant churches and schools and by the complacent homes. Like the ice-coated shrubbery in winter, social codes are overloaded with the weight of a new free-

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<sup>1</sup> Part of this chapter appeared in Religious Education, May, 1928.



dom and are breaking. To shy away from the facts is cowardly. To bewail the change and conceal the evils of yesterday is dishonest. The past offers no refuge toward which we should turn. An unwillingness to recognize the immediate crisis and to assist with understanding and guidance the youth that are facing new conditions is moral treason. Sex is in the foreground. It has long been a troublesome problem, and the church, the school, and the home in the past have tried every policy with reference to it except frankness and appreciation. The morbid cast that for so long was spread about sex has been shattered, and what we call the new freedom has forced sex out into the daylight and insisted that it be taken seriously.

Sex, once securely covered by the conspiracy of silence, has broken from its concealment and its appeal in one form or another seems omnipresent. To the new order individuals react in characteristic fashion, revealing the sex situation of the time when their at-

titude was set. In consequence sex appears the centre of moral confusion. As they notice what seems to them the slipping of the old code, some appear panic-stricken at the crumbling of what they had always supposed was normally secure; others deny, in order to sidestep trouble, that anything new is happening; while a few, with malicious or selfish intent, exult at the dissolving, as they suppose, of all restraint. In the transition the soundness of society is being maintained by those who both see and think, who neither shrink from facts nor respond with hysterical exaggeration to the new conditions that prevail. It is well for those who cannot be persuaded that humanity is entering moral bankruptcy, or that the time has at last arrived when some ingenious invention in matrimonial relationship promises complete solution of every form of sex difficulty, to attempt to understand just what has happened and why.

The history of human marriage in some ways suggests the strata that to the geologist



are so definitely marked on the surface of the earth. From this point of view what we call a transition is a reconstruction upon a new level of the human interests and values that have ever gathered about sex and marriage. On the lowest matrimonial level we find sex tied to property rights. The woman is merely an indispensable medium by which man obtains his sex satisfactions. She is bought or stolen as if she were cattle, and her status is primarily that of property. Sex signifies a masculine right, and society through marriage provides regulations that govern and protect the male in his possessions.

On a higher level we find society primarily trying to regulate sex because of its social dangers. Here a marriage attempts to stabilize the union of male and female, and to protect society from the menace of unrestrained and irresponsible sex behavior. The instrument of control is largely fear. The code is built upon a fear basis. Since the woman through pregnancy becomes the means by

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which the illicit behavior is given evidence, upon her especially is turned social pressure. She must be guarded and trained to protect herself from within, because, if her social standing is ruined or she is ostracized, her family will be disgraced and her career spoiled. The risk of illegitimacy was so consequential that the coercions relied upon for her safety became excessive, and the fear code, with the ambivalence that was to be expected, generated an intensity that forced sex under cover, hampering both men and women in their effort to achieve wholesome sex experience.

With the development of an efficient, although not absolutely safe contraception, the fundamental motive of the fear code was shaken, and to many the necessity of constraint seemed banished. This occurred at a time when, for various reasons, woman's sex life had been elevated to a point where it could be recognized as legitimate in the way that man's for so long had been considered. The new demands and opportunities thus issued,



in the thinking of many and the acting of some, in a freedom in which the right of sex expression was for both the man and the woman the cornerstone of the new attitude.

There is, however, another level of matrimonial control, which is based upon affection. The lifting of the marriage relationship to the conditions of affection does not remove constraint, but merely changes its form. Affection makes demands, and with a force that shows from what depths of human nature they come forth. The transition of which we hear so much and which is attended with so much confusion is coming from this movement to bring matrimonial experience more completely up to the level of affection. It is evident that this new set of matrimonial values is of a higher quality than those produced by the property or the fear code, and necessarily the testing of the personality of men and women is more severe than in the earlier stages of marital relationship. The proportion of failure, at least for a time, until human nature

becomes better prepared to meet the new conditions, must increase. But nothing else ever can be expected when standards are lifted.

Society has reached a stage where people do not often marry for economic advantage, and we are coming rapidly to the point where many refuse to marry as a means of obtaining sex experience. The new motive upon which marriage must more universally depend for its attraction must be affection. It would be false to assume that affection has been absent from marriage on the levels of earlier codes, but it is true that only recently have we begun to construct a code of restraint on the basis of affection. It is the type of constraint and the spirit of regulation that produces what is new.

One of the difficulties which now threaten to make the transition to higher standards a menace and a source of suffering and disappointment to some is the fact that with the removal of the fear code an opportunity is provided for the separation of sex from the new





constraint, so that sex experience is sought for itself and is not incorporated at all in intimacy based upon affection. The property and the fear codes forced sex, at least as far as the woman was concerned, to remain within the matrimonial relationship. Now the fact of contraception and the liberal attitude of many allow sex to be sought consciously for itself by those who insist that, since the relationship carries no social responsibility and does not bring children, it is purely a private matter.

Those who are familiar with the history of the family from primitive days onward are not deceived in thinking that this separation of sex from affection is something entirely new. We have in the past had sex devoid of affection both within and without matrimony. Outside of marriage it has been increasingly frowned upon, and within marriage has more and more been recognized as a misfortune. From its very beginning Christianity denounced sex when sought as pleasure independent of marriage. By implication it

taught that the ideal relationship required the union of sex and affection in a monogamous marriage, and the eventual coming of the code of affection was the inevitable influence of such teaching.

Not until the twentieth century did the long, but persistent, attack upon prostitution begin to win much success. The enormity of the moral offence of exploiting men and women by commercializing sex appeal began to appear with a clearness that allows but one outcome. The ancient evil, as it has been maintained in centuries past, is rapidly drawing toward its end, and, although long tolerated as a social practice, it is at last thrown out of what the sociologist calls the culture, where for so long it has been well entrenched. So great a social advance could not come without moral strain. Minor regressions result not only from this magnificent moving forward of social standards, but also from the fact that at the same time women came to share in the spirit of a prevailing philosophy of self-





expression, and also began to admit frankly to themselves that physical sex to the female as to the male brings strong and pleasurable impulses that can be easily detached from affection and made to serve as substitutes for the profounder needs of human nature.

There is, however, no ground for becoming morally panic-stricken on account of this seeking of pleasure on the sex level. The dissolving of the fear code must strikingly reveal the attractiveness of love which was partly submerged when conduct was largely dominated by a fear code which forced into marriage persons who sought only the pleasures of physical sex.

As we enter this period of crisis caused by the transition in the regulating code, what should be the policy of our moral leadership? The futility of mere denunciation is clear. The uselessness of invective is so apparent that those who practise it are open to the suspicion of attempting to conceal their lack of capacity for the task of moral guidance. The only re-



sponse they can obtain is from those already thoroughly committed to former tradition, who because of the stirring of emotion are all the more ill-prepared to deal wisely with the problems thrust upon them as parents. Moreover, sensational attacks by their exaggeration and morbid suggestion become in no small measure stimulants to unwholesome curiosity, and those guilty of such moral malpractice are seldom so ignorant as not to know the nature of the appeal they make and the mischief they run risk of producing. A moral program, to be effective, must be constructive.

He who has no help to contribute can at least abstain from muddling things by reckless words.

It is certainly no time to surrender. Any effort to label experimental sex relations with the marks of genuine marriage means confusing the issues and effacing the distinction between seeking sex for sex's sake and marrying for affection. Those who choose the detour know full well that they have left the



matrimonial highway, and they can be argued into believing that they are on the proper road toward marriage happiness only by taking from them their native sense of direction and values. Neither law nor social sanction, even if experimental marriage were popularized, can ever make the substitute appear the same substance as affection to those who are honest enough to face squarely their desires.

The new freedom is a direct and unequivocal challenge to social leadership. It can only be met by recognizing the necessity of clearing the way for the triumph of affection as the motive of marriage. Accomplishment can only come from recognizing the influences that undermine affection, and the resources in the hands of moral leaders for its conservation.

First of all, there is need of building up right ideas about life. Marriage does not stand as a thing apart. It is of the very substance of the everyday thinking and feeling of people. If luxury and false values flourish, successful marriage is to that extent more

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hard. Modern Christianity is finding as much difficulty in mastering modern civilization as did primitive Christianity in its struggle with the Roman civilization. There is no advantage, however, in concealing the source from which the vexing influences flow that are making marriage difficult. If the meaning of life is lost, the values of human experience perverted, marriage suffers immediately and supremely. Matrimony that tries to keep to the highest level, affection, becomes more sensitive to the evils of materialism than did the union of men and women who were dominated in their relationship by the former code of fear. Marriage experience provides an accurate clinical thermometer by which we can test the health of prevailing culture. Thus in matrimony social leadership sees reflected a trustworthy statement of its success as a moral and religious force.

The new freedom also challenges parents and social leaders to treat more wisely and with more success the problem of sex. There is no end of criticism in religious and educational circles of bad sex behavior, but little, indeed, is done to provide for the growing youth the knowledge he desperately needs if he is safely to meet his ordeal. The prevailing habit of making no serious effort to instruct or even to encourage the instruction of youth along lines of sex is without doubt a revelation of the strength in the past of the fear code which kept sex in darkness except when because of evil expression it was dragged forward to receive public criticism. Religion all too often has leaned either to the extreme of sensationalism with its morbid suggestion on the one side, or asceticism on the other. In the past our youth accepted as a matter of course this concealment of sex which was in full accord with the general spirit of the time. That condition has passed, and unless moral leadership can deal more constructively with sex, it cannot hope to influence youth in the meeting of their present problems.

Our moral leaders also need more commonly [182]



to recognize the serious need of instruction in preparation for marriage and for parenthood. These experiences, like the other activities of life, need the advantage of information that will make it easier for those who enter matrimony to prosper in their relationship. The material already gathered by science regarding the task of the parent is proving immensely valuable to those who have the good sense to make use of it. We have less knowledge of normal marriage, since most of the facts that have been studied have come out of family disorganization. But we are by no means destitute, and it is an encouraging fact that even the youth of our universities are beginning to demand that they be given instruction about matters in which they are supremely interested and of which, they have the wit to recognize, they are dangerously ignorant. those who are favored in their opportunities for training express eagerness for assistance in planning the most important part of their future life, is there not all the more need of

bringing close to the attention of other youth the value of starting matrimony with some understanding of what it involves?

Here and there in churches and other social organizations are classes definitely organized to prepare for matrimony and parenthood. Instruction of this sort is the backfire that most effectively will stop the spread of reckless passion. Where there is genuine desire to assist youth in finding the way to substantial happiness in marriage, pre-marriage and pre-parenthood education are bound to be given emphasis, since here as elsewhere knowledge proves in the long run our most effective ally in attack upon evils.

The three levels upon which matrimonial codes have been built do not show the distinct spacing that we usually find in geological formation, but, in spite of overlapping, their distinctness can be traced in the evolution of the family. It would be a great error to assume that the last, with its deeper anchorage in human nature, is lacking in the resources of

restraint. No control is so effective as that of love. No relationship is more imperious in its demands, for its very excellency makes it intolerant of looseness and base choices. This is the teaching of Christianity in its interpretation of the power of love. Love within matrimony is equally supreme. The code it is sure to produce as the controlling ideal of the great majority of married people will be more just and more flexible, but in no degree less effectual than the inferior codes of the past.

Meanwhile we are not left in the unhappy dilemma of either changing the structure of marriage by frankly making it a trial experience or leaving matrimony as it is, a victim of relative neglect on the part of our educational and moral leadership. We are not justified in waiting with calm optimism the slow emergence of a superior home-life well adapted to the needs of modern men and women.

There is much that can be done, much that must be done, if the family is to have a reasonable chance in this generation to bring to



men and women the supreme joys of human fellowship. The challenging that the family now faces will only work for its good, if the agitation leads to a genuine effort to discover what can be done to make contemporary family life richer and more inviting.

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## CHAPTER X

IS THERE ANOTHER WAY OUT?

If marriage in America is passing through a crisis, it is of the greatest importance that we seek without bias to find the goal toward which in modern life matrimony has been moving. No solution of temporary expediency can be of help to us in this period of testing, if in the slightest degree it draws attention away from the source of matrimonial satisfaction. Any program that tends to conceal from youth the meaning of marriage as a social experience of mature persons can only make it more difficult for the well-intentioned to achieve happiness.

Marriage is not the only human relationship which at present is having difficulty of adjustment. Indeed, throughout the wide sweep of



human experience we find the process of readjustment to conditions that naturally belong to the period of transition. Surely parenthood at present is having as much difficulty in adjusting itself to new circumstances as is matrimony, and if some sort of experimental parenthood were possible, advocates would be shouting it as the one necessary means of settling every family problem and making all happy. The general current of matrimony is flowing toward higher standards and a clearer recognition that affection is the only motive that justifies the intimate living together of husband and wife. Even if social conditions were not such as to unsettle family life and create disturbance in marriage, this trend toward higher levels of matrimonial experience would in itself be the cause both of restlessness and an increasing rate of failure. Progress never comes without cost. Whenever social advancement is going forward, we always find those who, because of temporary difficulties, advocate relief by turning backward and at-



tempting to repudiate the higher goals of promise. Experimental marriage is a bid for sex commitment, while the only solution of our matrimonial ills in accord with the forward movement is the greater stressing of affection as the hope of marriage.

What we need is not a method by which those who fail may more easily get rid of their matrimonial ties, but a better chance for men and women to achieve the matrimonial success for which they hunger. No human experience is, as a rule, started with more honest or profound expectation of success than marriage. A mere sex attraction is by its character temporary, but when love is added nothing carries with it a greater assurance of permanent satisfaction. What we need to know is why marriages that start with abundant promise of success fail, and how this information that we gather can be utilized in helping those who marry to escape pitfalls along their pathway.

It will prove a great mistake for society to

standardize its matrimonial regulations to failure. What it needs is to turn its attention to preparation and to give youth a fair training for the experience into which they usually enter with enthusiasm and sincere desire to attain the happiness of which they have dreamed since early years. So much attention has been given to matrimonial failure that we are in danger of becoming morbid. The result of an extensive study of family disorganization untempered by attention to successful marriages necessarily leads to skepticism, which makes it very difficult for youth who come under the shadow of doubt to use to the full the resources they have for a happy marriage.

What, then, is the solution for the marriage problem? If by the question is meant, "What one thing is to be done to make marriage happy?" the answer must be that there is no solution. A recipe for successful matrimony, in the sense that one may be had for the making of a cake, is impossible, and only the super-

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ficial and the cranks will assume that any specific thing—a change in code or legislation—will greatly assist the married to achieve success.

This does not of course mean that nothing can be done to make the matrimonial status more satisfactory. Much can be done, and there is the greatest need that the question of promoting the welfare of marriage be given the serious concern it deserves.

It is folly to attempt the hopeless task of forcing marriage back to what it used to be under different social conditions. We cannot wisely propose changes merely because they are new. We cannot profit from agitation unless it leads us to examine more carefully the basis of marriage and the source of family values. Anything that helps us realize that along every line effort must be made to conserve the family will, in the long run, prove an advantage. But we cannot expect a magic formula that will insure happy homes. In



spite of the fact that there is no cure-all, it is not difficult to discover practical ways of offering help to the family.

## EDUCATION FOR FAMILY LIFE

It is folly to expect happy homes unless we rid ourselves of the notion that the family can be left alone and, without any effort being made to conserve its welfare by education, public opinion, and social standards, can maintain its efficiency and bring to men and women the happiness they have a right to demand.

At present, especially in the middle class, undue strain is put upon many youth because of their necessity of postponing marriage. This could easily be changed if public opinion would recognize the advantage of those marrying who are mature and thoroughly committed to their choice, but are still continuing professional education. The situation is especially irksome when the woman is ready to be married and the man suggests that he must delay

marriage until he has completed his training and established himself in his profession. If higher education could shake off some of its traditions and be rid of the lock-step schedule and the formal credits which at present permit an enormous waste of time by those seeking an education, and especially if the colleges could get the courage to find the means of keeping out or getting rid of those who have no serious intellectual interest and who are not trying to get an education, but insisting that by some subtle means it be forced upon them, the marriage age of professional people might be greatly lowered.

It is also unfortunate that pride falsely expressed leads many couples to postpone their marriage until they can afford furnishings and possessions which they have wrongly come to think of as necessary. Here the mischievous teaching often comes from parents, who, forgetting their own earlier struggle, build up in their children a habit of thinking which makes it seem important that marriage should not oc-





cur until financial security has been achieved. When social conditions stimulate sex on the one side and tend to postpone marriage on the other, it is inevitable that a proportion of difficulty should arise from the temptation to accept a sex relationship instead of the more permanent and secure union of affection. In the proportion that luxuries are sought instead of family values, leading to the postponement of marriage and parenthood, society reveals its fundamental unsoundness, and in such circumstances it is folly to expect any considerable increase of family satisfaction as a result of legislating easier ways for divorce. If materialism warps our sense of values, we must pay the penalty for false notions of the sources of happiness in a relative neglect of the family.

Education itself has been notoriously neglectful in its attitude toward marriage and the family. At a time when we have come to realize that everything which is to flourish as a social experience must have preparation of an instructional character, it is amazing that



we have been so slow to take over in our educational program any specific and practical effort to conserve family welfare. It is true that we have paid some attention to the training of the girl in the field of cooking and household management, but even this has been largely restricted to a portion of our adolescent girls, and usually a group that did not go beyond high school. Even this instruction has often been ill-adapted to the normal conditions of the modern home. At best it has concentrated too much upon the mechanical, and has seldom incorporated with courage any genuine preparation for marriage aside from household technic. The parent has seldom done more for the child than has the teacher. As a consequence people have married, highly trained and well-prepared for most of the relationships of life, but utterly destitute of any information given accurately by competent teachers that would function to make their marriage a success and their family life more efficient.



Recently, as a result of pressure from many quarters, there is beginning to be in the thinking of college administrators and school superintendents some realization of the obligation that naturally and rightly falls upon education to prepare for marriage, parenthood, and family responsibilities. It is not true that such information is unsought by the thoughtful student. On the contrary, there is every indication that many youth, although they have a hazy idea of what they want, realize the necessity of finding trustworthy information respecting sex, home problems, and the care of children. In some instances the requests for practical courses in preparation for marriage have come from the student body itself. Indeed, it is only fair to say that on the whole youth appreciates even more than older people the need of specific instruction that prepares for marriage and parenthood. They have come to look to education for help along every other line, and, in spite of their apparent sophistication and lack of reticence, they real-

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ize that they do not have the trustworthy information of which they feel the need.

It is the increasing conviction of many students of the American home that preventive work for the family as an institution has been relatively neglected by both educational and social agencies. This is the mutual result of the traditions that still persist which emphasize the personal and private as compared with the public aspects of the family, the overstrong confidence of the great multitude of our citizens in the intuitive or instinctive preparation that marriage and parenthood are assumed to call up in individuals, and especially the doubt whether science is ready to handle problems such as those concerning the intimacies of marriage and the home.

As science, particularly sociology, psychology, and psychiatry, has brought a large quantity of human experience under causal explanation, human conduct problems have been attacked with success in various lines of social experience, and in the face of skepticism the



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value of these new drives of social effort has been gradually demonstrated.

The psychopathic clinic for the youthful offender, the pre-school child clinic, the habit clinic, and the nursery school are recent enterprises that, by bringing science to bear upon child problems, serve the family.

For the adult we have the mental hygiene movement, the psychopathic clinic, industrial psychology and to some extent the court of family relations, all putting to effective use the findings of the rapidly developing science of human conduct.

It is interesting to notice that much of this work, useful as it is, deals with problems after they have originated, but that each movement is being led toward greater emphasis upon prevention.

All this modern application of science to problems of human adjustment concerns the family, and the development of such work is clearly pointing to the logical next step, an attempt to apply this science more directly to



the home as an institution and to deal with family problems on the basis of prevention in the way characteristic of our successful modern social efforts.

It is evident that our child clinics, psychopathic clinics, and family court organizations are being forced more and more to deal with the family as a whole rather than with the individual member that happens to come for assistance. It is equally clear that this work for persons in trouble will not lead many people to seek the aid of such organizations at an earlier stage of their adjustment problem, when their difficulty is less acute and can be more quickly and thoroughly remedied. Moreover, it is doubtful whether these organizations are really prepared to deal with individuals who are in the first stages of difficulty or whose problems are essentially social in character. The major work of these semimedical and legal agencies is necessarily with those who are suffering from adjustment difficulties of a character that demands immediate

relief. Work of this sort creates in most specialists a tendency to stress the abnormal to an extent that hampers them in dealing with the more ordinary social problems that arise in family life.

No one would discount the valuable work done for those who, after adjustment problems have become serious, seek expert help; but preventive work for adults must, so far as family life is concerned, develop with little suggestion of the abnormal. For the abnormal whose problems are psychopathic in character we have institutions and clinics that are highly efficient and require no duplication. We also have a very valuable contribution from the private practice of psychiatrists. What we do need is an opportunity for those who are of the normal group to obtain impartial advice based as largely as possible upon the experience of a specialist well fitted to deal with family problems.

There have always been family problems, and they have been handled by men of greater or less skill in meeting the needs of those who have sought counsel. Ministers and doctors have done a great quantity of such work in the past and still do it, but in a diminishing proportion and with less and less success. This change has come from the greater specialization of our time which, by fitting one to do well his chief task, gives him scant preparation for a different line of service.

A characteristic picture of a part of the work of many doctors of the past is given with reference to his father by Charles Darwin:

Owing to my father's power of winning confidence, many patients, especially ladies, consulted him when suffering any misery, as a sort of Father-Confessor. He told me that they always began by complaining in a vague manner about their health, and by practice, he soon guessed what was really the matter. He then suggested that they had been suffering in their minds and now they would pour out their troubles, and he heard nothing more about the body.

. . Owing to my father's skill in winning confidence, he received many strange confessions of misery and



guilt. He often remarked how many miserable wives he had known.

The minister also is called upon to give advice, but is often by temperament and training not well fitted to deal with concrete problems that involve not moral preachment but scientific insight. Individuals are not likely to seek their clergyman, if this can be avoided, to disclose personal difficulties, since the community position of one's minister makes a confession to him so often contrary to one's pride. Both the minister and the doctor are too likely to find such family problems as are brought them the final climax of maladjustments of such long standing that they have become hopelessly chronic.

For some years in a quiet way through my work with students I have been giving advice to members of my classes, their relatives and friends, and for the most part this has been with reference to family problems. The amount of this work I have had to limit closely

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or it would have developed beyond my ability to continue it without injury to my teaching and writing.

I have welcomed this practical service because of the insight it has given me into family problems and, even had I wished, it would have been difficult to avoid giving my students opportunity to consult me in regard to their problems, since their coming for advice was a natural consequence of my courses. I have in recent years, however, asked them not to seek help unless they felt their problems were really serious, explaining that I must give my time to those needing it most.

It has been impossible for me to confine this work and I have to some extent given time to strangers whose cases appealed to me. Of late as this work has become more widely known I have found myself embarrassed by the impossibility of finding time to deal with the cases that have come to me by correspondence.

To emphasize the fact that people of intelligence and education have felt the need of coun-



sel, I herewith give parts taken from a few samples of recent requests.

Will it be asking too much, professor, for you to allow me to see you and tell my troubles and ask your advice? I have always considered a man a coward or mental sluggard who unnecessarily burdens others with his troubles, but I cannot solve my problems alone. 'Tis like that theorem in geometry—two points determine a straight line—and one won't do. This is not perhaps an unusual request for you to receive, but I sincerely hope that you will see fit to grant it, for my whole life depends on the proper solution of my problems and, what is even worse, the happiness of another. I am twenty-four, a college graduate and a former athlete.

## [From an educator]

I am facing, as is my wife, a personal crisis of the greatest magnitude. Could I possibly see you soon and get your help and advice?

I realize that perhaps you are now receiving many such requests, but I pray that you may instinctively realize that this problem of mine really needs your help.

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## [From a business man]

I am inclined to believe that before I am through telling you my predicament I am likely to rob your time to the extent of possibly two hours. Of course I could ask you to give me a few minutes of your time, but I know that would not be so, and appreciating the fact that you are a very busy man, it is not my intention to entice you to something by telling you that it will take a little time and then encroach upon your good nature with more.

It is, however, a predicament that I am in that I consider very troublesome. I have tried to ask advice from some of my friends and no one could seem to advise me. If my problem was such that it was involving me only, undoubtedly I could settle same without seeking other advice. My situation, however, involves the happiness of other people, particularly a son of mine, who is seventeen years old. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that I act as carefully as possible, and may I again ask you if you would be kind enough to give me your time, as I see that you have helped other people. I hope that you may be able to help me.

The family problems vary greatly in form, [205]



although certain fundamental characteristics appear again and again.

What is generally sought may be described as follows:

- (1) Opportunity to get an impartial outside view of a matter concerning which there are in the family differences of opinion.
- (2) Opportunity to get outside reactions to a decision that involves the welfare of other members of the family.
- (3) Opportunity to confess something which has become mentally or morally troublesome, in order to get relief from keeping the problem to oneself and with confidence that it will never become public.
- (4) Advice with reference to some serious adjustment in a family situation or at least one that seems important.
- (5) Advice as to the specialist to whom the individual can go to get expert help regarding some serious adjustment difficulty.

In my experience the cases do not represent the hopeless situations revealed by divorce trials, but problems that mean the beginning of separation and therefore are more easily handled. Child problems, problems of marriage and engagement, of incompatibility, loss of affection, trying habits, and misinterpretations appear often.

Problems that reveal morbid elements or that can be handled best by existing agencies are directed to the proper sources of help.

We are in great need of reliable information concerning normal family life. This is hard to get, but without it our education for parents will be largely hit-or-miss. We have learned much from childhood difficulties, and the present progress of child training is in large measure the product of insight the child clinic has given us into the child's problems.

Matrimony and adult family experience will profit greatly from the gathering of information regarding various kinds of family difficulties. There seems to be only one way to get this material and that is by providing a place where family problems can be carried for scientific counsel.

Any bureau that might be established ought to put great stress upon popularizing the results of the study of family problems, as in this way preventive work for the family could be best accomplished.

A bureau for family counsel requires a scientific basis. The question naturally arises, "Have we the necessary science?" We have nothing that compares with the exact physical sciences, but we do have material of great value as a means of interpreting human behavior, and family life is a special expression of human nature. The family does not produce an original and different personality; it merely provides a unique relationship in which characteristic behavior shows itself. The science that helps in dealing with other forms of human conduct also proves of value in handling matrimonial and home difficulties.

It is also true that anyone with a scientific training who gives considerable time to counselling families must soon develop an experide

ence of great practical value in dealing with problems of the home.

A question that has frequently arisen in my mind has been, "What are the legal difficulties of a family bureau?" Only a lawyer is competent to discuss the limits that law and court decisions may put upon family counselling. In matrimonial quarrels the legal aspects of counsel would surely need consideration. In any case no bureau for family counsel could safely function without an intimate association with a legal aid society or some other source of legal advice.

### WHOLESOME ATTITUDE TOWARD SEX

The lifting of the taboo on sex discussion has taken a burden away from matrimony and made it possible for men and women to deal frankly and sanely with problems of sex adjustment. At a time when the subserviency of women is passing and marriage is no longer



thrust upon the female because of economic necessity, this changed attitude regarding sex is invaluable, since it means that the woman's demands as well as those of the man may receive consideration. In the past it has been a general tradition that normal women should conceal even from themselves their desire for sex satisfaction, and there have been husbands aplenty who have felt that sex desire was primarily a masculine impulse, shared only by women of no reputation.

This attitude has been gradually changing, but, so far as the youth of today are concerned, it has utterly passed, and the normal girl as well as the boy takes it for granted that sex desire is a human possession, something of which one has no need to be ashamed. It is not, however, true that all who now enter marriage are so free from the shadow of the past or so well-informed that they easily make a sex adjustment that is mutually satisfying. Masculine traditions, a product in former generations of relationship with prostitutes, still linger and

make it difficult for many a man, because of ignorance of the normal woman's reaction, to give his partner in matrimony the satisfaction she has a right to expect. This has until now been a common cause of incompatibility, and it would operate even more disastrously in these days when women express more freely their personal desires and are less tolerant of masculine failure, were it not that we are fortunately coming to appreciate the seriousness of this problem and are beginning to give those who need it the knowledge that permits them to have insight into this fundamental problem of their matrimonial life.

Where the taboo still operates and the girl is brought up to think of sex as something shameful to recognize, the wholesome attitude becomes extremely difficult to attain, and often the husband and wife pass through a period of crisis which causes, at least for a time, an unnecessary tension—even, in the most serious cases, a breach in affection that is never entirely closed. Any parent that attempts to bring

back in the home the taboo of the past and shelter the child by creating notions of fear and shame regarding sex is creating circumstances that will make it extremely difficult for the child, when adult development is reached, to handle in a wholesome manner problems of sex.

It is not enough merely to avoid the negative attitude that backward parents take, which causes trouble for their children in later periods, but it behooves all who influence children and youth along the lines that have to do with sex and marriage to maintain a healthy point of view, and it falls upon the parent especially to give the child in early years not only information that will satisfy the natural curiosity of the growing child, but also facts and attitudes that will make it easy when marriage occurs for the young man or woman to make full use of the resource sex offers for a union of affection built upon a permanent and increasing satisfaction. In the early days of matrimony, especially, sex must be the source

from which, to a large extent, affection draws its opportunities to function. In so far as sex is interpreted as a shameful weakness, an experience of darkness, which is obtained in the spirit of lust rather than fellowship, matrimony has to travel on low levels and the individuals are deprived of the joyful and understanding comradeship which keeps in small proportion the minor discords in the living together of the man and woman.

The new morality behind the changes in sex attitudes is of a higher type. For a long time the relationship of the husband and wife has been hurt by the persistency of ascetic attitudes that originated in the distant past from morbid thinking, frequently the result of adult reaction to youthful licentiousness. Born either of fear of sex or the shame felt regarding earlier weakness, asceticism, the cowardly withdrawal from the character-testing circumstances of life, was promulgated as a moral ideal. In so far as asceticism came to be the goal toward which nature should struggle, it

disfigured sex and made normal attitudes impossible.

Although asceticism will always receive support from a certain sort of sick personality, and will for some form a peculiar kind of penance for guilty conduct that the character is not strong enough to face squarely and repudiate, there is every reason to suppose that asceticism has received in this generation a death blow from which it can never recover. It has passed forever from the category of ideals into that of mental abnormalities, and its morbid significance is being generally recognized. The dangers of the misuse of sex must not lead the moral leader to forget that the ethical program cannot be suppression, but direction of an instinct which, under the control of a keen sense of social responsibility, and sensitive to personal self-respect, not only contributes fundamentally to normal family life, but influences for good every sort of social experience among men and women.

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# HOUSEHOLD STANDARDIZATION AND LEISURE

The reaction of women to housekeeping shows a great diversity. There are, without question, modern women who are suffering from too much leisure and because of lack of interest become irritable and restless. On the other hand, there are many who find in their housekeeping responsibilities the great delight of their life, so that sometimes they are more happy as keepers of the home than as wives and mothers. The general trend, however, emphasizes the need of making the household task less exacting.

We must also have a greater standardization of equipment and a simpler manner of living in the home. Many customs that were not a burden when servants were common, or when maiden aunts stayed to help out the mother and wife, still persist and become both a liability along lines of finance and a cause of ex-

cessive expenditure of energy by the housewife. The meaning of the popularity of the city apartment today is not merely that it has become an architectural necessity in congested sections, but it also represents an elimination of much waste of energy that is still associated with the private, detached household. Without question household management has followed the trend of the modern changes in industry. In any community, through cooperative enterprises and better organization of resources, housekeeping could, for those who find it either irksome or a handicap in the carrying on of other activities in which they are interested, be reduced to smaller proportions, permitting a more satisfactory family life and the enrichment of the personality of the wife.

The need of this will be felt most strongly by the oncoming generation, since the young women of today are bound to make greater demands for leisure and freedom than their mothers, who did not in their youth feel the full force of the conditions that now stimulate amdis

bition or create desire for leisure and recreation. When the woman, as was true in the past, had to take it for granted that her destiny as wife and mother put upon her a house-keeping task which not only went from sun to sun, but was literally never done, household responsibilities had a lesser effect upon marital happiness than is now true, when the craving for personal expression has become strong. At the present time affection is not so rarely as some think ground down by the strain of household routine and the husband's responses to the irritability of the wife.

Although progress is being made, especially in the marked tendency toward smaller houses and the greater buying of prepared food, it is still true that tradition greatly influences housekeeping and prevents it from being adapted to present needs. In part this is the result of business, which perpetuates by advertising what may well be called household mores, so that what is considered good taste continues wasteful practices that make the



housewife feel compelled to clutter her space with unnecessary utensils and decorations. Her eagerness to maintain a household according to conventional standards leads to her becoming a victim of unnatural worries, useless rivalries, and general discontent. Emancipation from household tyranny is sought by the younger woman who has found that the road toward sane adjustment does not demand the sacrifice of independent interests and personal self-expression, which in the past has been required of the woman who married. One of the ways of making marriage more inviting, especially to the young woman, is to remove from housekeeping a quantity of useless toil, which even yet the average woman accepts as a legitimate part of her matrimonial destiny.

#### GREATER MATRIMONIAL FREEDOM

Another point of tension at present comes from the social attitude that assumes an unreasonable concentration of man and wife, who

by their marriage are expected to isolate themselves from their friends of the opposite sex. In the middle class, and especially in the small town, this is seen in the extreme. It is hard to imagine two educated people in middle life thoroughly fond of one another having a marriage crisis because the man courteously offered to accompany one of his wife's intimate friends to a lecture the wife was unable to attend. Yet this is an actual occurrence, and the conventional jealousy expressed by such an incident is by no means so uncommon as one would suppose.

It is unfortunate that many people cling to the custom of insisting upon what is literal isolation, as compared with the freedom permitted before marriage. The petty jealousies and unreasonable tension caused by these artificia, barriers are seldom valued at their full significance. But they are one of the causes of marriage restlessness, even leading eventually to sex antipathy between the husband and wife who are so constantly thrown upon one



another for social stimulus and contact. Today we sometimes hear young men or women refuse to be married on the ground that it will unreasonably curtail their liberty and force upon them limitations of association which they regard as unnatural and injurious.

Youth, experienced in the comradery characteristic of the present-day association of young men and women, balk when through marriage they are forced into an atmosphere where ordinary fellowship between men and women is interpreted as intrigue. The result is a head-on collision between the rules of yesterday and the spirit of today.

Jealousy has been elevated in the evolution of marriage until to many husbands and wives it has come to be a necessary adjunct of matrimony, an essential element in affection. Literature, public opinion and especially gossip, which always assumes responsibility for enforcing the customs handed down from the past, have conspired to develop a hair-trigger explosiveness wherever jealousy finds a chance to





discharge, and such opportunities are liberally provided by the freer life of today.

Affection must construct security without the suspicion and sense of exclusiveness which has so characterized marriage in the past.

#### REFORM OF DIVORCE

THE divorce problem cannot be satisfactorily solved either by making divorce more stringent or loosening it until it becomes merely consent on the part of the individuals concerned, without any social scrutiny. The quantity of divorce that we have in the United States at present is not only an expression of the hazard inherent when once a man and woman enter upon a life fellowship, but also of the abnormal disorganization of family life due to a social situation that fails to give the men and women who marry with a fair degree of promise the support their venture justifies. If family incompatibility could be reduced to the normal hazard of matrimony, the problem



would fall to such proportions that it would cease to be one of the major weaknesses of modern American life.

There is at present little prospect of relief, for the change demanded will be difficult to bring about until there has been a considerable realization of the suffering now involved in our high divorce rate. What we need is not a lax method of divorce which puts a premium upon incompatibility and encourages restlessness and impatience, but a new way of looking at the problem itself. Instead of the court concerning itself with the question of offense that has been committed which justifies one of the individuals separating from the other, the proper question is, "Why are not these persons happy together, and what can be done, if anything, to bring them into satisfactory adjustment?" Such an attitude turns the court from an atmosphere of criminal procedure to a fact-finding and social-adjusting institution as it operates in our progressive cities.

The juvenile court and the family court [222]





both point the way to what is needed in the handling of our divorce problem. The getting of a divorce needs to be taken away from the traditional attitude which has been usual in the past when the economic element of marriage overshadowed that of affection, and in its place the divorce request needs to be interpreted as an expression of social difficulty which calls for expert help. Complete separation is not justified until reasonable effort has been made by disinterested parties to help the couple in trouble to achieve a satisfactory relationship.

The conscientious lawyer and the conscientious judge know full well that even a slight effort at so late a stage as when a divorce procedure has been started, in cases not a few, prevents the going on of the trial, and leads the way to a reunion which ever after proves thoroughly justified. Indeed, the most superficial observer is familiar with cases in which even those who have gone so far as to get a divorce discover soon that they have made a mistake, have the courage to be remarried, and



in spite of their handicap do eventually achieve happiness.

Any scheme that leads to an automatic, irresponsible, self-directed method of divorce must become a mischievous influence, leading men and women to a hasty decision to separate, when a calm and impartial review of their case by officials of experience in such matters would quickly bring the quarrelling individuals to recognize that their happiness can come not from separation, but from more discerning comradeship.

Such a reversal of attitude toward a divorce may not come quickly, but it is growing more apparent to students of the problem that no other way offers hope in dealing justly with the human interests involved. The slow progress that seems inevitable in switching from a criminal to an investigating point of view in dealing with divorce is not merely because law has already its divorce procedure, thus bringing into being a legal overhead of lawyers and judges whose vocation is related to the present



methods of dealing with divorce, but primarily because our social thinking—our *mores*—are themselves standardized to the conventional attitude toward divorce.

If we were starting afresh with the problem in this age when science gives us so strong a desire to find facts and deal with them in the light of their meaning, a different sort of procedure with reference to family disorganization would doubtless come about as a matter of course. But society always finds difficulty in reversing its well-organized habits, and it is usually only as the result of painful experience that it gives up anything which has become customary in the effort to find a more adequate way of dealing with the problem.

Perhaps the most hopeful element in the present legal situation is the increasing disposition of judges, and to a less extent of lawyers, to make use of every opportunity to give or obtain for the persons asking for a divorce friendly counsel. Occasionally the psychiatrist is called upon to show the persons



in trouble the real origin of their difficulty, and to help them discover that their true happiness hinges not upon running away from each other with hatred in their hearts, but in finding the means of recovery, so that the promise of their early affection can be accomplished. The social worker and the sociologist also help at times to assist in changing discord into matrimonial harmony. The right divorce program can neither be making divorce impossible to obtain for those who must have it or some form of separation, since they cannot live together, nor in offering it so freely that it is accepted as a matter of course, but by treating it as a form of maladjustment which calls for social surgery only as a last resort.

# PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH: ASSISTANCE WITH CHILDREN

Instead of bewailing the incomplete, childless home, friends of the family should study the causes of companionate marriages, and set to

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work to bring about social conditions that encourage normal family life. One thing greatly needed is to make motherhood safer and less painful. The risk of childbirth in this country compared with Europe, and especially with New Zealand, will surprise many Americans. Professor East tells us that, if the statistics for the registration area in this country are representative, we lead the world in maternal mortality. Our record is twice that of Sweden, Italy, and Norway, and considerably larger than Prussia, Hungary, England, and Japan. It exceeds the death rate of France, Australia, Switzerland, Spain, and Belgium.1 Most discouraging of all is the fact that whereas in England, Wales, Ireland, Japan, and perhaps New Zealand and Switzerland, the rate slightly decreased in the years of the present century before the World War, in this country there was a small increase in the death rate of mothers from diseases and accidents connected with pregnancy and child-

<sup>1</sup> East, E. M., "Mankind at the Crossroads," p. 242.



birth.¹ As a result of a special investigation of midwives we are told that at present the general practitioner loses at least as many patients from infection at childbirth as do midwives, who are generally inadequately trained and in many sections under lax supervision.²

If women are asked to become mothers in these days of an efficient medical science, they have the right to demand that their risk and that of the newborn child be given greater attention and the death rate reduced to reasonable proportions. Professor Leta S. Hollingsworth challenges present statistics, believing that they are concealing the full seriousness of our situation.<sup>3</sup>

It is hard also to account for the slowness with which the pain of childbirth is eliminated. It is as if the idea once so firmly held that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Newsholme, Arthur, "The Elements of Vital Statistics," p. 472.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Williams, J. W., "Midwife Problem and Medical Education in the United States," Report, Second Annual Meeting, American Association Study and Prevention Infant Mortality, 1911, pp. 165-194.

<sup>3</sup> Hollingworth, "Impelling Women to Bear and Rear Children," American Journal of Sociology, July, 1916, p. 27.



childbirth was a curse placed upon woman and that it is immoral to attempt to lessen her suffering still continued. Future science, when the ordeal of the mother in labor has been squarely faced, will render the birth process relatively free from pain, and our acceptance of the mother's suffering, when looked back upon from that better day, will appear a remarkable expression of scientific obtuseness. Progress in reducing the danger and the pain of motherhood would doubtless be accelerated, if the custom should develop of having the husband at least once follow from the beginning to the end as an observer his wife's ordeal.

Outside the wealthy class, the problem of the mother after a child's birth, when first she attempts to do her own work, is most distressing. At a time when she needs to avoid fatigue, and when the consequences of her new obligations are likely to determine her subsequent health, she has to undertake the exacting care of the nursing child, usually with very little assistance—indeed, often with none at

The mother who has been through this, all. even if she does not forever suffer an unnecessary injury, finds in the experience which she vividly remembers a reason for hesitating to become a mother a second time. There can be no more practical way of helping the family regain its needed vigor in competition with the attractiveness of the childless home than developing a social machinery to assist mothers in the critical days when they leave the hospital with their baby or when, after being confined in their own home, they attempt once again to carry on their household obligations and to care for the new member of the family, who demands so much careful attention. An organization that could send to such mothers efficient help would do more for the family than innumerable resolutions or speeches on the sanctity of the home.

The conscientious woman, however fond she may be of children and eager to have a large family, must in these days ask herself the question whether she is fit to give the needed serv-

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have. Here again her policy, as contraception becomes more acceptable, will be largely determined by the help she can expect to have in bringing up her children. From this point of view the nursery school movement is of the greatest importance. It need not be selfishness, but the determination to do the best possible for the child, that leads the mother to go to some organization to relieve her, at least for part of the day, of the business of caring for the young child.

The nursery school will prove a poor substitute for a home, but it can be made a tremendous ally for the parents who recognize that it is an attempt by education to give children the best possible opportunity for the forming of proper habits for life. At present the problems of personnel and of cost forbid the general development of the nursery school. But, as the companionate continues to encroach upon normal family life, the community will be forced to recognize the need of establishing



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a practical method of helping parents along the line of the nursery school idea.

There is another problem of the mother that in these days should be more generally recognized, and that is her difficulty in getting relief from the family routine. One of the most common complaints of mothers is the fact that they are so long tied down, and it is strange that their protest is not taken more seriously. The holiday for the mother is an emphatic need, if she is to have a sane and buoyant attitude toward her home responsibilities. It is unreasonable to ask her to wait until the child has grown up before she has any measure of freedom, and then to present her with an unaccustomed leisure which she is ill prepared to use wisely. It is the constancy of the family task which is proving to the modern woman most wearing, and yet the community could easily organize either household visitors or temporary homes for children that would make it possible for the mother to have occasionally the brief vacation which is all that the conscien-



tious mother would either desire or accept. It is useless to criticize mothers for having few children, or to complain that so many of the married avoid child-bearing, if no practical effort is made by social leadership to remove the burden that now unnecessarily comes with the appearance of the child.

### FAMILY INSURANCE AND SECURITY

The growing interest in the proposition of some sort of family allowance and the persistency and extension of the pension-for-mothers idea demonstrate how necessary it is for modern society to provide some way of protecting the family as a unit. The value of life insurance needs no demonstration. But the time seems to be approaching when society itself will be driven to some sort of public policy which may perhaps be best described as family insurance. It is too much to ask that parents will bring children into the world whom they know would have to be left to the mercies of



ordinary charity, if the bread-winner should die. Now that we are beginning to recognize that the child is not a family asset, so much as a responsibility, and that it is the state itself that profits from the child who grows to become a good citizen, it is not unreasonable to ask that in some way family welfare be better secured than is possible at present, even to the most thrifty, if they are not wealthy.

The dangers of subsidizing families on the basis of the number of children in them are too apparent to win the support of the American public. The least desirable families would be most stimulated to produce by any public policy that made the child a means of revenue either from industry or from state or national funds. The hope lies in carrying still farther the idea of life insurance until the family as a unit is protected by the coöperation of a large number of individual homes, so that each may be assured of assistance in meeting stress and in educating its children. Whether this can, under American conditions, be best managed by



private companies or public organizations can perhaps only be determined by experience. Since governments do not manufacture money, and in any case the support of such enterprises must come from public taxation, the widening and more extensive use of a private organization similar to our present insurance company which can insure the family against accident, illness of its members, and the death of the bread-winner, and guarantee assistance to the children when they seek education in later adolescence, if such insurance could be made cheap enough by its large use to come within the means of those needing it, would secure the family. In primitive society the family could usually fall back in time of stress upon the resources of the group, the village, clan, or tribe. The custom that enforced hospitality and required a prosperous family to aid one in distress was a form of simple but practical insurance. In our colonial period the family was protected by alliance with relatives, made possible by the large families and the intense feel-



ing of family responsibility. In our times the family is without security, and unless by some process its hazard be reduced, within the middle class at least, there will be a strong temptation to play safe by not having children, or having only one or two.

The basic desire of the average middle-class family is for security. What it asks is not assistance, but freedom from disaster. Even when it is able to save in preparation for future need, it cannot usually accumulate enough to protect it in case a storm strikes it in its first years. A life insurance policy of assistance only if the bread-earner dies is inadequate.

Family insurance will not lead to a reckless birth-rate, since the conscientious appreciate the obligations of child care and the indifferent have no motive for adding children, when enlarging the family does not increase its security.

The need of help is most strongly felt at present with reference to illness and education.

The first of these problems is tied up with the





larger one of providing the middle class with the full use of medical resources, which at present are enjoyed only by the wealthy and the poor.

The middle class, as a rule, are particularly sensitive to their obligation to provide a suitable education for their children. Higher education is at best costly, but if some of our colleges and universities would cater only to the ambitious and serious-minded youth, and avoid imitating the institutions attended by those who do not seek education as a necessity, on account of the parental financial security, advanced training could be more rapidly acquired and at lesser cost.

Not only do unnecessary social activities add greatly to the cost of present-day college education, but the effort to develop methods of teaching for those who have little educational interest is expensive, without taking account of the slowing up of the progress of the ambitious by the presence in the class room of those who are mostly seeking the pleasures and

social opportunities connected with campus life.

It would also be for the good of the child himself that his financial assistance, whatever its source, should not be so great as to relieve him of some dependence upon his own earning resources, since this experience of earning one's way, at least in part, is itself too valuable a part of education to be left until one embarks upon one's career.

## HOUSING

If family life is to flourish, public policy must give more heed to problems of housing. It is true that the house is only the shell of the home, but to it must conform the family life in its most vital period.

At present we have on the two extremes a serious problem for the family. Influenced by inadequate transportation and the high price of land are the families that are squeezed nearly to death by inadequate quarters. In





the villages and country still persists the inflated house, suggestive in form of Noah's ark, a relic of the days of the unmarried aunt, who worked for her keep, and of cheap and abundant servants. Such a dwelling place has come to be an altar upon which housewives sacrifice health, peace of mind, and even affection in needless toil. From reasons of public policy we condemn unsanitary buildings; for family welfare we equally need to get rid of houses that are burdens, which handed on from the past, crush home-life.

Nothing is more distressing or revealing than the handicap of children to those who must rent. The policy of the landlord, all too often, suggests that it is the family with children that is abnormal. The motives that restrict child-birth are greatly stimulated by the difficulty of renting quarters if there is a child or two in the family. The problem is cumulative, as the father and mother find who have had the audacity to establish a sizable home of four or five children.

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As long as the general public continues its indifference to the housing problem as it influences the family, the avowal that this is the century of the child is mere twaddle, an insidious expression of social day-dreaming.

In making laws of taxation, in forming banking regulations, in establishing community policies, and in forming co-operative organizations, the need of better housing conditions deserves constant attention, if the home is ever to have a reasonable chance to function.

## THE ÆSTHETIC VALUES

Love must have a substantial source of vigor if it is to maintain vitality. The step from sex passion to general coarseness is easily taken. The bringing of sex into the atmosphere of the beautiful is equally facile. The difference between these opposite directions in the development of matrimonial sex is of enormous significance for marriage happiness.

Æsthetic destitution is often back of the [240]

collapse of sex attraction. Our backwardness as a nation in appreciation of art, our relative lack of standards in music, literature, and every form of art is adverse to the growth of matrimonial sympathy and that sane sense of values which gives substance to family association. A multitude of people are morons in art, occasionally grasping the meaning of the beautiful through indirect interpretation. If the stars dropped forever out of the sky, all sunsets lost their colors, and every flower turned gray, there are people who would notice no difference, and would awake to the change only if it were announced in the newspaper.

With increasing leisure, such modern inventions to distribute artistic wealth as the radio and the popular magazine, the general taste still clings to the level of our early, frontier settlements. Without the simplicity of the frankly vulgar, or the refinements that come from æsthetic attitudes, many married men and women are neither good animals nor fully-



equipped humans. Love dies or sinks to feeble response because of the general barrenness of life. Deadly routine, unrelieved by any soul-stirring experiences, strangles affection and forces many a couple to cling desperately to sex pleasure as at least offering a vigorous antidote to the drab emptiness of life.

Problems of marriage, like all other expressions of social maladjustment, reveal how pitilessly modern civilization wears down human morale when there is lack of spontaneity and artistic vitality. Although powerful in our grasp of the resources of modern science, we cannot as a people expect to keep to the right ways of living if we neglect beauty, the twinsister of love. Matrimony flowers best when deeply-rooted.











