

**A woman's best years : the art of staying young / by W. Béran Wolfe.**

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*The Art of Staying Young*

A  
WOMAN'S  
BEST  
YEARS

W. BÉRAN WOLFE

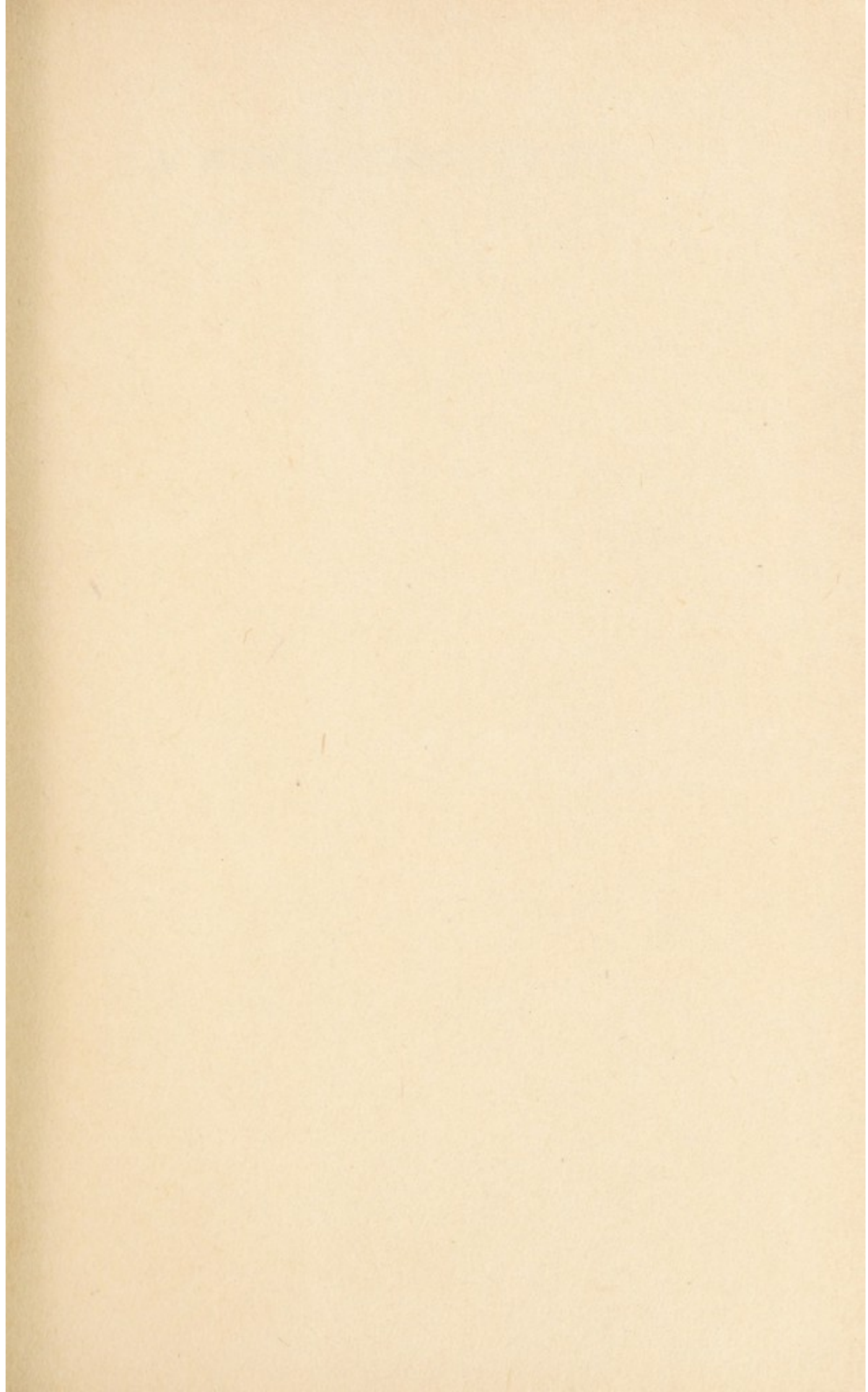
*Author of HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH HUMAN  
NERVOUS BREAKDOWN etc.*

# A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS

This book speaks frankly and courageously about the physical, moral and spiritual problems that confront the mature woman of to-day. It teaches women the art of staying young, the science of acquiring beauty of body as well as freedom of spirit. It reveals how and why the change of life need not hinder a woman's sex life. It offers the first clear discussion of love between women, and it deals fully and sanely with the importance of careers for wives and sex for career-women. Other chapters deal with the errant husband, gigolos, sexual loneliness, sexual frigidity, substitutes for sex, nerves, the do's and don'ts of diet, divorce, the right to love, etc.

“Dr Wolfe has some wise advice to give on the question of physical health, but considers mental health and activity even more important. This book should be a valuable tonic to the women in the forties who are feeling that life holds little romance or activity.”—*Times Literary Supplement*.

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A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS



BY W. BÉRAN WOLFE, M.D.

AUTHOR OF  
"HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH HUMAN"  
"NERVOUS BREAKDOWN" ETC.

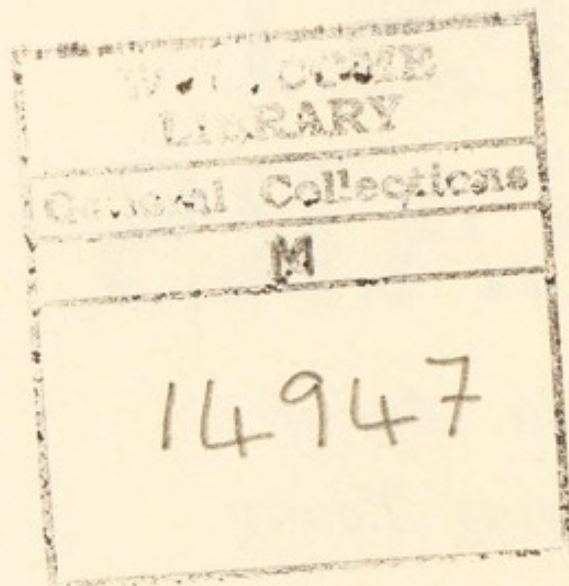
A  
WOMAN'S  
BEST  
YEARS

*The Art of  
Staying Young*

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TO MY WIFE



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## PREFACE

EVERY woman wants to remain young, young in body and young in spirit. In the first decade of her life she explores avidly the rich world of childhood and fills her life with the busy play and the happy fantasies of the nursery and the classroom. Sometime in her second decade she experiences the profound changes that make her a woman, and her life is replete with the dreams of the fulfilment of that womanhood. In the dramatic third decade she finds love, a husband, children, or a career. She is so busy living that she hardly dreams at all. And then, before she is aware of it, she finds herself suddenly in her fourth decade, which is a decade of introspection and soul-searching, a decade of mental inventories. It is the time when every woman must ask herself, "Must I say good-bye to youth and love and work now, and settle down to a stodgy middle age? Or can the coming years spell richness and serenity in my life?"

This book is dedicated to the women who are going to accept the challenge of the fourth decade with clear eyes and good heart. It proposes the

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thesis that *the years of maturity are a woman's best years, and that no woman is ever too old to be a complete human being.* It is written for the women who realise that the only way to remain for ever young is to grow up, to accept the challenge of maturity—and to enjoy it. The first three decades are decades of preparation. Life comes to its flower in the fourth decade, and in the decades beyond unfolds its meaning and value. Youth is not a matter of years, but a matter of mental attitudes. The goal of eternal youth is now within the reach of every woman who learns to be the master of her hours and not the victim of her years.

Many of the problems of maturity cease to be problems when you understand them and are unafraid to meet them. Ignorance is the root of fear, and fear is the root of most of the unhappiness in the world. Most of the fears that women have about middle age are not fears of actual dangers, but are traditional bogeys with which a neurotic civilisation has attempted to intimidate its womenfolk in the dark ages gone by. Many of these fears are nothing more than sociological relics from a time that is happily dead.

Time itself has banished many of these bogeys from the mind of modern woman. Knowledge of contraception, mental hygiene, and modern machi-

## PREFACE

nery have given woman a true emancipation. She is no longer a female slave in her household. Not only can she do her household duties with the aid of man-made machines, but these very machines have enabled her to compete with man in the world's work and to establish her self-esteem by her contribution to the world's welfare.

The physical body with which the modern woman must fight the battles of middle age has been strengthened by modern medicine. Gone are the fears of the menopause. Gone are the fears of unhappy, crotchety, nervous, old age. The secret of physical well-being, the magic of health after and during the menopause, is sold to-day in delicate ampoules in every pharmacy, and may be administered by any competent physician.

The emancipation of the modern woman also has been abetted by a score of great spirits who by their writings have broken down the traditional patriarchal bogeys. Walt Whitman and Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler, Robert Briffault and Norman Haire, together with a host of their disciples, have exploded the myth of woman's innate inferiority and have opened up an entirely new world of creative possibilities for the modern woman. Artists, poets, novelists, essayists, doctors, psychologists, and even philosophers have



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made the modern world a better place for women to live in.

The following pages are more than a mere survey of the problems and obstacles that confront the middle-aged woman. In so far as it is possible and practical to do so, I shall attempt to outline a practical technique of transmuting the philosophy of affirmation into effective everyday conduct. The women who read this book must have the courage and the imagination to construct the symphony of their lives upon the simple chords and the fragmentary themes which are to be found in these pages. Transforming the middle decades into a woman's best years is an art—and no art can be learned from books. I shall feel that the writing of this book has been justified if these pages will serve to acquaint my readers with the scope of the art of living and to stimulate some to apply the principles in their daily lives.

W. BÉRAN WOLFE

# I

## THE MODERN WOMAN'S STRUGGLE WITH TIME

You have been looking in the mirror again! Yes, a few more grey hairs about the temples, and just the barest suggestion of fullness beneath the chin. You cannot run up the stairs without your heart thumping harder than it used to do after two sets of tennis. Perhaps you just feel like spending more evenings at home. Night clubs and dances have somehow lost their glamour. You find yourself looking wistfully at the women ten or fifteen years younger than yourself, wishing perhaps, that you, too, could become as excited about engagements and parties. You do not bounce out of bed in the morning as gaily as you did ten years ago. Perhaps you have found yourself getting a little irritable at times, and you hate yourself for it.

You begin to wonder what life holds for you now. Your thoughts turn inward. Something like a religious renaissance is going on in you. You want to cling to something certain and solid. You catch

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yourself with a tear in the corner of your eye when you listen to certain music. And then one day your son, or perhaps your niece, lets the entire story out of the bag. It is not just a question of the boy's staying out until two o'clock in the morning. It is not the argument that hurts. It is the fact that seventeen says to forty, "But mother (or auntie, or Mrs. Jones, or Miss Smith), *you* wouldn't understand! You're . . . middle-aged!"

You must face the music. You are confronted with reality and there is no getting away from it. You are entering upon a difficult period. Some call it the "dangerous age." Perhaps that is an exaggeration. You can make it a very dangerous age if you do not take cognisance of what is happening in your body and in your mind. But you can also make it an age of serenity and peace if you recognise the problems that confront you, and prepare to meet them as they arise. This is perhaps the most critical time of your life. Not so dramatic as the storm and stress of your adolescence, not so vibrant as the period of mature love and work which you have just closed in your third decade, but none the less *the* decisive decade which will determine whether the rest of your life is to be happy or sad.

It is not too late to take a mental inventory of

## WOMAN'S STRUGGLE WITH TIME

yourself. You may have just turned thirty-five, or you may be fifty-five. In this book you will find your problem and the problems of most of the women in your age group discussed very frankly. All your life you have been carrying a mask before your face, deceiving yourself and deceiving the world. Now you must retire into the secret recesses of your heart and soul, carefully remove the mask where none but you can see, and finally meet yourself—as you are, without verbal or physical lipstick, rouge, or mascara. Unless you do this the years to come will be years of conflict and unhappiness. If you do, if you learn finally to know yourself, the remaining decades can be years of creative self-realisation.

What are some of the problems that you have to face? Let us survey the whole situation. You are the general who commands a small army of talents, graces, abilities, techniques. You must conquer an enemy country. There are traitors in your camp. People call these traitors vanity, overweening ambition, anxiety, emotional immaturity, romanticism, hesitation, doubt, procrastination, and the will-to-be-fooled. No matter. Every army has traitors. If you mobilise your forces strategically, if you know the far country into which you must penetrate, if you have a plan of campaign, you will

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succeed in conquering that arch-enemy, *Time*. The first thing you and I must do is to survey the enemy country.

To do this we must understand the problems that beset the confronting decades.

### I. YOUR BODY: ASSET OR LIABILITY?

The first problem is the problem of physical health. You might as well admit that your forces are going to be worn out by the coming struggle. Your final victory or defeat may depend upon the mastery of your available resources in some unforeseen crisis. Even the healthiest woman cannot muster the forces at forty-five which she squandered at twenty-five. The "pitch" of life sags with the passing of years.

To attempt to maintain the pitch of youth when arteries, muscles, glands, and nerves can no longer stand the struggle, is folly and ignorance. The first step in your campaign must be to find out just what forces you command. Go to your doctor. He alone can make the inventory for you, the objective inventory of your vital reserves. Let him examine you thoroughly, and make it a rule to be re-examined once a year from to-day. The body is a curious thing. If you try to run a locomotive

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without coal, it will stop. If you try to run the body beyond its safety limits, it will burn itself out to keep up with your neurotic ambition. It will not whimper or complain for a long time. But eventually it will cripple you in self-defence, if you do not listen to its claims.

Perhaps you have known for many months that you should have your teeth attended to, your heart tested, some minor operation performed which you have been deferring because you have been too busy living. Attend to them now. My advice will be useless to you if you work against me by refusing to wear glasses when you need them, by allowing teeth to decay without dental attention, by letting hæmorrhoids or varicose veins destroy your sense of humour, fallen arches cripple your activity, or constipation cloud your mind. Go to your doctor to-morrow. Tell him the truth. And follow his suggestions.

### 2. BEAUTY AND SEX APPEAL

The second problem concerns the many women who have staked everything in life on beauty and sex appeal. Yours has been a false strategy of life. You have been interesting to men, men have loved you, men have flattered you, men have lauded your

## A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS

beauty, men have bought you expensive presents to win your favour. And now you face the blunting of your chief weapon. Each little crow's-foot, each additional pound, throws you into a panic. The spectre of the menopause is just around the corner. Menstruation is beginning to be a little irregular? Men are choosing the younger beauties? Are you going to face life without love, without affection? Do the declining decades spell personality disaster to you because you have staked everything on beauty and sex appeal, because Time, the implacable croupier, is rapidly raking in your last counters? Have you noticed the first signs of panic? Have you been laying snares for youngsters whom you would never have considered in your prime? Are you making a last play for some superannuated widower whose income spells a loathsome security? If this has been your false strategy in life, take stock of yourself. You must face the music! You must try to develop something more permanent than mere physical beauty if you want your life to be always serene and happy.

### 3. MENTAL STRANGULATION: FAMILY STYLE

The third great problem of middle age concerns the women who have made the cult of their families

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their sole profession in life. You have always been a dutiful daughter. You married and loved and brought beautiful children into the world. You slaved and sacrificed for them. They were your jewels, and you showed them proudly to the world. Nothing else mattered but your home and your children. But the world has changed! Your son has already left you. In a far city he cleaves to his wife and child and resents your good-natured and maternal solicitude in helping his Mary to run her own household. You sense you are not a welcome guest in his house. Your daughter is champ-ing at the bit. She calls herself "modern." She works in a laboratory, and you know that she is having sexual relations that have never been sanctioned by the clergy. Your youngest son, now eighteen, is a complete mystery to you. You cannot even follow the radical and Bohemian ideas which he flaunts at your dinner table. Your husband, always so busy trying to make a living despite the hard times, is equally remote from your ideal. How many nights have you been weeping on your pillow? Will you continue to hover over your brood by sheer force, making a nervous wreck of yourself, and embittered neurotics of them? Do you want to settle down to a life of hypochondria because there is nothing else left to you? You must



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have wider horizons and more extended social relations than those of your own family if you want to find meaning in the last decades of life for which the first were but a preparation.

### 4. SEXUAL LONELINESS

The widow, the divorcee, the unmarried woman, must fight it out in our fourth sector, the sector of sexual loneliness. Whether you have loved and lost, or never loved at all, whether yours was a full and rich life with a husband you loved deeply, whether you fought and battled to a separation or divorce, or whether you never loved at all, in these decades you must meet the problems of lonely nights. Can you be faithful to an image? Do you wish to remain the victim of an embittered misanthropy born of sexual unhappiness? Can you face a life in which the love of a man plays no part? Some women have done so, some women can do so. Many women have been shipwrecked, physically and mentally, spiritually and socially, on the rocks and shoals of sex. Look into your heart! Can you live without love? After forty you may awaken to the great love of your life, or you may entomb yourself finally and for ever in the white sepulchre of spinsterhood. Middle age is a difficult time, at

## WOMAN'S STRUGGLE WITH TIME

best. Without love, it is far more difficult for most women.

### 5. WHAT PRICE CAREERS?

The fifth problem confronts the woman with a career. For you business, art, the stage, a profession, have been the things. You have not bothered with men nor let them annoy you with their sentimental propositions of stodgy wifehood. You have stood on your own feet. You are a success in the eyes of the world; but in your own boudoir, after a full day in your shop or office, you have thrown your tired head on the pillow and wondered what it was all about. You wept last night at a silly and sentimental film of a lost and neglected child. You may even have thought you would take a year's holiday abroad, get a good strong man to collaborate with you in the sexual rites, have a child, and bring it up without the annoyance of having a father about. You catch yourself looking wistfully at little six-year-old boys riding their tricycles in the park. Was it worth while, this success that you bought at the price of your heritage as a woman? Adopt a child at your age? Go through all the nuisance of feeding and clothing and playing with a tot? Drown the idea of it in working harder,

## A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS

making more money, taking more foolish trips round the world with foolish people all running away from their own problems? Success or no success you must face the problem before it is too late. Neither fame nor money will carry you through alone.

### 6. BRIDGE, BAZAARS, AND BOREDOM

The society woman is confronted with the sixth problem. Must you admit that endless bridge parties are beginning to pall? That the parties and the entertainments and the long hours of drinking are upsetting you? Are there no more good plays? No more fun in the same golf foursomes, the same tiresome gossip, the same silly matinees? What now?—Alcohol? Morphine? Gigolos? Travel?—What is left? Move to another community and begin all over again with the same bridge parties, the same matinees, the same gossip, the same superficial novels, the same silly comedies? More balls, more débutante teas, more charity bazaars? Fed up, jaded, depressed? Now you must put something more into life than being a good hostess and a fair bridge player. Around the corner the demon Ennui is waiting to get you. Social position and the joys of social functions may punctuate the first four decades and make them interesting, but the

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activities of formal society, alone, will not help you over the long stretches of middle age.

### 7. THE "ALSO RAN" WOMAN

A special problem confronts the woman who aimed high—too high—and failed. Are you tired, fretful, hot-tempered, irritable? Are you happy only when you are fussing about something or criticising the world? Are you an embittered human who has forgotten to smile? Suspicious of men and women? Hateful to all who annoy you? I know, you wanted to marry the squire, you wanted to be the best designer in London, you wanted to be elected to the most exclusive society, you wanted to live down your mother's bad opinion of you. The lines of hate are getting deeper on your face. Will it be a modification of the ambitions, or a life of paranoid delusions of persecution? Perhaps you could be happy in what you have accomplished if you lessened your aggressive drive for fame? Perhaps your childhood ambitions were frustrated for your own good? It is not enough to meet the challenge of the middle decades with a pessimistic philosophy. Something more than the keen edge of sarcasm is required to put meaning into the years that follow the fortieth birthday.

## A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS

### 8. ROMANCE: BEFORE AND AFTER

The eighth problem confronts a vast host of women, the women who have based everything in life on romance. Are you a spoiled child? Has the adorable husband who has always waited on you hand and foot been discovered in the arms of "the other woman?" Have you always taken for granted that it is the world's privilege to wait upon you as a princess? Is the princess getting a little fat and frowsy? And are the ardent suitors looking elsewhere? Has your smug security been shattered by a cleverer woman who realised that even the best men are susceptible to flattery and attention, especially when their wives do nothing but demand, demand, demand? Have the once inviolable precincts of your domestic principality been invaded and torn from under you? And do you feel helpless to cope with the situation? Romance is dead? What comes after romance? If there is one thing that will not help you after you are forty, it is the romantic attitude that the world owes you love, respect, gratitude, or honour. You may have received homage at twenty without earning it—simply because you were pretty, or had adoring parents. At forty you will have to earn

## WOMAN'S STRUGGLE WITH TIME

the world's approval with something more valuable than a pretty face.

### 9. RELIGION AT TWILIGHT

Our ninth problem concerns the women who have been brought up to believe implicitly in the faiths of their parents, in the superstitions they learned at school. Have you invested three decades of implicit belief, four decades, even five decades of faithful performance of the time-honoured rituals which the school-books insisted would bring happiness and success? You have rigidly adhered to all the rules, but the promised happiness has not materialised. The happy women seem to be the women who broke all the rules. The old religious and ethical sanctions do not work. You are in the greatest moral quandary of your life. You have lived a saintly life, and the men you wanted married gay Jezebels and glamorous Delilahs who forsook the admonitions of their mothers. The school-book mottoes lied! And now, what? Hate and rebellion? It's too late. Redoubled saintliness, redoubled affirmation of the worn-out mottoes? You know yourself that they are hollow and empty. More submission, more gullibility, more saintliness? It is not too late to open your eyes. In the middle

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decades you will have time to search within your own soul, and time, too, for a revaluation of all values. In these years you must discover either a religion or a new set of moral values which will guide you through the twilight!

### 10. EMOTIONAL SHIPWRECKS

Unhappy are the women who face the tenth sector, the problem of ruptured emotional attachment, in the middle decades. The loss of a parent, a sweetheart a husband, a child, a companion on whom you have lavished your entire love, on whom you have depended completely for spiritual sustenance and moral support, is one of those critical situations which confronts the woman who has focused her emotions not wisely but too well on a single object. What will the future bring you? Frustration and mourning, neurosis, melancholia, suicide? Do not wait until the inevitable happens. This is surely one of the avoidable defeats in your campaign for happiness. Even though your emotional attachment to one individual is not yet broken, you must seek now to enlarge your emotional horizons before your unstable emotional state topples you into mental disaster.

## WOMAN'S STRUGGLE WITH TIME

### 11. THE AMENITIES OF BEING POOR

The eleventh problem concerns you who have lived in power and glory, and lost. Many a woman to-day must face a revaluation of values in a world where all that was believed secured and strong has crumpled. Money? Power? Esteem and prestige? These are the most fleeting vanities of all vanities. Do not fear this loss, or has it already robbed you of your sole basis for self-esteem? What now? You felt so sure of yourself, so haughty, so proud, when your father had a large income. Can you face life with a smile on four pounds a week? Without maids, without motor-cars, without jewels, without a box at every first night, without expensive perfumes, without Paris frocks? Would you be capable of facing reality if what you still have were wiped out? Are you prepared? Do not spend your days worrying about your financial investments. Invest your money in education. The best investment for middle age is a wide horizon of interest, emotional vitality and elasticity, broad social activities, and a career of service to your fellow men.



## A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS

### 12. YOU CAN'T KILL TIME!

The twelfth great problem which confronts the middle-aged woman is the ever increasing problem of leisure. Are you bored? Are all the pleasures that you have been pursuing with such avidity no longer capable of stimulating your surfeited nerves? You have security, you have love, you have children, but you have been killing Time, and now you are going to suffer for it, for Time is going to kill you!

Leisure is the most acute of modern problems for the unprepared. The state will furnish you a bed, a roof, a crust of bread, if you are hungry and homeless. But only *you* can solve the problem of your spare time. Do you think you can kill time for ever? A good hobby is one of the heaviest guns which you can train on the arch-enemy, Time. Whatever else may befall the woman who has developed hobbies and avocations, she will never be a burden to herself. The art of getting on with yourself is one of the most important arts to learn in middle age.

There is your survey of the enemy country. You have ten, twenty, perhaps forty years in which to gain your objective. In our subsequent chapters we shall examine these problems in detail. I am going to show you how you can meet these problems—

## WOMAN'S STRUGGLE WITH TIME

and solve them. My book is replete with the actual histories of women who have conquered the bogeys of middle age. You will find your problem illustrated among them—and you will be encouraged by the examples of the nameless women who have learned how to conquer Time.

Now you have only to look into the mirror of your own soul and admit that some of these problems exist—for *you!* You cannot hide, you cannot run; that way lies disaster. You must accept the challenge of the years. Face them with open eyes and courage. Know yourself, your assets, your limitations, your special powers and your hidden weaknesses. Then you can meet these problems with poise and serenity and say with Robert Browning,

“Grow old along with me  
The best is yet to be  
The last of life for which the first was made.”

## II

### MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR BODY

EVERY woman who reaches the age of forty begins to think about her body more than she did before her fortieth birthday. No matter how emancipated and matter-of-fact she may be, no matter how hard she is working, no matter how successful her love life, her attention is called to the fact that the elasticity and vigour of youth are no longer hers. She begins making more frequent trips to the beauty parlour. She uses her mirror more often. She finds herself investing more money in corsets and girdles than was her wont. She makes more visits to her doctor. And whether she admits it or not, she spends a considerable amount of time thinking about the coming of the menopause.

If I can help dispel some of the outrageous fears and fallacies that exist in the minds of countless women concerning this one problem of the menopause, this book will have been worth writing. In our patriarchal civilisation, built as it is on masculine

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR BODY

ideals and masculine morals, a woman even at best has no easy time of it. She has to compete with men in fields for which men are usually better suited. At worst she is degraded to the level of the charwoman, the lowest-paid drudgery in the world. Most women attempt to lift themselves out of the slough of this artificial inferiority imposed on them by men, by developing their sex appeal. A woman with a compelling "sex appeal," a woman with "It," can laugh at the economic and social restrictions that men have placed on her career.

In business as well as in their private relations women profit legitimately by the introduction of their feminine graces into the drab routine of the office day. There is no disgrace in this introduction of a feminine softness into the hard, steel-like environment of modern business. Lionel Britton has pointed out in his novel, *Hunger and Love*, that men are extremely grateful consciously or unconsciously for the colour and the artistry of femininity which are introduced by women associates into the arid wastes of their eight-hour exile from society and the home. The woman who neglects to take advantage of this situation in a fallacious belief that she must be objective and non-feminine to be a good business woman, reckons without the realities of office life.

At the office, in the drawing room, or in the

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home, the successful woman turns her feminine graces to her own profit and to the delight of her male associates as well.

With paint and with powder, with well-chosen clothes and seductive perfumes, she befuddles the allegedly nobler critical faculties of her male companions, and brings them to their knees. The gullible male victims of this hocus-pocus call it "chivalry." In other words, the clever modern woman is a past master in the use of the one thing that nullifies the professional he-man's superiority, her sexual constitution. Lacking a woman as a foil, the ultra-masculine man is at best an incomplete animal. By carefully using her sex appeal, a woman can establish a *de facto* equality, even though *de jure*, in the lawbooks and office ledgers, she is categorised as man's inferior. I need not go into the technique of glamour. You women who are reading this book will have learned your fair share of this technique and, if you have learned it well, you have a place in the sun of humanity to show for it. By developing your sex appeal you have simply harnessed all the technical strength and training for which males slave away their days, by artfully getting at the Achilles' heel of men—their basic vanity, their basic sense of inadequacy, their basic tendency to confuse thinking and wishing.

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Perhaps some of my readers have not succeeded in getting this far. They may have been deluded into believing what men have always told them about themselves. If so, they have continued throughout the first three decades thinking that men were really superior, women really inferior. They have acted as timid violets, and never found the supreme satisfaction of love and the sexual caress. Whether you have succeeded in attaining glamour and sexual security, or whether you have found the sexual problem too difficult to solve and read these lines with a virginal mind and body makes no difference in the discussion of the present problem.

### I. BODY, SOUL, AND THE MENOPAUSE

Some time between the ages of forty and fifty-five every woman goes through a tremendously important period of physiological and psychological change called the menopause, the climacteric, or the "change of life." In some women, especially in unmarried women who have lived very isolated lives, this begins earlier, and in other women, notably those who have had many children, it begins later. But sooner or later it comes to all women.

Any woman of thirty-five or over who reads this book was brought up in the Victorian era, and,

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whether she admits it or not, she has been poisoned by the bourgeois, patriarchal, superstitious, moral codes that came to flower in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. If you do not believe me just take out the family album and look at the clothes your grandmother and mother wore when you were getting your ideas on sex. I think one look at the family album will convince you that you were the victim of an age which believed in the "sublime innocence of ignorance."

It is more likely than not that your whole life has been spent with the hidden fear that the menopause meant not only the end of the period of sexual reproduction, but also the death of sexual desire and the cessation of sexual gratification in general. More than one woman has confessed to me that she believed that after the menopause a woman lapsed into a sort of spiritual and physical senility for which no remedy existed. Perhaps when you were very busy you did not think much about the menopause, but now that the time for these changes is not far off, you have begun to wonder, and to worry.

But let's get at the facts.

The facts are these. The "change of life" is a period varying in duration from a few months to a year or more, during which the female reproductive

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organs undergo certain profound changes. The uterus, or womb, and the ovaries become smaller. The thyroid gland undergoes certain modifications which make it much less active. As a result, the entire glandular balance of the body is upset, and with this upset concomitant changes take place in the mental and physical and emotional constitution. Usually there is a slowing down of the tempo of life, a deposition of fat, notably on the buttocks, a gradual diminution of the menstruation with, finally, its complete cessation, a tendency to sweat and flush easily, accompanied by subjective changes known as "hot-flushes," and the like. In the mental sphere there is a well-marked tendency to irritability, worry, over-sensitivity, introspection, depression, and sometimes fairly marked changes in the ability to pay attention, remember, and concentrate on immediate problems. The emotional changes may run the entire gamut from extreme sexual passion to complete sexual apathy, from querulousness and self-pity to stoical impassivity.

Does that sound dreadful? It isn't nearly as bad as it sounds, because nine-tenths of the difficulty is purely psychological, and the other tenth, which is physiological, is amenable to-day, thanks to the advance of gynaecology and endocrinology, to successful treatment. I do not hesitate to say that



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*the woman who approaches the menopause with sense and with sanity, and will avail herself of the comforts of modern medical science when necessary, need have no fears about this period, and can pass through it with serenity and with a minimum of mental, physical, and emotional discomfort.* There is no earthly reason why any woman to-day, who can get to a reputable gynaecologist, or well-conducted women's clinic, should ever suffer from the terrors that beset her mother and grandmother during the menopause. There is no earthly excuse for any woman to have hot flushes and depressions. There is help for her. The reduced ovarian and pituitary hormones can be artificially restored to her blood stream by the proper injections of the newly isolated hormones. Qualified physicians, with adequate knowledge of gynaecology and endocrinology, can banish the terrors of the menopause for ever. The normal endocrine balance, so necessary for a sense of physical well-being, is to-day a matter of syringe and ampoule!

### 2. LOVE OUTLIVES THE CHANGE OF LIFE

Most of the distress, moreover, which attends the menopause is psychological, and these pages will help you to prepare yourself to meet the psychological challenges of this period. Let me clarify some of

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these psychological problems immediately. While it is impossible for a woman to conceive and bear children after the menopause has been established, there is no reason why she should not enjoy sexual relations after or during the menopause as much as she did before. There is a widespread belief that the menopause means not only the cessation of child-bearing but the cessation of sexual attractiveness and sexual interest. Nothing can be further from the truth. *The woman who desires and needs an active sexual life will find sexual relations just as satisfying after the menopause as before it.* I cannot emphasise this truth too strongly because the psychological fear that the menopause signifies the termination not only of reproduction but also of all womanliness is at the basis of all too many of the nervous breakdowns and the melancholias that occur at the climacteric.

The woman who has found an active and satisfactory sexual life in marriage will find no diminution in her satisfaction, because the physiology and psychology of coitus are not changed by the menopause. The woman who has always been afraid of childbirth—and she has another psychological problem—may find the menopause the condition which will remove her anxiety; and if she does not become deceived by the fallacy that after the menopause

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sexual intercourse is no longer interesting and that she can no longer be attractive to men, she may come to enjoy the sex relationship more than she ever did before. Sexual attractiveness is not entirely a matter of youth and physique: it is certainly just as much a matter of psychological readiness and co-operation. The woman who has lived a normal sexual life, who has been married and borne children, will find no terrors in her menopause if she will only realise that the investments in comradeship and co-operation which she has made during her active sexual life will begin to bear dividends at this time. And for the woman who has denied sex throughout her life, the menopause need not signify the inexorable closing of the book of life. She may have forfeited her privilege of bringing children into the world, but she has not yet forfeited her privilege to love and to be loved.

Let us sum up. The menopause is a natural involutonal process which marks the close of the active reproductive life of woman. Because of the glandular changes that are involved in this period, which usually occurs somewhere between the ages of forty and fifty-five, and concludes with the complete cessation of menstruation, a woman in the menopause is often plagued with uncomfortable and annoying physiological changes. These changes can

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now be controlled by the injection of the hormones derived from young female animals. Any competent gynaecologist can give you these injections and prevent most of the unpleasant symptoms of the menopause. In many large hospitals there are special clinics devoted to the care of the physical problems of the menopause. Its terrors no longer exist. Medical science has conquered them. There is, therefore, no excuse for any woman to be afraid of the menopause any longer.

As research in the field of endocrinology advances and our knowledge of the glands of internal secretion is extended, it becomes more and more apparent that the tortures that women used to suffer at the time of the climacteric are totally unnecessary. Years ago it was believed that a great many women *had* to die in childbirth, but medicine has advanced to the stage where to-day a mother can go to the lying-in hospital confident that she has an excellent chance to give birth to a normal child and survive the ordeal of childbirth with a minimum of pain and risk. Similarly it was once believed that puerperal infection, small-pox, rickets, and a host of other unpleasant infirmities of the flesh were "acts of God." With the advance of medicine these ghosts have been laid. One of the latest—and most persistent—of these bogeys is the belief that every

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woman *must* experience a period of physical and mental torture at the climacteric, as if the hot flushes and the irritability of the menopause were also "acts of God." Happily that superstition is passing into limbo with the horsehair sofas and the antimacassars of our Victorian ancestors.

The psychological problems of the menopause, while more numerous than the physiological ones, can be equally well controlled and dispelled. Mental hygiene has robbed the menopause of its ghosts as gynaecology has robbed it of its little devils.

Recently a woman was referred to me because of fits of uncontrollable weeping, despondency, and persistent depression. As soon as she woke in the morning she was seized with a feeling of hopelessness and despair. She spent frequent days in bed. Life had lost its meaning and charm for her. Neither food nor drink, dress nor society held any interest for her. She lost weight, took no interest in her personal appearance, accused herself of innumerable nameless crimes which she had never committed in her actually impeccable life. She did little but complain of her unworthiness to live, threatened to commit suicide daily, and, when she was able to get out of bed, went about with a look of forlorn futility that would have wrung pity from a robot.

What was the problem? She was going through

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her menopause, and she firmly believed that her usefulness as a human being would terminate with the cessation of her menstruation. Her mother had had a nervous breakdown at her climacteric, and her grandmother, too, had been removed to a sanatorium when she had reached this period. My patient felt that it was "on the cards" that she too would cease to be a human being within the next year, and sink to the level of a human turnip. Her despondency was a very natural and logical result of the fiendish superstitions with which she had been inculcated since a girl.

But what happened? With the aid of an intelligent gynaecologist the physical symptoms of her menopause were reduced to a minimum. The masseuse, the hairdresser, the dressmaker, the dancing-master were called in to do their part. As her psychiatrist I explained to her the origin of her fallacious ideas, the effects of her hopelessness on her body, and succeeded in changing her attitude toward life. In a series of conversations I succeeded in allaying her fears and in enlisting her co-operation. As soon as she realised that she was not condemned to a sexless, useless, and unhappy life, and as soon as she realised that she was not *en route* to the nearest sanatorium, her entire attitude changed. Little by little she got back into the routine of her

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life, and little by little, as her courage grew, she extended her social and intellectual and occupational horizons. To-day she is a happy and effectual member of her community who views her former menopause-phobia as one would recall a bad dream. She is only one of the many women whom gynaecology and psychiatry "save" for a serene and radiant maturity.

Of course every woman is a law unto herself, and every individual case must be carefully studied before any prescription can be given for her specific situation. Here are some good common-sense rules to follow in managing the menopause. Do not wait until you are in your menopause to practise them!

1. Remember that the menopause is not a disease; it is a natural process. The only changes that occur are changes in the reproductive organs themselves. There is no reason why your sexual attractiveness should wane, or your sexual enjoyment cease, with the menopause.

2. A woman's value to society does not lie solely in her ability to procreate. If you used to believe this fallacy, forget it. Look around you and see all the women who go right on through their menopause without the least deviation in their human efficiency. You need not cease enjoying life simply because your procreative years have come to an end.

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3. Keep busy. Many of the worst problems of the menopause are the result of too much introspection.

4. Cultivate a healthful attitude toward your problem. Accept its existence philosophically. Nothing can stop the menopause. You might just as well resign yourself to it gracefully. Cultivate a stoic contempt for your symptoms, and don't talk about them to any one but your doctor. Use this time to plan your future activities in such a way that the thrill of new interests and added responsibilities will compensate you for the cessation of physical procreation.

### 3. AND YOU CAN REMAIN BEAUTIFUL!

Middle age is a time of slowing tempos and relaxing tissues. The woman who "lets herself go" has herself to blame if the middle decades leave her full of fear, anguish and hopelessness. No matter how old you are, you are not too old to take care of your body and your soul, and never before in the history of civilisation have there been so many excellent opportunities for keeping both of them fit. Many middle-aged women have the deplorable habit of spending their entire time in the hopeless attempt to look and act young. Youth and beauty



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are associated, to be sure, in a very intimate bond, but middle age and beauty are by no means divorced. The middle-aged woman who "acts her age," and allows herself to enjoy the beauty of psychological serenity, is just as beautiful as the girl who revels in the glorious beauty of youth. Beauty and youth are relative concepts. This one thing is certain: the dowager who is trying to deceive herself and her friends into believing that she is twenty years younger than she really is, gets small return for her pains. Psychologically, she prepares for an ignominious failure when Time, the implacable enemy, forces her to her knees.

Nothing is so disgusting as a fifty-year-old woman acting as if she were still fifteen. There are fifty-year-old women who are as young as they were at fifteen, but theirs has been a life of affirmation. They have lived each epoch to the fullest, and at fifty they are still young because they are looking forward. *Looking backward is what makes you old—looking forward keeps you young.* And the best way to be beautiful is to be beautiful in your conduct. *Take care of your psychological attitudes, and your grey hairs will take care of themselves.*

Every woman who reaches thirty-five ought to engage in a reasonable amount of physical exercise. The tonus of the muscles tends to become flabby

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if they are not kept in motion. After the age of thirty-five every woman should visit her doctor once a year for a general overhaul of her physical condition. Let your physician prescribe diets and exercises according to your physical type. Diets and exercises prescribed by fanatical magazine writers and ignorant newspaper hacks are more likely to be deadly than beneficial. Make it your business to keep up your walking, your dancing, your skating, and your golf or riding. They do not require the strenuous activity of tennis or swimming, which, unless you are in exceptionally good physical trim, can be detrimental. Look forward. Stop recalling the days when you played four sets of tennis without a qualm, and begin practising your ping-pong! It will stand you in better stead ten years from to-day. That's one of the beauties of golf, which I can heartily recommend to women because it combines open air exercise with plenty of social interest and muscular co-ordination.

Take care of your physical beauty by taking adequate care of your body. While special attention to the problems of elimination is desirable, do not spend the rest of your life in a fanatical war on constipation. In other words, do not make a fetish of health. Health is only valuable if you use it to some adequate social and individual end.

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Again, it's not so much your health as your psychological attitude toward health that is important.

A woman once consulted me on her thirty-fifth birthday with the request that I should commit her to a nursing home for the rest of her life. The reason for her strange request was that she had suffered from what had been diagnosed as a valvular lesion of the heart. She brought with her reports of several heart specialists which led me to believe that for these twenty years she had been making a profession of her heart disease. For almost twenty years she believed that life was not worth while and that she would be compelled to spend her remaining days as an invalid. She was willing to invest her savings and pay for what she told me would be her last five years of life in a nursing home.

I made the following suggestion. I told her that she could live thirty years more if she took very good care of herself, or six weeks more if she went out and enjoyed all the things that she had denied herself during the last twenty years, in which she had been guarding her health and her heart. My suggestion was that six weeks of being a complete human being was worth thirty years of vegetable existence as a human turnip. I told her to act *as if* some one had just pronounced a death sentence on

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her and she wanted to crowd into the remaining six weeks of her life all the joys, all the sensations, and all the emotions that she had hoped to wrest from her mundane existence.

She agreed with me that this was the more desirable course and launched herself on a busy and active career of saying "Yes!" to life. That was five years ago. This woman is still alive and has accomplished much more in those five years than she accomplished in the previous thirty-five. In her last letter to me she said, "I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you for your advice. So far as I am concerned I do not even know that I have a heart. I am too busy taking care of my husband and my child and filling my spare time with courses at the University to realise that I am ill or ever was ill. Life is very sweet and I expect to live on indefinitely, leaky valves or no leaky valves!"

### 4. THE CULTIVATION OF "PLUS GESTURES"

Every woman who reaches middle age experiences little qualms of self-esteem. The maintenance of your self-esteem is a tremendously important activity, and I believe that I advise you soundly when I counsel you to spend a little more time taking care of your person and your physical attractiveness. Be

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sure that you do not neglect your hair and your nails. Your skin and your feet, your teeth and your eyes, will need close watching. Never before has it been so easy for a woman to put together an attractive coiffure and a jaunty hat, a neat pair of shoes and a simple frock, and give herself an air of insouciant youth that is truly the despair of the youngsters. There is nothing like an occasional massage, an occasional permanent wave, an occasional extra half-hour in the beauty-parlour to give a woman the necessary "life" that enables her to better meet her social and occupational problems. To neglect these is to court middle age in the worst sense.

Let me tell you of an example. There was once the wife of a doctor who felt that her husband was growing away from her because of the demands of his profession and because the passage of years had not added to her physical attractiveness. She believed that her worst feature was her nose and felt that if she could have a plastic operation performed that she could bolster up her own self-esteem to the point where she could again become the centre of her husband's affections. Without saying anything to any one she went away, ostensibly on a holiday. Actually she consulted a famous plastic surgeon in a nearby city, told him her difficulties

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and begged him to do the operation which she felt would enable her to win her husband back. This plastic surgeon, who was just as good a psychiatrist as he was a surgeon, performed the operation with excellent results. The doctor's wife returned from her alleged holiday, beautified in body to a small extent, but psychologically far more willing to accept the challenge of her middle decades.

Before she returned home she spent the money that had been laid aside for the expenses of her holiday on new clothes, rang up her husband's office and made an appointment under an assumed name and confronted her husband with her new self. As a "plus gesture" the operation was not nearly so important as her subsequent psychological renaissance. Not much was said between husband and wife during this first encounter, but somehow both of them recognised the birth of a new attitude toward life and from that day they have grown constantly closer together.

There is hardly a human being who has not at some time or another discovered some little fetish that lifts his spirit. I have called these harmless crutches "plus gestures," and when you have passed your thirty-fifth birthday, you need as many of them as you can mobilise. Personally, when on some rare occasion I feel blue or depressed, I go

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out and buy a new album of gramophone records, or a new etching that I cannot really afford. These are my plus gestures. What are yours? Is it a new hat? A new and pleasing dress accessory? New gloves? A gardenia? Mince pie? A bottle of champagne, or a seat at the opera? You owe these things to yourself, and the investment you make in them is never lost. Cultivate your "plus gestures," and when you come to the rough spots, they will help you out of the slough of despond that every woman, no matter how clever or how fortunate she is, slips into from time to time. You cannot avoid these little depressions altogether, but you can prepare for them!

### 5. THREE MAGICIANS: COLOUR, CLOTHES, AND PERFUME

One of the best ways to safeguard your health and your beauty in middle age is to dress appropriately. Perhaps you will think me impertinent to advise you on fashion, and the *haute couture*, but if you will let me take you behind the scenes, I will show you the women who consult me because they are depressed, unhappy and middle-aged in the worst sense. You will immediately notice that a great many of these are depressed and

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unhappy because they dress in bad taste and use the wrong colours. I have yet to see a woman suffering from melancholia or depression who was not dressed in black, or dirty brown, or in a dull and depressing dark blue! If I could do so I would make it a criminal offence for any dressmaker to sell a middle-aged woman a dark brown dress, even if she wanted one! When a woman "lets go," when she gives up the struggle for health, beauty, and happiness, she usually does not do it by half stages, but she practises a subtle kind of self-sabotage which pushes her into the abyss of melancholia. These women have an uncanny faculty for picking the wrong clothes and the wrong colours.

If you do not want to commit psychological suicide, do not let yourself become a dowdy old woman. One of the strictest rules I lay down for middle-aged women who come to me suffering from a nervous breakdown is to throw away their brown or black dresses and get a red dress and a red hat, a new corset, a new permanent wave, a manicure, a facial massage, and a corsage of gardenias. Then we begin the treatment. You can prevent a great deal of mental anguish if you will follow this advice yourself. Do not forget that human beings are very imitative. If you masquerade as a living



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corpse, people will take you at your face value, and treat you as if you were already on the way to the undertakers. Look alive. Spend as much money on your clothes as you can afford, and as much interest on your exterior as you can without making it the be-all and end-all of life. Clothes in themselves are never a substitute for a correct attitude toward middle age, but they are a great help.

Try to dress your age. If you have a good figure, aim for neatness and trimness and clean-cut lines. Avoid fancy clothes and *outré* designs. The less your clothes call attention to the fact that you are over thirty-five the better they will be. The best dressed woman is not the woman whose dress every one admires, but the woman who is so well dressed that people are aware only of her personality, not her clothes. Avoid drab colours, and above all avoid looking like a little girl. You deceive no one but yourself, and the saleswoman who sells you the kittenish outfit is laughing at you behind your back. Dress your age, but show that you esteem yourself in your clothes.

A word about perfumes and their use. Most women know very well that perfumes are sexually exciting to men. As their physical charms wane,

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they attempt to compel male attention by the use of heavy musk-like perfumes. They believe that they can become "glamorous" and "alluring" by means of these artificial props to their own failing self-esteem. This is bad psychology. Let your perfume bespeak your serenity. Too much perfume, especially on a middle-aged woman, is a gross vulgarity. Perfume is a plus gesture. Use it, by all means, but use it only to heighten a general effect, never as a heavy artillery barrage on the outraged sensibilities of the poor males whom you nauseate with the unfulfilled promise of abandon.

### 6. THE "DO'S" AND "DONT'S" OF DIET

The woman who has entered into the middle decades is often compelled to relinquish activities that filled her youth. The problems of managing a household, bearing children, running a business, and keeping a husband happy often militate against exercise and recreation. The drudgery of housework may leave you so tired that you have no interest in dancing or walking or swimming. The result is that the hard muscles of your athletic days begin to fill in with fat, and the slim silhouette of seventeen is no longer discernible in the more than rounded contours of thirty-seven or forty-seven.

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At this period of your life moreover, the thyroid gland, that great dynamo which distributes energy through our bodies and determines the ratio between the building up and breaking down of tissue, begins to take week-end holidays. And since the thyroid is intimately associated with the pituitary and the ovaries, and influences them, it is not uncommon that the middle-aged woman takes on more pounds than she would like to admit. Her sedentary life, her glandular disposition, her lack of activity, all conspire to make her fat. If her thyroid gland is under-functioning, she presents a flabby-doughy fatness all over. If it is her pituitary gland that is not functioning properly, her face and hands remain thin, but the rest of her body may be loaded with fat, and if it is her ovaries that are responsible for her overweight, she is fat all over, hands and face participating in the general process.

The woman in the middle decades, however, is living in a world which is dominated by a Chorus Girl ideal of feminine beauty, and she must compete with youngsters who, despite the beneficent influence of Mae West, still maintain their adolescent figures. The poor woman who wants to keep in the swim is literally between the devil of feminine fashion and the deep sea of appetite and

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enjoyment. I have found that she vacillates between a fanatic devotion to some fantastic diet and remorseful lapses from dietetic grace.

Most of the diets that are foisted on gullible women are futile and unintelligent. There are some women who are constitutionally stout, and these women are never up to their psychological par if they starve themselves into thinness. There are other women who remain thin despite all gourmandising. Others again are fat not because of dietary excesses but because of certain glandular deficiencies. To apply the same diet to all these women is manifestly insane.

If you think you are too fat, go to your doctor and have a thorough examination to determine not only your general health, but specifically your basal metabolism. Let him outline a sensible diet for you, and stick to that diet despite the advice of all your friends. Part of the business of being happy though middle-aged lies in the acceptance of the fact that it is no disgrace to have a middle-aged body at the age of forty. If you need glandular injections, let only an expert administer them to you. Beware of patent nostrums, advertised cures for over-weight, and so-called reducing baths and creams. You are just throwing your money away when you invest in them.

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They are all based on the fact that a gullible middle-aged woman who wants to recapture her youth by looking like an adolescent girl will pay almost anything for her neurotic folly. More than one middle-aged woman who could have led a perfectly happy and successful life is pining away to-day in a padded cell because she reduced beyond the physiological limit of safety, and reduced not only her fat but her resistance and sanity at the same time.

As a general rule of common-sense dietetics it may be said that in the middle decades the demands for energy are lessened, and it is folly, therefore, to gorge yourself with food which you cannot burn up in muscular exercise or work. *The middle-aged woman should eat as little as is consistent with comfort.* Make it a rule to leave the table not quite satisfied. Small meals, with an occasional snack or cup of tea in between, are preferable to large meals with starvation between them. Drink as much water as you can without making a medicine of it. A generous use of fresh vegetables and citrus fruits is desirable, and meat need not be taken at more than one meal a day. A normal diet, eaten in moderation, is the best diet for the middle decades. Artificial slimming diets should be taken only on the advice of your doctor.

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### 7. OUTWITTING STODGINESS

The physical health of the maturing body requires a certain amount of exercise. Where this exercise does not come as a result of your daily work, it should be gained artificially, either by exercises at home or by gymnasium work. Sports are the best form of exercise because they are free of the monotony and futility of calisthenics or gymnasium work. I recommend highly: golf, rhythmic dancing, riding, walking, social dancing, swimming, skiing. It is unwise to make a fetish of exercise just as it is unwise to make a fetish of diet. Have a decent respect for your body. Its well-being will determine your mental poise and efficiency to a large extent. Your body is the cathedral in which the divine services of the mind are held. Keep it in good repair.

I cannot recommend too highly to the woman past thirty-five, periodical health examinations. At this time of life some of the organs and organ-systems begin showing signs of wear and tear. Knowing that they are in danger enables you to take better care of them. Make your doctor your confidant, and let him help you to keep healthy. Do not wait until you cannot climb the

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stairs without losing your breath, or until you are losing a devitalising amount of blood in profuse menstruation, before consulting your doctor. A certain amount of stoicism about health is certainly desirable—at any age. Stoicism, when you have definite physical symptoms of disease in middle age, may be folly.

### 8. “ NERVES ” . . .

A word about the common neuroses of middle age. A great many women in this trying period realise that they have “lost face” in the world. They have not played the game well, they feel that they are losing ground in the competition, and they begin to get panic-stricken. Their panic does not express itself in just so many words. They begin to say “No!” to life in terms of sickness and symptoms of the most bizarre type. They begin to have aches and pains in every imaginable quadrant of their bodies, and some of their symptoms have never been described in any medical text-book. With lightning shifts of scene, they complain first of headaches, then of backaches, then of nausea, then of fatigue, then of insomnia, then of palpitation of the heart, and then they reverse the order. Each organ is saying “No!” as

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loud as it can, and the result is a cacophony of jangled nerves and physiological ailments.

Medical records are full of the case histories of women who have suffered for years, only to have their ailments cease as if by magic when some new psychological attitude entered their lives. I am reminded of the the case of a woman who suffered from continuous headaches for ten years. These headaches were the organic expression of her resentment against her husband's domination. Then one fine day her husband was declared tubercular by a physician, and sent abroad to recuperate, thereby leaving her in complete control of a business in which she had held a somewhat menial position. Almost automatically the headaches ceased as soon as she became the "boss" of her husband's establishment. To-day her husband is a chronic invalid, while she accomplishes twice as much as she ever did while he was the nominal head of the business—and she does it without any headaches!

Another woman spent practically her entire life running from one gynaecologist to another. Four times she had been operated on for various vague complaints. After every convalescence she developed new symptoms and then went to a new gynaecologist. I pointed out to her that her



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symptoms were a symbolic revenge on her mother-in-law, and suggested that she could materially better her situation if she were to screw up her courage and tell her mother-in-law to move out of her house. She might alienate her mother-in-law in the process, but she would surely save herself a great many aches, pains, and useless doctors' bills. After some hesitation she resolved to be brave, waited for an opportunity, and when the time came practically evicted her mother-in-law from her house and declared herself the sole mistress of her ménage. Since that memorable day she has had no aches and no pains, and for years she has not consulted a gynaecologist.

What has happened to these women? The doctors say there is nothing organically wrong with them, and yet they beat the trodden path from one specialist to another. These women are making a profession of being ill. Nothing pleases them more than to tell you about their latest operation in all its gory and gruesome details. They are enjoying ill-health.

Have you ever stopped to consider what a "big stick" an illness can be? How an errant husband can be held to his wife by a really bad headache? How an insolent child can be kept home at night by a backache? Or how the sew-

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ing circle can be dominated by a really good fibroma?

Making a profession of ill-health is one of the common neuroses that women have allowed themselves since time immemorial. In the Victorian era they swooned. To-day they tell you about their insomnia, their nausea, their nervous indigestion, their palpitating hearts. Despite the fact that many a woman has succeeded in tyrannising over her entire environment by being constantly ill, I cannot recommend the technique of the bed-ridden princess to any woman who really wants to be happy. If you are suffering from some profound conflict, see a psychiatrist or read some of the excellent books on mental hygiene that have been published in recent years, and get some kind of insight into your problems. In the end the tyranny of sickness leads only to your own profound discouragement and isolation, and the price paid for the attention gained in this way is out of all proportion to the dividends in power.

In recapitulation: the body requires care and understanding during the middle decades. Regular visits to the physician are highly desirable. A healthy body liberates your mind for constructive work which alone can bring you happiness. A well-chosen diet, and a well-chosen régime of regular

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exercise, are extremely valuable to the mature woman. Do not diet unless you have to, and then follow only a diet which is prescribed by a competent physician. Dress to suit your age, and let your costume bespeak your serenity, not your panic at being middle-aged. Spend just a little more on beautification, but take care that your beauty is more than skin deep. And do not worry about the menopause. It is a natural phenomenon, and in no way hinders the continuation of your sexual attractiveness or sexual desire. If you have unpleasant symptoms, a good gynaecologist can relieve you completely of them. Prepare psychologically for this period of your life by filling your days with work and recreation, and your evenings with the enjoyment of social and intellectual activities. The bogeys of the menopause no longer exist for the woman who makes middle age the beginning of a beginning.

### III

## YOUR FAMILY: FRIEND OR ENEMY?

EVERY family is a collection of psychological dynamite which may blow up on the least provocation. Somehow, during the fourth and succeeding decades of a woman's life, this family dynamite has an unfortunate way of causing the most unforeseen and unpredictable catastrophes. Every woman sooner or later has to face the problems presented by her own parents, her husband's parents, together with the associated and often unincorporated in-laws, and her own immediate family. To deal with all these problems tactfully and psychologically, so that no one's vanity is hurt and no one's ego injured, while the woman herself retains sanity and happiness, requires the patience of a saint, the technical training of a psychiatrist, the luck of "the devil" and the smiles of a beneficent Providence.

It would be futile to attempt to give any sort of a prescription which would cover all the possible

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cases of all the various women who will be reading this book. I cannot teach women to be saints, and I cannot give a full course in psychiatry in one chapter of a small handbook, and needless to say I have no magic panacea that will compel Fortune to smile on you. But what I can do is to outline some of the difficulties that have to be met, and make some trenchant suggestions about the technique of handling a family.

### I. THE MIDDLE-AGED WIFE *v.* IN-LAWS, LTD.

One of the most common problems that beset the woman of middle age is the adjustment to parents who have grown old or dependent. Her loyalties are divided between her own immediate family and her parents. She feels that she should be a grateful child and give some attention and help to the parents who have often sacrificed much to educate and protect her during her early years. Sometimes it is not the woman's own parents who cause the difficulty, but her husband's parents. The problem becomes more complicated than the Gordian knot when the parents, in turn, belonging to a past generation insist on interfering and meddling in the education of their grandchildren. Untold conflicts and emotional explosions result.

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I cannot hope to resolve all the conflicts of emotion and loyalty that arise out of these family relations. I can only suggest that *a woman's first loyalty must lie towards her own family, her own husband, and her own children.* This may sound very brutal to some who have been brought up in a strictly traditional manner, but I hold it to be a psychologically sound doctrine that it is criminal to sacrifice the lives of children and husband, as well as your own happiness, for the sake of filial duties and affection. In China there would be no question as to which way a woman would turn in a family crisis. The parents and grandparents would receive the first consideration. The whole Chinese civilisation has its eyes turned to the past. But *you* are not living in China. Your duty lies in looking to the future. Your own children therefore must be your first consideration.

Let me tell you that there has never been a house built large enough to shelter, simultaneously, three generations. No woman can live in peace and harmony with her children, her parents, and her parents-in-law. Realisation of this psychological truth will save you untold anguish.

One of the most ingenious and effective solutions to this problem which I have encountered, was worked out by a young woman whose life

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was being ruined by the in-law situation in her home. She was devoted to her mother, but retained enough insight to realise that her filial attachment was ruining her own marriage. She was a writer of great talent and of considerable success. She surveyed her situation and realised that no price was too high for the attainment of peace in her home. One day she took her mother aside and told her that she wished her to move to another part of the county and agreed to pay her mother "alimony" for staying out of her house.

Twice a year this young woman leaves her husband and pays her mother a visit. In no circumstances will she allow her mother to visit her. She has been paying her mother "alimony" now for seven years and the terms of the "separation" are as strict as those in any legal contract and the "alimony" is paid with as much precision as if it had been imposed by a court of law. This young woman says that she would do without a new dress or deny herself a spring holiday in order to pay her mother "alimony." In other words, she found it better to sacrifice part of her financial income than to have her life ruined by her mother's presence.

If your parents or parents-in-law are dependent on you, keep them out of your house and quarter

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them elsewhere, even though you have to go without a new dress for three years and renounce every pleasure in life to do so. You will thank me for my advice in the end. Many a woman has been hurtled prematurely to the grave or to the nursing-home because she has attempted to solve this insoluble psychological problem. You may have all the filial affection that you please, but it must never be given at the expense of your affection and interest in those to whom you are wife and mother.

Let me take this occasion to say just a few words about the family, which will be helpful in testing any specific case. The family exists for one reason and one reason only: it is the best possible means of preparing the young for independent life *outside the family*. Due to the fact that the human child is abnormally weak and dependent, the family is likely to become a permanent arrangement in human society; and instead of serving its biological function, the family becomes an end in itself, family loyalty is elevated above human loyalty, family honour above social cooperation, and filial affection above normal heterosexual love. In this way the family becomes an end in itself, and thus, a biological vice and a psychological crime.



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One mother of my acquaintance has solved this problem in a very realistic way. She has three children. She has sacrificed a great deal to give the older two, who are now at universities, the best possible education with which she could provide them. She told these children, when they were fourteen or fifteen years of age, that they were to expect no inheritance and that on their twenty-first birthday they would be compelled to move out of her house and shift for themselves. As she put it, "There is no difference between a human child and a bear cub. When a bear can hunt for itself, out it goes! I am giving my girls the best education for life that money can buy. When they reach physical and mental maturity they must shift for themselves. I see no reason for the continuation of my family when my children have reached an age when they should be making their own families for themselves."

If you are really psychologically grown up you must realise that *no child belongs to his parents*. He belongs first to himself, and second to society. Society has lent the child to the parents. The parents have the duty of providing the child with the training necessary to enable him to emancipate himself from the family, and, with maturity, to carry on his own life independently of his

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parents. *No child owes his family a debt of gratitude or obedience or filial duty. No normal parent can, or will, demand these things.* Most of the family conflicts that occur arise from ignorance of this simple, biological, sociological, and psychological law.

### 2. THE ADOLESCENT CHILD v. THE MIDDLE-AGED MOTHER

And that brings us to our second problem, the treatment of adolescent children, a problem that plagues many a woman in her middle decades. The conflicts that arise between mother and adolescent children are chiefly conflicts in purpose. The mother often wants her children to grow up into graceful ornaments to her, whereas the children instinctively tend to become self-sufficient, independent human beings. Adolescence is hard on both the adolescent and his parents, but its inevitable conflicts can be reduced to a minimum if the wise mother will try to understand something of what is going on in her child's mind.

Let me give you an excellent example of what I mean. A friend of mine is the mother of an eighteen-year-old girl. One day this girl asked

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permission to go to a dance in a neighbouring town. Her mother, although not entirely pleased with the arrangements, allowed her daughter to go, suggesting only that the child return at a reasonable hour. At half-past three in the morning after the mother had spent hours of anxious waiting, the daughter returned home. There was a distinct aroma of gin on her breath and her evening dress was torn and dirty. The child showed considerable evidence of having spent a strenuous evening.

Did this mother begin to scold her? It was obvious that the child was wiser for a number of experiences. As the mother learnt later, the car in which her daughter had been riding had been overturned in an accident. To have scolded the child on this occasion, or to have shown distrust, would only have developed the child's antagonism to the mother and paved the way for clandestine escapades in the future. The mother, however, was a wise mother. She affected not to see the evidences of the accident nor did she remark upon the child's breath. Instead she suggested a sedative powder and a hot bath, and told her daughter that although she had been concerned with the lateness of the hour, she felt certain that her daughter had

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conducted herself with common sense and resourcefulness. The daughter deeply appreciated this evidence of her mother's confidence, and after a good night's sleep voluntarily explained all the circumstances. Both mother and daughter look back to that event as the beginning of a profound friendship that has lasted for many years.

There are just three things that every child has to accomplish in the course of his adolescence. He has to attain the *physical status of maturity*; he must effect a *psychological emancipation from his family ties* and become an independent unit functioning in a wider social sphere; and finally, he must *establish firmly his interest in members of the opposite sex*. Adolescence represents an extremely difficult period for the child. He has to say good-bye to the pleasant irresponsibility of childhood and face the grave difficulties of mature life. It is a time of soul-searching, emotional upheavals, and above all of egoistic introspection. No adolescent child is a very pleasant companion, and often he is so disagreeable and stubborn that it is almost impossible to live with him.

The mother of any adolescent boy or girl will do well to remember her own adolescent struggles and the resistance and repression which she suffered from her Victorian parents. In any latent

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conflict let her try to fathom the psychological goal of her child's actions. No matter how bizarre her child's conduct may seem at first glance, if she can discover any tendency to accomplish the three essential objectives of adolescence, let her look away and allow the matter to pass. Too many "don'ts" and too many "musts" will serve only to evoke the natural aggression and antagonism of the adolescent child.

Let the middle-aged mother question her own desires, and let her search her own soul for her motives; and let her, above all things, be true to the psychological development of her child. This is a time when the middle-aged woman will do well to turn the other cheek. It requires the greatest self-control for a mother to watch her daughter or son making the most egregious mistakes, but I maintain that it is far better for the psychological development of the child, and eventually for the mother's peace of mind, to let the child make mistakes and suffer the consequences, rather than to compel him to let his mother make his decisions, sparing him thereby the unpleasant consequences, but cultivating within his personality as a result the characteristics of a spineless parasite.

This point is well illustrated by the tragic story

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of a woman of fine character who brought up her only son in an emotional atmosphere of sterilized air and antiseptic cotton wool. She herself had had a very bitter and difficult childhood. Her husband died leaving her with a one-year-old son. She had to go to work by day, and studied at night in order to prepare herself for her profession. Every penny that she made went into the care and nurture of her son. He had the best nurses, governesses, and tutors that she could engage. He was never allowed to play with other children except when he was under the supervision of a governess. Nor was he permitted to go to public school lest his mind and his body be contaminated.

This mother vowed to herself that her son would never know the hardships which she had endured as a girl or as a young widow. The climax of her life was the day that she took her son to the University and allowed him to matriculate. Within six months the young man, who was utterly unprepared for the independence required by college life, and completely incapable of making social adjustments without having some older person constantly solving his problems for him, committed suicide. Not realising that her own fine character was the result of her conquest of obstacles, she consequently failed to understand that by her over-

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protection and over-solicitude she had actually condemned her own child to a premature death.

I know this will come as bitter advice to some mothers, and many of you will write to me and tell me that I am wrong, and that you just cannot let your children go out and get psychological broken noses and black eyes from a bitter world. But I have thought through these problems with many hundreds of parents, and usually the principles have proved themselves correct. The wise mother will save her energies for the objective problems of life, and forego the emotional scenes, with their tremendous expense in energy and emotion, which mark the conflicts between middle age and adolescence. She will let Mary go about with her own men friends, even though she shrinks at the thought; and she will let John go out and drink too much, however much she quails at the thought of his bad companions. Both Mary and John are working out the necessary objectives of adolescence, though their methods are not the best possible ones.

The intelligent mother will face these problems, arm her children with as much knowledge as she has, and if her knowledge is inadequate she will supplement it with expert guidance. Her attitude towards the adolescent child will be one of friendly understanding, of encouragement, of sympathy, of

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guidance, and of selfless love. She will avoid all show of authority, traditionalism, emotional criticism, belittling, and interference. Above all she will avoid ridiculing anything in the child's conduct which she does not completely understand. And when in doubt the intelligent mother is going to ask for expert advice instead of muddling through at the expense of the sanity and happiness of her children. And so her own critical problems at this time will be serenely solved.

### 3. THE ERRANT HUSBAND

When a woman has been married five, ten, fifteen years, and has invested her total happiness in life in one man, it is usually a rude shock to learn, often by the merest accident, that this husband has strayed from the narrow path of monogamy and has indulged secretly in more or less serious flirtations and infidelities. The shock to her self-esteem is great. She becomes angry or depressed, panic-stricken or revengeful in accordance with the nature of her personality. She allows her injured ego to go on a rampage. Bitter recriminations follow the discovery of the tell-tale lipstick on the husband's handkerchief. Doubts and suspicions grow into fantastic and exaggerated



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obsessions. Out of a clear sky, when the wife was living securely in the belief that her husband was "different," the horror of betrayal, often with an inferior woman, grows into a veritable mental complex.

Now take a long breath, settle down quietly in a comfortable chair, and let us examine this situation as dispassionately as we can. What you do and the success of your course of action depends largely upon how objective you can be in dealing with this problem. And if it has not happened to you, read these paragraphs anyway. It may happen even in the best of well-regulated families, including your own!

Let me say at the outset that I believe in monogamy. It seems the best possible solution of the man-woman problem in our day and age. But complete monogamy, with complete and wholehearted fidelity, is an ideal state that few individuals are capable of attaining in this world. For those who never look to one side nor to the other, I have the profoundest admiration. But as a psychiatrist I must say that I have seldom seen either a man or woman, no matter how happily married, who could not under certain circumstances and conditions be lured or tricked off the straight and narrow path. It's just human nature.

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You are a woman and man's psychology perforce is something of a mystery to you. Let me take you behind the scenes so that you may watch the operation of a man's mind and soul. Let's take John Jones, a typical, solid respectable Briton—the salt of the earth, honest, co-operative, adequately ambitious and socially responsible. If John Jones were living in a past age he would have married at eighteen, taken his wife with him, and set off in a covered wagon for the pioneer conquest of the colonies. He would have been faithful to his wife to the end of his days. But to-day about the only chance that same John Jones has for adventure and pioneer activities is limited to playing football, and to trying to beat his competitors in the open market. Day after day he fulfils the round of trying business routines, and day after day he returns dutifully to you, his wife, to bridge parties, theatre engagements, and golf on Sundays. You can predict exactly where he will be on Sunday the twenty-fifth of July 1937!

Now one day John Jones discovers that he is middle-aged. Perhaps it is just the fact that his life-insurance premium came due and John Jones suddenly feels that he is missing something in life. Routine has killed his soul. Suddenly, while he is indulging in pleasant day-dreams about a trip round

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the world which he will never be in a position to take, his eyes wander over to the neat shoulders of Miss Smith, his secretary. She has been working devotedly for him for years, but Jones has never noticed her as a sexual object. To-day she represents Adventure. And so the story goes, according to an age-old pattern, until one day, in a horror-stricken amazement, you make the discovery of Miss Smith's lip-stick on your husband's handkerchief. Sometimes the story is just as simple as this. Sometimes it is more complicated. But in almost any case, the final outcome of the problem *is in your hands.*

### 4. NEW ANGLES ON THE TRIANGLE

Now what are you going to do? You are middle-aged. You've invested five to twenty years of your life being a devoted wife to this man. You feel now that he has smirched your union by a clandestine love affair with a woman you consider not nearly as attractive and certainly not as intelligent as you are. If you are traditionally-minded, and have no imagination, you are going to run back to your Mama, or to your solicitor, and prepare to "end it all." I must admit that is one solution, and a very handy and drastic one. Most women,

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no doubt, would think of just that solution. But I feel that it never works because it does not take into account the years of unhappiness that follow the choice.

Errant husbands are like adolescent children. They must often be handled as such, and the clever wife will never be at a loss in her technique because she will know that husbands must be given "enough rope" and allowed to work out their destinies for better or for worse. In my experience a great many divorces which follow occasional adulteries are economic, emotional, sexual, and spiritual tragedies for both individuals. I do not wish to interfere with your religious ideas on marriage. There are a great many individuals who are almost compelled by their religious beliefs to refuse to condone sexual escapades. To those who are not so bound I counsel an entirely different course of conduct in the vast majority of cases.

It is my belief that women as a group are more intelligent in matters of love than men. Here is a situation which must be handled with the utmost tact and understanding. The average woman who finds that her husband has committed adultery is going to take up the "wronged wife" attitude instinctively. I counsel an entirely opposite course of conduct. *The first thing to do is to act as if you*

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*knew nothing about the infidelity.* This is an essential premise to success. I am assuming, of course, that you still have some attachment for your husband and it is your desire to continue the investment of years that you have made in marriage with him. If you have wanted for years to break up the marriage, a husband's adultery is as good an excuse as any other for terminating the relationship.

And now I want you to retire into the recesses of your own soul and take a little mental inventory! Have you let yourself go? Have you given up the little thoughtful deeds that came so naturally just after your honeymoon? Have you stopped growing mentally? Have you perhaps excelled your husband socially or intellectually and made him feel inferior, so that he has felt himself in duty bound to revenge himself upon you with this petty adultery? Have you developed some unpleasant physical habits? Have you neglected to make yourself as physically alluring as possible? Have you, perhaps, let other women occupy your husband's mind simply because you were too bored to extend your activities and interest yourself in him? Have you forgotten that all men have inferiority complexes, no matter what their position or wealth, and that all men need flattery? Have you forgotten to smooth the ruffled ego of your husband?

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Have you, above all, forgotten to be a good lover? A great many women look at marriage as an end and not as a beginning. Before the ceremony they spend a great deal of time laying siege to their husbands. But once they have snared the prey, they think the battle is won and no further effort is required. Many a tragedy of middle age is based upon the fact that an otherwise intelligent wife forgets that part of the job of being a good wife consists in being a good mistress to her husband. The mature, balanced, emotionally grown-up woman who makes a success of her married life borrows pages from the books of the great courtesans of the past. In her conduct with her husband she seeks for little surprises, little diversions, little variations which make her love relationships to her husband a kaleidoscope of constantly changing reactions.

Men and women are so constituted that they are polygamous by nature. Society attempts the ideal of monogamy. Monogamy can only be successful when both partners recognise the essentially polygamous instincts of the opposite sex and by varying, changing, and embellishing the actual technique and art of love, they effect what amounts to a constantly changing relationship with their mates. The woman who approaches this delicate subject in a realistic fashion and recognises the fact that men seek variety

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in their sexual relations as they seek variety in food, clothing, golf clubs, or automobiles—recognising the fact that this desire for variety in love is no more immoral than the desire for variety in neckties—has gone a long way toward being a successful wife. Such a woman need never fear that her husband will tire of her, because, while her basic character, the thing which her husband loves in her, remains static, its manifestations change with the seasons. Any woman who ceases to be something of a mystery to her husband opens the door of her boudoir to the first clever woman her husband meets.

I am no clairvoyant, and I am not writing an encyclopedia of domestic relations. I cannot, therefore, go into all the possible situations that can arise between husband and wife, even if I actually knew all of them. But I want you to take inventory of yourself, and act not only as if you did not know about your husband's infidelities, but *as if they were actually your own fault*. I can hear some of my readers bristling, denouncing me as a champion of men against women, and muttering under their breath that what their husbands need is a good sound thrashing or a good stiff dose of alimony to teach them a lesson.

I know, I know. I have heard all that before, and I have seen hundreds of women try to punish

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their husbands' infidelities. Some kill their love by nagging, and some foolishly believe that they can settle the score by committing another infidelity (for which there is frequently not the least reason, because the husband is entirely satisfactory as a lover and had the wife not accidentally learned of the infidelity no criticism could have been uttered.) Some women make partisans of their children and wage veritable campaigns of vengeance against their husbands, while others prefer open hostilities, public scenes, widespread gossip, and various other forms of annoyance.

### 5. THE CARE AND FEEDING OF AN ERRANT HUSBAND

These tactics seem to me to be undesirable. I suggest that the middle-aged woman who has discovered that her husband is unfaithful, look first at herself, and attempt to determine what it is that is lacking in her. Husbands are like water: they run downhill, and they go to the woman who offers them the most ego-satisfaction. Perhaps you have been taking marriage too much for granted, and thus have denied your husband that sense of adventure which is such an important element in any happy marriage. Perhaps you have been developing unpleasant mannerisms and antagonisms, so that



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when your husband comes home he returns to a new battlefield instead of returning to a haven of peace. Perhaps you have been letting your physical charm go, or you have been foregoing the little flatteries and attentions which are meat and drink to every man. Few men are heroes in the outside world. Every man wants to be a little hero in his own castle, and the woman who does not understand this and does not act accordingly does not understand the first law of marital psychology.

One of the happiest families I know is the family of a woman whose husband holds a responsible position as the secretary to the chairman of an enormous organisation. The chairman of this organisation is a neurotic who expresses his striving for power by brow-beating all his subordinates. He is a man who has no real sense of inner worth, and whenever things go badly he takes it out of his secretary. As a result, this woman's husband often comes home from a harrowing day at the office with his ego deflated like a punctured balloon, his nerves rattled and frayed, his hope crushed, and his sense of personal esteem reduced to an intolerable minimum.

In the beginning this woman used to chide her husband for not being more aggressive, with the result that he started to have a love affair with his

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own secretary who appreciated his difficulty and attempted to bolster up his self-esteem by flattering him. When this man's wife learned of the true situation at his office, she took a leaf from the book of her rival. She understands that her bread and butter depend upon her husband's service to a neurotic tyrant. She knows immediately when her husband has had a difficult day in the office. She knows also that one of the things on which her husband bases his self-esteem is his ability to play golf well. She has built a little putting green in her backyard. When her husband comes home feeling depressed she immediately suggests a game of putting before supper. This woman plays golf very well but she sees to it that her husband beats her on such occasions. This serves to restore his self-esteem. In the winter time when putting is out of question she uses the game of dominoes as her method of building up his courage. She knows how to make him win. And with these simple little devices she manages to restore his belief in himself. True, these are not important means of establishing one's own sense of value, but symbolically they are just as good as any business or professional success.

The wise wife will look for such *symbolic* opportunities to restore her husband's courage. Certainly this course is far preferable to acting the *rôle* of the

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wronged wife, creating scenes and scandals, or rushing to the divorce courts. Many a divorce and many a marital triangle could be solved if the woman in the beginning had had the good sense and the courage to understand the causes of her husband's infidelity and to make those causes inoperative by her own insight into his condition and by her own efforts to ameliorate them.

I can hear some of my women readers rising in their wrath and exclaiming, "Why should *we* make all the concessions and compromises? Why shouldn't my husband remember some of those little attentions that he used to give me during the honeymoon? Why should there be one law for him and another one for me?" If I were writing this book for husbands, I assure you, my friend, that I would caution your husband to do the very things that I am telling you to do. I would teach him to be more appreciative, I would urge him to improve his love-making, I would demand greater attention to the little things that make a marriage happy. But I am writing this book for *you*—and I write it for you because on the whole I believe women have more sense about these matters than men. In any two-sided controversy like this the more intelligent member is going to be the one who makes the first offer of peace, the one who

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*assumes* the guilt even though it does not actually belong to him.

And that brings up an interesting psychological point. The man who is unfaithful to his wife is usually haunted by a certain sense of guilt, even though it is his two hundred and forty-fifth infidelity. If you, his wife, begin nagging him about his infidelity, he is going to distort your nagging into just one more good reason for finding his love elsewhere than in your arms. If you make yourself exceptionally desirable in these circumstances, you will mobilise the tremendous dynamics of his guilt complex to your advantage, and thus you will win him back to you, if he is going to be won at all. There is an old Persian proverb which every deceived wife, if she wants her errant husband back, may well repeat to herself as a morning and evening prayer. That proverb runs: *You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar!*

Here again I can illustrate my point by a concrete example. There was once a busy banker who devoted his life to an ardent chase after money and power. He was successful, and the more successful he became the more he was thrown in contact with outside activities which deflected his interest from his home and his wife. In the beginning his

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wife resigned herself to his neglect and attempted to occupy her time with endless bridge parties. One day she received an anonymous letter which shook her equanimity to its foundations. Her husband was not only spending almost every night away from home, but had also become personally interested in a young woman who, as junior partner in the firm which handled some of his business, had had occasion to make herself very valuable to him. He began spending a great deal of his time with this young woman, whose active mind and clear grasp of business affairs fascinated him. Her whole personality was an almost direct contrast to his wife's bovine resignation and lethargy.

The banker's wife, however, was not as slow thinking as she looked. She made it her business to meet her rival and to observe her. She saw at once what qualities her husband admired in her and immediately set out to develop similar qualities in herself. She began to develop intelligent interest. She put herself on a rigid diet and reduced her superfluous *avoirdufois*. She changed her dresses from the frills and flounces which she had been accustomed to wearing to a more severe and manish garb. She began taking lessons in public speaking and singing. Her husband knew of none of these activities.

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Then one day he received a formal invitation to a party at which his wife was to sing. He could not believe his eyes when his wife appeared on the platform and sang a group of songs in a lovely, clear voice whose existence he had never suspected. Suddenly he realised that his wife was one of the most attractive women that he had ever met. She had told him nothing about the anonymous letter; she had made no scenes and uttered no recriminations. She had simply taken stock of herself and decided to be a more attractive woman, very wisely realising that the basic investment of ten years of marriage plus her new attractiveness would be sufficient to win her husband back again. If more women would take this attitude about their husband's infidelities there would be fewer divorce cases and a great many more useful and attractive middle-aged women.

### 6. DIVORCE

In most countries there is only one legal ground for divorce and that is adultery. To my mind this is one of the least important and one of the least valid grounds for divorce. I hope that our laws will some day be made by psychiatrists and sociologists and not by muddle-headed legislators. When

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that time comes you may be sure that mental cruelty, social irresponsibility, sexual perversion, and sexual incompetence will be written into intelligent law books as grounds for divorce by mutual consent. Our present divorce laws are written as if every husband and every wife were natural-born enemies, actuated by primitive jungle antagonisms. Hardly any place for decency and sympathy can be found. The matter of divorce, therefore, often becomes a matter of distasteful collusions and conspiracies, the breaking up not only of emotional and family ties, but deep-rooted social and occupational interests.

Let us be realists. To the woman who does not have an independent income or lacks an excellent and secure job, or who is not physically very attractive, and who has not a wide circle of friends and social relations, divorce offers very little. She may get herself out of an unpleasant situation with her husband, only to be thrust into half a dozen other unpleasant situations all of which require difficult adjustments. And yet many a woman comes to the fourth decade, who has tried with all her heart and soul to make an adjustment, to smoothe out differences, to make compromises and concessions, but all to no avail.

Often she is a woman who has known no other man than her husband. She has forfeited years of

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happiness as payment for her mistake in marrying the man to whom she is married. She has assumed not only all the obligations of wifehood but the responsibilities of motherhood too, and yet every offering that she has made has been denied, each concession met with further demands.

Yes, I know there are men like that. Men consumed with greed and gnawed by ambition, men without the least divine afflatus, wooden automata that eat and drink and sleep, human vegetables and no more. Yes, I have seen fine young women go to their doom, and beat out their brains against the indomitable inertia of such human clods. I have seen women who have broken under the terrific strain, others who have killed and poisoned and maimed their men as the only way of release, and I have seen gentle, sensitive souls who have snuffed out their own lives rather than go on. For these problems, of course, the law has no answers, because the law was written by patriarchs for patriarchs. The patriarchal law takes no cognisance of a woman's feelings or a woman's pain.

Perhaps you who are reading these lines are one of the women who have suffered and suffered and lost all hope of release. You have invested five, ten, even twenty years in a hopeless proposition. You look into the future and only insanity or death can



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release you. You may be tied economically to a man who is a tyrant or a human turnip, and you think of divorce with fear and trepidation. You may have children, and you say bravely, "I remain with my husband only because of the children. If it were not for them I would have separated long ago. I want them to have a home."

I am going to talk with brutal frankness to you. I have never seen any good come out of a marriage which lacked all semblance of communion, comradeship, respect, sympathy, or love. If you made a mistake in marrying your husband, and if, after years of honestly trying to make an adjustment to life with him, you look at the future with hopeless despair, and your husband with disgust, hate, or pity, you will gain nothing by perpetuating the mistake, by continuing the sterile relationship. Never have two mistakes equalled one good judgment! Unless there are definite advantages in remaining married, it is better to be divorced under such hopeless conditions.

Of course I cannot tell you whether *your* marriage is a success or a failure. I know that the time is not far distant when in every large metropolitan centre we shall have marital guidance bureaus, staffed by psychiatrists, gynaecologists, social workers, specialists in home economics, and the like, who will advise

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young men and women whether they should marry, teach them how to make the best of their marriages, and, should their marriages go on the rocks, help to rescue them and repair them, or, if they are hopelessly shipwrecked, send them decently to the bottom where they cannot be a constant menace to others. I, myself, shall work very hard for the establishment of such bureaus, but until I succeed, you will have to seek guidance wherever you find it available.

I think an impersonal and trained observer should be called in to referee the situation before divorce proceedings are entered into. This person may be a mutually acceptable friend, a clergyman, a lawyer, a psychiatrist, or the family doctor. But once you agree with an impersonal observer that there is no help for your marriage, I advise that you cut the Gordian knot surgically. Divorce, separation, and desertion—the poor woman's very effectual divorce—are the only answers. Take time to come to your decision, but once your decision is made, act, and act quickly and with finality.

### 7. SAFE AND SANE DIVORCE

Unless you want to sacrifice the rest of your life on the altar of your first marital mistake, I

suggest that you free yourself from a marriage that holds nothing for you. It is, moreover, the grossest fallacy to believe that a marriage that is tied together by the flimsy pretext that its continuation is for the sake of the children is a valid marriage, or has the same effect on the children that a good marriage between their parents would have.

An interesting instance of this thesis is illustrated by the J. children. John and Betty J., aged six and four years respectively, were brought to me because of conduct difficulties. Johnny was having daily temper tantrums in school and had developed a sullen anti-social attitude not only towards his parents but towards his playmates. Betty J. was a timid, frightened child who refused to make any kind of social contacts and spent hours every day in seemingly motiveless weeping. The mother, feeling that somehow she had not fulfilled her duties as a mother to the children, brought the children to me, asking for advice about the cure of their childhood neuroses.

Examination of the daily routine of the J. children showed that the mother had made every possible effort to give these children a normal psychological attitude toward life. The clue to the difficulty was found in Johnny's statement of the situation. In a moment of almost anguished

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embarrassment he told me, "Mummie and Daddy don't love anybody and they don't love us, so why should I love anybody?" Further examination showed that the parents, who were deeply incompatible on a variety of life's sectors, had decided to remain married "for the sake of the children."

Johnny and Betty were much wiser than the parents gave them credit for. Both these children, as subsequent consultations proved, had a very definite insight into the lovelessness of their parent's marriage. Both the children suffered from the fact that the parents, in attempting not to make partisans of the children, actually neglected them. Both the children recognised, moreover, that the social life was entirely different from the social life of their friends' parents. Try as they would Mr. and Mrs. J. were unable to deceive the children, and the children's conduct deviation was the direct result of the parents' incompatibility. On learning that the incompatibility was of such a nature that no amount of patching up could bring these two people together, I suggested their divorce.

After the parents were divorced the children went to live with their mother, being visited once a month by their father. Once the parents were divorced they changed their attitude toward

each other and toward the children. An attitude of decent respect was substituted for the former attitude of unspoken but truculent antagonism. No sooner was the divorce granted than the children's conduct changed. Betty began making friends in the kindergarten which had been recommended for her, and Johnny entered into the life of his classroom with a better spirit and his school work improved miraculously.

Parents who believe that their children cannot see behind the masks which they wear are very much mistaken. Children and dogs have an uncanny faculty for looking through the externals of human beings' conduct and literally "sniffing out" the inner essence. Parents make the mistake of under-rating the intelligence of their children. Long before the usual divorce is decided on by the parents, the children, even though they are still infants, are capable of sensing the flaws in the union, and the parents who listen to their children will often learn some astonishingly painful truths from the mouths of these babes and sucklings. Much as I deplore the psychological effects of broken homes on the children of divorced parents, I feel that a clean and decent divorce, with an admission of incompatibility as an explanation to the children, is infinitely more desirable

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than the artificial living together of man and wife for the sake of deceiving the children into believing that a "home" exists.

There is hardly a woman who has been married more than five years who has not at some time or another questioned herself as to whether her marriage should stand or fall. My advice is to build it stronger, if there is anything at all to build on. But if nothing is left but the ashes of rancour and the dust of disappointment and discouragement, it is better to build anew. Unfortunately, too few men and women look upon marriage as a task for two mature people. Too few men and women are psychologically mature. Too many are infantile romanticists who expect marriage magically to cure them of their neuroses. Each problem is individual, each problem unique. When the problem becomes acute in the life of middle-aged women, it is all too often complicated by physiological, economic, social, and familial ramifications. But whatever the problem is, try to look at it with the following points of view in mind.

If the problem of divorce comes up in *your* life, try (1) to understand your husband's point of view in the matter, and the possible psychological reasons for his conduct. (2) Do not do anything in the heat of emotion and in the blindness of anger.

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You usually prejudice your own interests. (3) Try to think the problem out for yourself. If you ask advice, choose an expert to help you. Do not go round peddling your troubles to the whole world. You will only be confused. Ask yourself (4) how much *you* are responsible for the threatened break-up, and do what you can to better yourself before you try to do anything to your husband. Carefully consider (5) your chances as a lone woman, and (6) try to ascertain the probable effects of divorce on your children, your family, your social position. If possible (7) talk the matter over dispassionately with your husband, with or without the presence of some mutually respected third party as a referee. And finally, (8) make up your mind, and once you have decided, stick to your guns no matter what happens.

### 8. DANGEROUS OLD WOMEN

Perhaps you are a grandmother when you read this. And perhaps you are a maiden aunt. In both cases you probably have some family relationships which are closer to you than the casual friendships of the social world. Very often you have grandsons and granddaughters, or nephews or nieces, and these children have a very special

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emotional relationship to you. You adore them, you treat them as if they were your own flesh and blood, and you would sacrifice anything for their happiness. And not infrequently you have a feeling that you understand these children better than their own parents understand them.

This is a delicate problem. I wonder whether you realise just what you are doing to these children by winning them over to yourself with love and gifts and attentions? Is it possible that you have taken these "ready made" children, and, without assuming the responsibility for their life, their health, their education, their character, are merely enjoying the fruits of their companionship and love, without really being aware of what you are doing? Of course there are grandmothers and maiden aunts who know much more about child education than the parents of their grandchildren and nephews and nieces and perhaps you are one of them. But nearly every grandmother or maiden aunt *thinks* she knows more about child psychology than the parents of the children themselves.

What frequently happens is this. A grandmother feels that her usefulness in the world has been minimized by time. Her children are grown up and their attention is turned to their own children. The grandmothers, especially those who



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were born in an age in which women were not educated to use their leisure fully, often find in their grandchildren an opportunity to make themselves useful again. In a sense they want to "show" their own children that they are not superannuated.

They lay a campaign, an unconscious campaign you understand, to win the grandchildren over to themselves, and away from their own parents. This is not always difficult to do as the parents have the unpleasant function of punishing the children for their little misdeeds, while the grandparents can condone everything, and, under the guise of grandparental privilege, spoil the children to within an inch of their lives and their sanity. The same technique holds true of the maiden aunt who often focuses her entire love (which, if she had been more courageous, would have been devoted to her own husband and her own children) upon the children of her more daring sisters or brothers.

This is a very dangerous business and leads not only to unhappy consequences for the children, but for the grandmothers and maiden aunts themselves.

Two parents consulted me frantically a few years ago because such an octopus-like grandmother had succeeded in alienating completely the affection of their children. In this instance it was the

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husband's mother who was the villain in the family drama. She had never reconciled herself to her son's marriage and had laid a long campaign to break up his home.

For eight years the marriage bravely withstood her innuendoes and machinations. Finally the grandmother, seeing that she could not disrupt her son's marriage directly, made a flank attack via the personalities of his two young sons. She bought a lovely house in the country, and suggested to her son that he and his wife take a much needed holiday leaving their two sons with her at her country home. The parents eagerly accepted this offer, little realising that during their absence, the children's grandmother would methodically and persistently break down their affection for their own mother, and substitute a vicious dependence on their grandmother for a very normal relation to their own parents.

But this is precisely what happened, and it required months of patient effort to persuade the boys that their parents were not the villains their grandmother had painted them. One must not believe that this grandmother was a malicious psychopath. Apart from her neurotic hostility to her daughter-in-law she lived a fairly normal life. But ever since her son married she felt betrayed

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and deserted, and in order to save her self-respect, was literally compelled to attempt to win her grandsons to her. The problem was finally solved by directing the grandmother's emotional interests into more acceptable social service activities.

Tensions are bound to arise; the parents will resent the interference and will forbid their children to see so much of the grandmother or the maiden aunt. Sometimes the children will desert their own parents and devote their love entirely to the grandmother or maiden aunt. This leads to tragedy within the children's own family. Thousands of untoward psychological complications may ensue. Sometimes the children are spoiled so badly that when they grow to the age where they have to make independent decisions for themselves, they feel deserted and turn not only upon their parents but upon the "good" grandmother or the "favourite" maiden aunt as well. And then the "good little grandmother" has not only the reproaches of the parents to deal with but her own bad conscience as well.

An example which shows how this situation can be handled in a psychologically mature fashion is that of a woman who lived with her married sister and often was responsible for taking care of her two young nieces when the parents went out at

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night. This woman was incapable of having children of her own and had never married for this reason. She was devoted to her nieces and yet she determined that she would not allow herself to enter into a false psychological relationship with them. Whenever she remained at home with her nieces, or took them on an outing, she brought along another adult or child. The purpose of this was to provide for a wider distribution not only of her own, but of her nieces' emotional interest. The presence of the stranger served the double purpose of the development of the nieces' social feeling, and the frustration of any tendency toward emotional fixation. The result is that a beautiful co-operative relation, totally devoid of pathological emotional strains, exists between her sister's children and herself.

The point I want to make is this: To love grandchildren or nieces and nephews not wisely but too well eventually ends in tragedy, not only for the recipients of the love, but also for the donors. It is unwise to focus one's entire love-stream upon a child much younger than one's self, especially when that child is not one's own child. Too many chances of disillusion exist. If you must pet something, if you must shower your love in unending streams on some living thing, focus it on a little

dog or cat, a horse or a goldfish, but not on a child. And better yet, find a variety of outlets for your love, and a variety of activities from which you can gain your self-esteem. Follow a policy of "hands off!" with children who are secondarily related to you, and your chances of happiness will be immeasurably improved.

### 9. KEEPING PEACE IN THE FAMILY

We have discussed some of the more serious aspects of a woman's family life, and some of the more difficult problems that she has to meet. By far the greatest number of situations which must be met, however, are the petty annoyances and aggravations of everyday life. These, unimportant in themselves, have an unhappy way of piling up until they assume mountainous proportions. The great majority of women are capable of meeting the crises of life like heroines; but I have seen too many fine women, who could be depended upon to carry out faithfully and effectively the most delicate and difficult practical tasks, wreck their lives on the rocks of petty vanity and the shoals of egoism.

It all boils down to just this: Every human being in the world is hard at work trying to get

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rid of his or her little inferiority complex. The one profession that we are all engaged in, night and day, consciously and unconsciously, is the profession of keeping up our self-esteem or "face." Now, where is there such a marvellous arena for working up a superiority complex as one's own home? The victims are there, and they cannot escape. Day after day you can utilize the same tricks for building up your sense of self-esteem. And that is where most of the unpleasantness in a woman's life is manufactured.

The constant struggles for prestige that mark man-woman relations in the outside world, are repeated, with emotional intensification, in the home and in the marriage bed. I wonder how many women know that nagging is a form of tyranny, and that worry is a club that they use on the undefended heads of their husbands and children? I wonder how many women would rather lose a tooth than think their husbands had the last word in an argument? I wonder how many women who are making a profession of martyrdom and submission realise how many women dig a grave for their own happiness by gossip, curiosity, jealousy, envy, vanity, egoism, hypochondriasis?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A full description of these traits with their psychological implications will be found in the author's book *How to Be Happy Though Human*.

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The technique of working out a superiority complex at the expense of your husband is very simple. A woman of my acquaintance, who was herself highly educated, married a man who had very little education. She constantly found opportunities to criticise her husband's spelling or pronunciation, especially of words of foreign derivation. She always waited until there was company around to take the opportunity of correcting him. Her husband, fortunately, is a man with a great deal of self-esteem, and despite his lack of formal education, an extremely intelligent man. His wife obviously was taking unfair advantage of him. His sterling character more than compensated for his lack of education.

One day the husband refused to be a worm any longer. He happened to be an extremely good dancer, whereas his wife seemed to be incapable of dancing in correct rhythm. He sought opportunities to dance with her in public and when she got out of step he would threaten to leave her standing alone on the dance floor. His wife corrected his grammar with a certain amount of malice, but the husband, who really loved his wife, did his correcting with very good humour. After the third or fourth public demonstration of her inability to dance well he proposed a truce. "No more

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corrections of pronunciation—no more corrections of dance steps. Let's start all over again and be friends."

For one man or woman who has sufficient self-esteem to handle the situation in this fashion, there are thousands of others who blindly go on struggling for prestige at the expense of those whom they are supposed to love more than anything else in the world. Surely there is no art in finding flaws in a human being, since, being fallible, we all have such flaws. To pick flaws and emphasise such defects at the expense of existing personality assets is a cheap and neurotic method of building up your own subjective self-esteem. The real art of being a comradely wife lies in the very reverse of this procedure: the building up of personality assets to such an extent that the husband's self-esteem rises to the point where further struggles for prestige vanish spontaneously. Needless to say this advice applies equally well to husbands!

Of course the true ideal of family life is comradely co-operation. Indeed, a happy family life is unthinkable without co-operation. But many women believe that if they do the "co-ing" their husband will do all the "operating." And therein lies the source of much family tension. This tension usually appears in the form of useless



arguments. Many a woman has buried her happiness beneath a mountain of silly arguments. If you have an inferiority complex go to a psychologist and get cured of it—do not take it out on your husband and children, or your employers or employees, in the form of verbal browbeating. A woman who is sure of herself can afford to let some one else make and win his point in a discussion without getting in a panic about losing her prestige.

In the last analysis, it amounts to letting your husband "get away with it" once in a while. I know one brave little woman who makes all her husband's decisions. At the time she makes them he seems not to be listening. Two weeks later he announces her decision as his own with the air of a Spanish conquistador who has just discovered a new continent. The little wife smiles and says nothing. It is one of the happiest marriages that I know. If every woman would only realise that she is not the only woman in the world with an inferiority complex, that, indeed, every one else in the world is struggling with the same mental problem, the whole situation of conflict over prestige would be easily solved. Because the woman who is armed with this knowledge would consciously and unconsciously avoid making any one else feel inferior. She would avoid arguments,

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she would abjure all words of finality, she would not "put people in their place," she would not insist on the last word. She would try to "build up" her husband so that he did not feel like a worm, and she would go out of her way to make her children, her parents, her neighbours, her servants, feel that she respected their integrity as human beings.

There are some women who believe that when they are kind or considerate their husbands will think they are fools, their servants will "take advantage of them," their children will be impudent and disobedient, and their neighbours will simply get what they can out of them. Therefore, they deal sharply in act and word. With what results? The very thing they are trying to avoid happens: their husbands have other women on the side, their servants steal from them clandestinely, their children become sycophants, and their neighbours avoid them entirely. These women end up in an ivory tower, surrounded by an aura of moral superiority—and nothing else to show for their pains.

Peace can be kept in any family by any woman who has an inkling of psychology and a trace of a sense of humour. Such a woman never starts an argument and, finding herself in one, lets the other

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fellow finish it. She never belittles any one, and never ridicules man or child. She knows how to sacrifice a minor advantage in prestige for the major gains of peace and serenity. Being tolerant of other people's opinions, no matter how unsound they may seem to her, she wins their respect and toleration; and because she is secure in her own self-esteem, no man's hand is raised against her. The woman whose family life is not peaceful has only herself to blame. For family peace depends only on a woman's being tactful and co-operative, sympathetic and tolerant, and psychologically wise enough to know *that the injured party must always make the first overtures of "making up," and the more intelligent party must be the first to disarm!*

To recapitulate: The family is a loose collection of emotional dynamite with an unfortunate proclivity to explode just when a woman wants a little peace and quiet in her life. The problems of family relations, whether of parents or in-laws, of your own husband or children, or of your relatives, nieces, nephews, and grandchildren, can usually be solved if you assume a common-sense attitude towards them. Try to understand, to identify yourself with the other fellow. Recognise that while there are exceptions to the rule, women get pretty much out of family relations what they put into

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them. If you are being made unhappy, look first at yourself and discover what you are omitting before you begin criticising some one else. Never allow family relations to become an end in themselves, either with your parents, your husband, or with your children. Be loyal to your family, but keep a decent distance. Be respectful to your family, but do not worship it. Do not try to dominate, but do not be a doormat with "Welcome" written on it. Guarantee to every member of your family the right to his or her own self-determination, and insist on your own right to be happy when it interferes with no one else's happiness.

## IV

### THE RIGHT TO LOVE AND BE LOVED

MIDDLE age is the crucible in which the gold of character is separated from the slag of personality. Not until a woman is middle-aged does she actually know whether she is a success in her social, business, family or sexual relations, for in these years her resistance to the critical strains and stresses of life is tested to the utmost. And nowhere is this test as dramatic as in the realm of sex.

In the previous chapter we discussed that common household problem, the errant husband, who constitutes the flying apex of the family triangle. The erotic triangle is an actual situation, and any woman who does not lose her head in the transition from the dizzy heights of romanticism to the depths of emotional disorganisation, can meet it with common sense and solve it by reason. But there are other problems which lie not so much in the outside world as in that more intangible world within the psyche of every woman. Let us

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consider the problem of the woman whose husband has been a model of conduct so far as social and moral conventions are concerned but who in his private life has been an emotional and sexual zero. Let us consider the problem of the frigid woman who has never experienced the thrill of the sexual orgasm in her otherwise satisfactory marital relations. Let us consider the woman who, for any reason whatsoever, has reached thirty-five, forty-five, perhaps fifty-five, without having actually been a woman in the sexual sense. What shall be her attitude as she looks to the few remaining years of sexual vigour? What shall be her attitude toward the conventions under which she has lived? What shall be her conduct toward a husband who has given no overt cause for complaint?

### I. SIX LAWS OF SEX

These are difficult problems to discuss. There are always aspects to these situations which preclude public airing. I wish I could hear your own version of your unique problem, and could consequently suit my advice to your individuality, to your environment, to your emotional attitude, and to your future. I know that I run the risk of being crassly misunderstood in bringing these most

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intimate matters to light, but I believe there is always merit in truth and frankness. For generations women have been suffering untold tortures because they have not been able to talk to any one about these very problems. Thousands of women have borne crosses bravely and heroically because they happened to live in an age which gave no comfort nor quarter to women. Literally countless women are sitting in insane asylums to-day because they have not been able to find any other solution to this problem than a retreat into a world of fantasy or a regression to infantile patterns of conduct. For this reason, come what may in the way of criticism, I am going to tell you the truth so far as I know it. I hold these ideas to be true and psychologically valid:

1. Every woman has the right to experience her womanhood as a positive and satisfying reality. The satisfaction must be physiological, sexual, emotional, and spiritual to be complete.

2. Every woman has the right to experience normal sexual relations unless some physical or organic factor beyond the help of modern medicine and surgery bars that way.

3. Every woman has the right to motherhood unless she bears some hereditary taint which would *surely* be communicated to her offspring.

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4. Every woman who is prevented, by the facts of her marriage, from fulfilling her complete womanhood, has the right to find that fulfilment elsewhere, *unless she chooses to forego complete satisfaction for the sake of maintaining and retaining certain positive features of her marriage which she values more highly than complete sexual satisfaction.*

5. Every woman who chooses to forego the complete physiological, emotional, sexual, and spiritual fulfilment of her womanhood outrages certain laws of her own biological and psychological development. Unless she finds some substitution for the unsatisfied component of her femininity, she lays herself open to physical or mental disease.

6. Men and women are biologically and psychologically equivalent as human beings. Their differences are differences of structure and function designed to further their division of labour and their psychological co-operation, not to establish differences of human value. It follows, therefore, that *all* rights, duties, obligations, responsibilities, and opportunities for enjoyment and development must be shared equally by men and women.

Perhaps these six psychological axioms sound so self-evident to you that you have always taken them for granted. Perhaps they come to you as the direct



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refutation of all the traditions and codes which you have been taught since you were a little girl. I have no desire to outrage your religious or moral ideas and beliefs. I have no axe to grind. I am simply explaining certain "facts of life" which have escaped a great many estimable women because of the narrowness of their education or the bias of their childhood environment. I must state my premisses clearly so that we will understand each other clearly.

### 2. TO BE, OR NOT TO BE—FAITHFUL?

Let me say emphatically at the very outset that I am not advocating sexual promiscuity or marital infidelity for unsatisfied women. In a former chapter I stated my belief that monogamy is the ideal form of modern marriage, qualifying the statement by saying, however, that few men or women are psychologically mature enough to be completely monogamous.

Far from advocating sexual license, I would rather point out the dangers of loose sexual morals to most women. The woman who leaves her husband's bed to seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere runs a number of risks. Venereal disease is not the least of these dangers. The chance of discovery, and

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the consequent unpleasant divorce proceedings, together with the attendant loss of her children or the loss of her financial security, is another factor to be taken into consideration. An important deterrent is surely to be found within the unfaithful wife's own conscience, especially if she has been brought up to look upon sexual relations as somewhat sinful, even within the bounds of legalized marriage. The danger of impregnation, with the consequent dangers of illegal abortion, not to speak of the attendant mental anguish, is not to be taken lightly. And the fact that the woman who seeks sexual satisfaction outside her own marriage may occasionally find a man who so completely dominates her sexual and emotional life that the quiet continuation of a partially satisfactory marriage becomes psychologically impossible, must be considered, as well as the possibility of libel and blackmail, and all the other unhappy consequences of extra-marital sexual relations.

Every woman who seeks for sexual satisfaction outside her marriage must realise furthermore that a clandestine sexual relationship, no matter how exceptionally satisfactory it may be in itself, is not always the complete answer to that woman's problem. Sexual satisfaction is but one factor in the relationship between a man and a woman. The

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sexually dissatisfied or unsatisfied woman usually over-rates the importance of complete sexual satisfaction in the scheme of her happiness. She may have developed a fine social and spiritual companionship with a man who is sexually unschooled or inadequate, and she runs the risk of losing something vivid and real and comforting for the sake of the clandestine enjoyment of physical relations with a man who is completely incapable of giving her other human satisfactions. And the risk is not an inconsequential one.

Here is a case to illustrate the point. A young woman whom we will call Louisa G. was married to a man whom she respected and admired very much. He was some ten years her senior and because of the pressure of his work, the long hours that he had to remain at his desk, and also because of the aftermath of a childhood illness, Louisa's husband was sexually not satisfactory to her. She felt that she was a young, active, healthy woman emancipated in her moral outlook, and decided that she would remain with her husband but indulge in extra-marital sexual relations in order to gain sexual satisfaction.

She picked out a young man who was sexually mature and able to satisfy her physically, but who was psychologically inferior to both her and her

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husband. The young man found Louisa an easy solution to his problems, and relationships which began with a few furtive and clandestine meetings became more and more serious and more and more involved. At many of their meetings they indulged in alcoholic excesses with the result that on one occasion Louisa was too much intoxicated to take the ordinary precautions and soon found herself pregnant.

Louisa's pregnancy threw her into a panic, for she was afraid that her husband would never condone her infidelity. Furtively she sought to do away with her unborn child and unfortunately fell into the clutches of an unscrupulous and clumsy abortionist. She was obliged to pawn some of her jewellery in order to pay him his fee. Infection set in. Louisa became critically ill and finally had to go to her own doctor and submit to a serious operation to save her life. During this illness her husband, who did not suspect the true nature of the difficulty, was unusually kind and considerate. She does not know to this day whether he knows the true nature of her difficulties, but she suspects that he does. She feels guilty about the entire affair and because of her careless and foolish conduct she has been left permanently crippled in body and sadly disturbed in spirit. The fine relationship which

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she had with her husband has been broken not by any act of his, but by her own attitude towards him. She has projected to him her feelings of guilt, and since her operation has become a nagging hypochondriac.

One could, of course, quote cases that are exactly the opposite of Louisa's story. I do not wish to draw any moral consequences from this case except this: In our society, dominated as it is by senseless sexual taboos whose origin are hidden in the mists of history, a woman who seeks sexual satisfaction outside of marriage must be prepared for the consequences. This is surely the last course she should take, and then only when all other methods of improving her situation have proved futile.

I have refrained purposely from discussing the moral and religious aspects of this problem, because in the first place I am not qualified to discuss them, and in the second I must say that I have too often heard the Devil quoting Scripture. My only approach can be that of the scientist, the physician, the psychiatrist. It must be evident to you that the solution of this all important problem is an individual matter which must be solved after careful consideration of all the factors involved. Were I to formulate a general rule, it would be this: attempt to make your marriage as happy as you can. If

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you are frustrated in the attainment of complete happiness and satisfaction by character traits in your husband or by conditions in your environment that preclude the satisfaction of the sex axioms I have outlined, attempt first to direct your unsatisfied sexual energy into substitute channels which are socially acceptable. If this fails, and you have considered the risks and dangers involved carefully and sensibly, and if you have checked your opinion with the opinion of unbiased experts, seek the more drastic solutions of separation, divorce, or extra-marital relationships as a last resort.

### 3. WHEN THE SEX LIFE GOES ASTRAY

Women, like men, vary in the strength and vigour of their sexual impulses and appetites. Many a woman is happy not to be annoyed by the sexual advances of her husband, focusing her satisfactions on other aspects of marriage than the purely sexual. Such women have told me that they were overjoyed when their husbands became impotent or found themselves so busily engaged in their occupations that sex played a less important *rôle* in their husband's lives. Other women, especially if they have been repressed in childhood, experience intolerable anxieties when they are sexually neglected.

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Certain very primitive women, that is primitive so far as the vigour of their sexual impulses is concerned, are completely incapable of sublimating the sexual or maternal urge in any way. Other women find no difficulty in directing their love energies to hobbies, to social life, to settlement work, or to artistic creation. Some women are so dominated by their maternal instincts that they kidnap the children of other women because of their half-crazed frustration, while other women find no difficulty whatsoever in being happy though childless. In some women the force of traditional morality is so great that it effectually crushes the sexual impulse, while in others the urge for sexual satisfaction is so powerful that neither pride nor honour, social ostracism nor moral excommunication, can stay the exigency of their desire. The whole problem revolves about physiological needs, social customs, moral attitudes, and psychological determinants.

The sexual problems of the middle-aged woman must be solved, therefore, according to her individual constellation. Where conflicts in sexual matters exist, I strongly recommend a psychological examination of the problem and, if necessary, an intensive psychological re-education at the hands of a competent analytical psychiatrist, before you make drastic decisions which are capable of making or

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breaking your future happiness. Even though psychological analysis and re-education is sometimes a lengthy and often an expensive procedure, its benefits, especially in this sphere of a woman's life, are worth all the sacrifices of time and money that it might entail.

The woman who is intolerably enslaved by a neurotic and tyrannical husband who, through ignorance or lack of social feeling, is completely and fundamentally incompatible in every way, should face clearly the issue of the middle decades. Whether she wishes to pay for economic security or social prestige with the frustration of a normal sexuality, or whether she feels emboldened to risk a break in the marriage and seek sexual or emotional happiness elsewhere, must remain an individual problem. Whether a woman, who is sexually enthralled by her husband but intellectually or socially left adrift in the doldrums of boredom, should trade her sexual satisfaction for intellectual stimulation, is an equally difficult problem to solve. Sexual satisfaction without maternal, emotional, intellectual or social satisfaction, is just as horrible as economic security without love. It is manifestly impossible to discuss the thousands of permutations of these situations in a short handbook. All I can hope to do is to stimulate women to think of their



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situations, help them to imagine the future, and to show them how that future must strike a balance between their own compensatory capabilities and their personal needs.

Many unsatisfactory situations which remain chronic but endurable during the first years of marriage are strained to the breaking point during the middle decades.

Let me give you some illustrations that show how middle age becomes a critical testing ground. I am reminded in the first place of a woman who fell in love with an exceedingly handsome young man who was socially and intellectually her inferior. During the first years of their marriage the supreme happiness which she experienced sexually with her husband justified her isolation from her friends and her intellectual interests. When she married she was thirty and her husband was twenty-five. At forty-two she was a disillusioned woman. Her husband, under the lush influence of her pampering, had grown fat and stodgy and bald, and more uninteresting than ever. There was literally nothing that they had in common, and sexual enjoyment, the one bond which held them together for the first years of their marriage, was rapidly losing its charm and glow. This woman was approaching an age where the social, intellectual, artistic, and spiritual

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activities of life become more and more important. Her husband was completely incapable of sharing these interests with her. So deep was their incompatibility that every day that they lived under a common roof the worst qualities of both became more conspicuous. Her husband, who never could understand the psychology of the situation, became abusive and took to drinking. She spent most of her time complaining to her friends about her lot.

There seemed only one way out: that was to admit honestly that the marriage had begun under false pretences and unfavourable auspices, and then to break it, and begin again. Despite the lingering romantic attachment which this woman had for her husband, she determined her course, divorced him, and began a new life. She has returned to her earlier friends and to her intellectual interests and has found a solution for her life in literature and music. At the present time the thought of re-marrying is intolerable to her, but if she re-establishes her self-esteem she will probably find some man more nearly her spiritual mate whom she will marry and love.

The other case is that of a woman who gave up a career as a singer to marry and become a wife and mother. For years she despised her husband as a mere bread-winner, a background for her

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artistic endeavours. When she reached the age of forty-five she felt that another year of living with her husband would drive her to a complete mental collapse. Then suddenly a series of physical and emotional accidents occurred which unmasked her in her own eyes and made her see herself as a vain, neurotic, unco-operative woman. Her husband, whom she had disdained for years and would have divorced on the least provocation if there had been the opportunity, suddenly appeared as a sturdy oak on which she could support her failing self-esteem. He proved to be far better, far nobler, far more understanding than she had ever believed him to be. In the crisis that occurred he became a veritable tower of strength. Suddenly she realised that the home, the husband, the children, the little pleasures, and the little disappointments of bourgeois existence were really much more important to her than the phantom career on which in the past she had mistakenly based her value. She woke up on her forty-fifth birthday to realise that she had been on the wrong track all her life, and she determined to make the most of the very real advantages that she had gained in twenty years of marriage and to overlook some of the shortcomings which inevitably inhere in all human relations.

As I have said, middle age is a crucial testing

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ground and many of the situations which can be tolerated during the first three decades change drastically, either for better or for worse, during the fourth and fifth decades. Only the woman who is involved personally in these crucial changes can tell whether they are getting better or worse. Toleration, sympathy, understanding, good sportsmanship, social co-operation, and imagination will help to solve many of them. Separation appears the only cure for others. Hold your head high and be courageous, for it is better to be strong and suffer the pains and discomforts of your own making than to humiliate yourself and endure the intolerable indignities that derive from another's cruelty or ignorance.

### 4. NEW MORALS FOR OLD

Family life and family organisation are in the course of a revolutionary transition. In an age in which we cannot prescribe an absolute norm for every one, in a period when it is utterly impossible to describe a sane and safe course to every woman and to every family, I hold it self-evident that a certain leeway must be left individuals for experimentation in their sexual relations.

I have seen families in which both husband and

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wife managed to carry on a satisfactory married life, making an apparently adequate adjustment, in which either the husband or the wife, consciously and with full understanding of the situation, voluntarily denied himself or herself basic sexual satisfactions. I have seen other families in which separation, divorce, or suicide was the only way out. And I have seen a number of happy marriages between thoroughly civilised and emancipated men and women in which husband or wife made no efforts to maintain a monogamous state but carried on extra-marital affairs happily and without rancour or sentimentality. I know women who regularly go abroad and in a few weeks or months of travelling live a completely satisfactory sexual life, only to return to their husbands perfectly content to carry on a fine relationship which is intellectually or socially satisfying, but sexually completely unsatisfying. And these women are, because of their own psychological organisation, completely free of all twinges of conscience and all remorse of guilty feelings. Other women, by occasional flirtations and sexual escapades, have preserved marriages which would otherwise be wholly intolerable. One of the happiest and most beautiful marriages that I know is between two people who would never think of divorce. In this couple the husband is completely

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satisfied sexually by his wife, yet the wife has had a constant lover for fifteen years, with the husband's knowledge and full consent. This I admit is unusual.

I believe that the sexual problems of middle-aged individuals should be discussed between them with openness and frankness wherever possible. When a husband is either disinclined to discuss the matter, or waxes emotional and goes into hysterics when the subject is broached, and the wife decides after mature consideration to find sexual love and satisfaction elsewhere, I counsel that wife to be tactful in her amours, to be silent about her affairs and never divulge them to other women, and above all to maintain an outward semblance of decency and decorum in her attitude toward her husband. This is not moral hypocrisy; it is simply good sportsmanship and common decency. There are very few husbands indeed whose vanity would not be mortally wounded if their wives told them of their infidelities.

Husbands sometimes say, "I don't care what you do, but tell me the truth about it!" Do not believe them. A woman should not discuss her past with her husband, and she should certainly not discuss her adulteries with him. If this course must be chosen in order that a woman may save her own physical health and her own mental balance—in a situation where it is vital that the formal marriage

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be maintained and where divorce is either undesirable or impossible—then let her be discreet. And if possible let her never give herself to any man whom she would not be willing to marry. And let her never write letters which she would not like to hear read aloud in the law courts.

### 5. SEXUAL FRIGIDITY

One of the commonest causes of marital misery during the middle decades is sexual frigidity, that is, a woman's inability to experience a normal orgasm in the sexual relationship. This condition is far more wide-spread than the layman believes. The figures which certain gynaecologists have gathered, showing that from seventy to eighty per cent of women are sexually frigid, seem hardly credible. Not only does sexual frigidity on the part of the wife account for a large proportion of the infidelities of husbands, but it is one of the commonest causes of marital infidelities on the part of the wife. The wife who has never experienced a sexual thrill has a great temptation to blame it on her husband, and then attempt to find sexual satisfaction elsewhere.

A young couple who had been married six years recently consulted me. Their marriage was "on the rocks" despite the fact that the husband claimed

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that he loved his wife dearly and that she was very much attached to her four-year-old son. They had tried everything, so they said, but the wife was completely frigid. The wife blamed it all on the husband. He had not understood her, he had treated her badly. But on examination I found that the husband was really a model young man, sexually potent, schooled in the art of love, and well versed in the psychology of women. It was not one of those simple cases in which a boorish and un-schooled husband wrecks the finer sensibilities of a wife and ruins her sexual life for the rest of her married life.

Here, for once, the trouble lay in the wife! She had a curious history. She had been assaulted as a young child, and, despite the assurances of a woman gynaecologist whom she consulted before her marriage, she was afraid that her husband would discover that she was not a virgin. She was an orphan and had been brought up by friends who were so anxious to live up to their trust that they filled her mind full of the most fantastic notions about the sinfulness of all sexual relations. Naturally, when she finally came to marriage, she believed that "no nice girl" participated in the sexual rites, except under protest. It was her belief that the less she entered into "that nasty business



of sex," the more moral and virtuous she would be considered.

Only later, when she discovered through conversations with other married friends that she was getting no joy out of marriage, did she begin upbraiding her husband for not treating her right. She was completely unaware of the fact that she herself had produced her sexual frigidity by her own unconscious attitude toward the sexual relation.

While a certain amount of sexual frigidity is due to glandular disturbances and to malformations of the female genital tract, these causes constitute less than one per cent of the cases of frigidity that exist.

There are a number of causes of sexual frigidity, among which one of the most common is the ineptness of husbands in the art of love, their lack of understanding of the physiology and psychology of the sexual impulse in their wives, and their complete unwillingness to study the subject and devote themselves to the poetry of love-making.

It is an unfortunate fact that many women are brought up in a tradition of "Hush! Hush!" when it comes to sexual matters. It is my belief—a belief born out of countless clinical cases—that an intelligent woman who recognises her own erotic needs, finding herself married to a husband who is not an artist in love, can usually guide him and train him

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to become a good lover if she has the courage and candour to attempt it. Too many women give up perfectly good husbands simply because the husbands are untrained in the art of love. This is too high a price to pay. Most men are willing and anxious to be good lovers. Many of them are shy and awkward and ignorant, and if they could feel a true comradeship with their wives they would do everything in their power to improve their sexual technique. The clever wife will not be ashamed to bring this most important of all subjects into the open and by gentle guidance and objective discussion train her husband to be the lover she would have.

A second cause of frigidity is our Puritan morality which permeates the minds of most girls who are brought up in "nice" (the word is almost synonymous with criminal, psychologically) homes. These girls are filled full of fallacies about the sinfulness of sex in general and the wickedness of men in particular. No woman can experience a normal sexual relation culminating in the supreme sexual pleasure of the orgasm if she looks upon all sexual relations as something bestial and sinful. Monogamy would be far easier for both men and women to attain if we were as objective about sex education and as sane about sex as the lowly Samoan savages.

A third cause of sexual frigidity is the fear of

impregnation, ignorance of the technique of contraception, or the psychologically and physiologically unhappy subterfuges which couples ignorant of birth control are compelled to use to prevent conception. Many women have the mistaken notion that if they "hold back" and do not experience the orgasm they can prevent conception—an unhappy fallacy based on old wives' tales that is responsible for a great deal of sexual unhappiness.

By far the commonest cause of sexual frigidity in women is a purely psychological one. We live, as I have so often said, in a man's world. Every woman's position in this man's world is an inferior one, no matter whether she is superior or inferior as a human being. The superior woman resents the prevalent ideology of the traditionally-minded men who let them know that every time a woman has sexual relations she "falls" and is tumbled into an inferior position. This hocus-pocus of male superiority and female inferiority is a purely historical and sociological fallacy. The woman who reads any of the recent books on the evolution of sexual morality will soon learn the origins of these masculine superstitions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> René Guyon: *The Ethics of Sexual Acts*, Robert Briffault: *Sin and Sex*, and Erwin Wexberg: *The Psychology of Sex* are especially to be recommended.

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But she may have fallen into the error a long time ago. The woman who has been fighting for her rights as a human being, the woman who is earning her own living, the woman who has reached mature stature psychologically, does not want to be reduced to an inferior position, simply because a man fills a psychological and physiological hiatus in her life. She marries because of social custom. But once she finds out that in marriage she is supposed to play the *rôle* of flunkey, she rebels psychologically.

Yes, she can submit to sexual advances from her husband or lover, but she does not "go all the way." In her fantastic psychology she believes that if she can withhold the orgasm, then she can prove that she is still dominant. She submits, but she does not surrender her ego! Do you understand the mental process behind this? To experience an orgasm is to admit openly and frankly, "I am a woman and I need you, a man, to make me happy!" But this admission is psychologically intolerable to a woman who has been taught all her life that feminine women are inferior. She must remain superior at all costs. And by being frigid she says, in the language of the body, "You are no man! You cannot make me experience the orgasm!"

Many a middle-aged woman has involved herself

in extra-marital escapades because of her sexual frigidity, which might have been solved better by psychological analysis and re-education than by illicit sexual relations. To the woman in the middle decades the problem of the continuation of her life without sexual satisfaction often becomes the focus of a thousand neurotic tendencies. Instead of going to the root of the matter, which more often than not lies within her own soul, she "projects" her feelings of dissatisfaction to her family and friends. Here her bitterness, cynicism, caustic remarks, and general disagreeableness only serve to bring out the worst antagonisms in her environment; and the result seems to prove her contention, that the world is an unpleasant place to live in.

I have made my position perfectly clear, I believe, in the axiomatic statements at the beginning of this chapter: A woman has every right to a normal sexual life and to normal and satisfying sexual relations. *But she owes it to herself to investigate the source and meaning of her dissatisfactions before she goes forth on a career of sexual promiscuity in order to attain her ends.* No woman whose sexual frigidity is part and parcel of her own unhappy pattern of living, no woman whose frigidity is a manifestation of her ignorance of sexual relations or of her desire to dominate and domineer over men,

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is going to find sexual happiness in promiscuous sexual relations. The cure does not lie in having relations with more men, or seeking for the mythical "right" man, but in understanding herself and freeing herself of her neurotic tendencies through psychological re-education.

### 6. THE " DANGEROUS AGE "

Much has been written in recent years about the " dangerous age," chiefly in reference to the sexual problems of women in the middle decades. Sensational novels and sensational legal processes have grown out of the misunderstandings which popular misconceptions have focused on some of the problems that we have been discussing in a calm and scientific manner in these pages. No woman's age is any more dangerous than she makes it, and no woman need go through a " dangerous " period unless she is victimised by her own ignorance and fear. Let us see just what happens at the so-called " dangerous age."

A woman leads a sheltered life for thirty or forty years. She marries and makes an adjustment to a husband who is neither interested in, nor capable of, being a " great lover." To all purposes her home life is not unhappy. Her children are be-

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ginning to grow up and she has a greater amount of leisure on her hands. Her husband, too, is becoming somewhat more successful economically, and she is less tied to her home and children than formerly. She goes on trips and cruises, attends the theatre more often, and has time to read more novels and to see more films. Her relations with her husband becomes more and more tenuous as time goes on. Perhaps she feels that he has had sexual affairs outside his married life, although she is not at all certain about this. She lives, however, in a social world in which most of the talk is about sex, and a tremendous flood of sexual stimulation pours in on her from a thousand different sources. She eats a little too much, and perhaps takes a few cocktails too many. Moreover, she begins to think that the menopause is not far away, and that her days of sexual enjoyment are numbered. She is ripe for trouble.

Perhaps, on the other hand, this woman is not married. She has been a teacher or a business woman for many years, and while she has not been uncordial to men, no man has come along who has really thrilled her, or offered her a home and marriage. She has avoided sexual entanglements, and concentrated her life on business or a profession. Now she meets her school friends who have been

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married and borne children, and she begins to read books which indicate that she has missed something in life. She, too, feels that the time is not far off when she will have lost her sexual attractiveness, and regards the future with mingled feelings of fear and longing. Her whole life is in the balance.

And there is the third woman who has led a very active sexual life, and based her self-esteem upon the fact that she has succeeded in having as many lovers as she wanted. Basically, of course, this woman has always felt that being a woman consisted in being something inferior to a man, and has done the next best thing: developed what I have called a "belligerent It" and wielded this sexual cudgel against any man who offered a challenge to her sexual supremacy. This type of woman, of course, is learned in the arts, wiles, and techniques of coquetry and love-making. She is the type of woman for whom men leave their wives, for whom men commit crimes, for whom men shoot themselves. In the old days she was a famous courtesan, or reigned over a fashionable salon. There is just a dash of the *demi-mondaine* in her make-up, and of course the same psychological melody runs through her life that we find in the lives of frigid women. And she, too, is in line for "dangerous" experiences.



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### 7. CHASTITY v. PROMISCUITY

Perhaps the one thing that all three of these types have in common is a fatal vanity born of a sense of insecurity and futility. The world is full of young men who dance well and talk well about the glittering world which these women have never experienced. The gigolo is a past-master of practical psychology. He compliments the middle-aged woman upon her well-preserved complexion, upon the excellent taste of her clothes, upon her "mature charm." Her head is turned, the die is cast, and the frantic woman enters into a "dangerous" affair.

Perhaps the first extra-marital love affair at this time gives her a new sense of values and adds fresh meaning to her life. More likely than not, however, it leads to disappointment. The woman realises that the assiduous young man who has accompanied her to dances and to the theatre, to the opera and to the night clubs, expects to be well paid for his services. If she is not callous, it comes as a distinct shock to her self-esteem, and serves to lower her personal self-evaluation to the nadir of sexual despair. Sometimes the first illicit sexual adventure whets her appetite for further excursions upon the primrose path of sexual

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dalliance. Again, it is not uncommon for a woman who has led an extremely sheltered and "moral" life to react to her first adventure with neurotic pangs of remorse and self-castigation. She may not be considered a "lost" woman by the world, but in the little world of her own soul she has lost something that she considered very precious.

### 8. ABOUT GIGOLOS

I do not condemn the institution of the gigolo. I am reminded of a case in which an estimable woman was literally prevented from spending the rest of her life in an insane asylum by the judicious prescription of a gigolo. This woman, at the age of forty-five was being completely isolated from her world by otosclerosis, a progressive form of deafness. The deaf, you know, are inclined to be very suspicious, and in marked contrast to the blind, who by their very dependency usually acquire a considerable social feeling, the deaf are inclined to be very unsocial.

Because of her sensitiveness about her deafness, this woman refused to go about in social groups where she was mentally isolated by her defect. Her husband was rather unsympathetic, over-worked business man, who believed that he had spent so

much money on doctors for his wife that he had discharged all his obligations toward her. He spent most of his nights in his office or at his club. My patient had no children, and her only companion was a poodle on whom she lavished all her affection. But even the best-mannered poodle is no substitution for human beings. As sometimes happens in cases of this kind, this woman was capable of hearing music much better than conversation, and she had a fine sense of rhythm. Indeed, before her deafness became very marked, she had the reputation of being an excellent dancer. Dancing was her passion, but as her husband had no time for her, and since she found it very difficult and embarrassing to ask young men to go to dances with her because of her physical defect, she had to forego that pleasure too. She lived an almost completely isolated life, growing more and more suspicious of her husband who made no attempt to disguise his belief that she was "crazy."

It was because of her growing irritability and suspiciousness that she was finally brought to consult me. Here was surely a case in which a dancing gigolo was indicated as part of the cure. I got a handsome and intelligent young man from one of the dancing teachers, instructed him in his *rôle*, and arranged a meeting of the two, telling

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my patient that the young man was a stranger in the city and shared her love for dancing, but had no partner. The husband willingly paid the gigolo's fees, and the patient never knew that she was "hiring" a partner.

Within a month my patient's morale had been so heightened by her new-found companionship that I was able to convince her of the desirability of studying lip-reading, which before she had strenuously objected to doing, and of mixing further in social affairs of her own making. To-day, despite the fact that her deafness is worse than when I first met her, her entire personality has been changed, and no small part of her spiritual renaissance is due to the intelligent co-operation of the young dancing partner who followed my prescription with imagination and interest.

In other cases I have prescribed similar companionship where the patient knew she was paying the gigolo. In countries where people are generally more civilised in their attitude toward middle-aged, unaccompanied women, the institution of the gigolo does not cause eyebrows to arch or noses to tilt a few degrees higher. Perhaps that it one of the reasons why women who can afford to do so prefer to travel in Europe, where it is no more disgraceful for a woman to pay for male companion-

ship than it is for men to pay for female companionship. Surely the hiring of a gigolo is preferable to the hiring of a private nurse, and surely the companionship in pleasant surroundings of a young man who is hired for the occasion is far preferable to the companionship of neurotic patients in a nursing-home.

The world being what it is, with husbands generally more interested in making money than in making their wives happy, it is inevitable that young men should step into the breach and fill the gap. But I warn the middle-aged woman to be objective with the young man whom she allows to take her to the theatre or to the dancing party. I certainly agree that a well-mannered gigolo makes an evening more interesting than no escort at all. It is better to hire good company than to sit at home alone and weep about the good old times or to introspect upon the neglect your husband shows you. But let it be a purely business-social matter. The gigolo who wants to go farther is a dangerous investment. He plays upon your vanity until he has you in his toils. He may sell you his body, but he seldom throws in the precious ingredient of love, without which sexual relations remain rather shoddy biological collaborations.

The gigolo becomes psychologically dangerous

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when a woman has passed her fiftieth year. Any woman who has lived a well-rounded life should have developed interests, friends, activities, hobbies, and avocations which would make the hiring of a gigolo unnecessary. If you have not done so, and feel that you must hire a man for the evening, try to keep at least the semblance of decorum, both from yourself and from your husband, by going out with a man whose age is not too flagrantly disparate from your own. I know that in the matriarchy older women were served by younger men, and matriarchal women, even to-day, demand the attention of youngsters. But a certain amount of tact and decorum, at least in your public appearance, will save you much unhappiness and undesirable gossip.

There are enough worthwhile young men in the world struggling with economic difficulties while attempting to gain a university or professional education who can fit into the *rôle* of the occasional escort, without making the fact too obvious that you are hiring some one as a personal gigolo. These young men usually make more interesting company than professional gigolos, and you can salve your conscience with the knowledge that the young doctor or architect whom you ask to escort you to the concert or the theatre is enjoying some-

thing that he would otherwise be compelled to forego. To any woman whose tastes are not entirely jaded, the unprofessional gigolo is to be preferred.

9. SEX . . . OR "NERVES"?

The relationships between gigolos and middle-aged women frequently do not remain purely platonic. The gigolo who begins as an escort remains—to spend the night. When a woman is in an actual panic about her sexual life, she may even enter upon a series of more or less promiscuous sexual adventures. Such sexual athletics are ruinous to her sense of self-esteem. Each new man is a new challenge, as if the woman were saying to her unconscious self, "If I can still make him love me, then I am not yet old!" What bitter tragedies occur in the course of these terminal convulsions of a dying sexuality! Each day the problem becomes more acute. Each day it becomes an increasingly hopeless race between face-lifting and sex-appeal, between what was once love and what amounts to male prostitution. Each new adventure intensifies the panic in the heart of the unhappy woman who treads this "dangerous" path.

Each sexual victory, paradoxically, is a sexual defeat, a psychological defeat. With each new

flame it becomes harder for the promiscuous woman to maintain her self-esteem, especially as the male victims usually fall progressively in the social and intellectual scale until they reach the bottom. And then one day even the most attractive woman, if she has been lucky enough to escape gossip, blackmail, venereal disease, disappointment, and despair, must admit defeat. And that is the dangerous day, the day of reckoning when the future looks its blackest.

Not infrequently this day ushers in a psychological depression, a so-called nervous breakdown, or a real melancholia. It must not be thought that sexual athletics, in themselves, cause nervous and mental disease. The mental aberrations that follow on the discovery of the loss of the last vestige of sex appeal are nothing new. They are cut from the same psychological cloth as the sexual excesses themselves. It is not sexual intercourse that is responsible for the nervous breakdown. The neurotic style of life without which sexual excess or "dangerous" sexual athletics is unthinkable, is responsible for the final declaration of mental bankruptcy. The unhappy woman who experiences the bankruptcy of her sex appeal usually falls back upon a time-honoured technique. What she can no longer command by virtue of



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her sex appeal, she now demands by the power of illness from those who are still attached to her. When a woman begins talking about her operations, it is safe to say that her love-life is dead.

### 10. SEX V. SAINTLINESS

I have purposely painted the blackest side of the picture of the dangerous age. Thousands do not experience this dangerous age at all. They are preoccupied with their homes, their work, their hobbies, the care of their pets, and they cross the thin ice without accident. Some women awaken to the need of sex much later in life than others, and they accept the responsibility and the joys of sexual relations without any qualms about social approval or ostracism. Many a woman has married after forty and lived a completely satisfactory love life thereafter, finding outlets for her maternal instincts in channels other than the actual bearing of children. Many women come to the dangerous age, accept the sexual challenges, experience a few love affairs, and settle down to the work-a-day business of living the rest of the lives untroubled by the storms and stresses of sex. It is just part of the great personal and individual equation.

A case in point is that of a singing teacher who

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had her first love affair after she had reached her fortieth year. This woman had spent an unhappy, bitter childhood and the problems of her existence for the first three decades of her life were so difficult that she had no time to "bother with men." Every minute of her time was devoted to her professional career and to the exigent task of supporting herself and her family by her own efforts. One obstacle after another had to be overcome. An ailing mother had to be supported in a sanatorium, a crippled sister had to be helped through her education, a young brother needed her support to establish himself in his chosen profession.

At forty she became a great success and suddenly all the problems that had been besetting her were satisfactorily solved. She was free for the first time to live her life as she would like to live it. She suddenly recognised the fact that her former hectic existence had left a much-needed ingredient out of her life. She was by nature a hard-headed, matter-of-fact woman, who, seeing such a defect, would set about to remedy it in much the same fashion that she would overcome all the other obstacles of her life. She felt she did not want to die without having experienced the joys of love even though forty years of self-sufficiency had made her a little wary of marriage.

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And so one fine day she packed her belongings and went off on a romantic honeymoon with one of her most talented pupils. They lived in Italy for six months, enjoying the abandoned pleasures of a complete and satisfactory relationship. Nothing was left undone which could add to their thorough surrender to the joys of travel and sexual companionship. The experience was eminently satisfactory to both of them. At the end of the six months, she returned to her studio, and he to his work. Her feeling was, "Well, now that is over and I have proved to myself that I am a complete woman. Now I can go about my work until I need another vacation." Five years have elapsed since her honeymoon. She is healthy in mind and body. Her sexual problem has been solved, for ever, so far as she is concerned.

We have reached a time in our civilisation when for a variety of reasons the rigid taboos which have dominated sexual relations for the last five or six thousand years are beginning to crumble away. Women to-day are inclined to take the matter of their sexual felicity into their own hands regardless of what Mrs. Grundy will say. A notable example of the sexual problem which I have indicated above is to be found in the story of a woman who devoted the first thirty-eight years of

her life to the pursuit of literature. She was not a pretty woman. Indeed, all her life she had been considered, and considered herself, an ugly duckling, and for many years had resigned herself to the fact that no man would ask her to marry him because of her physical shortcomings. Instead she poured out all her love and emotion into her writings and established a name for herself as a novelist who understood the profundities of human nature and had plumbed every depth of human emotion and sympathy.

At thirty-eight she had achieved an international reputation and was thrown in contact with every class and variety of man. One of these was a writer many years her junior who came to her more as a worshipper than as a lover. Perhaps his admiration for the high qualities of her writings blinded him to any physical ugliness that manifested itself in her body. At any rate he saw beyond the externals and fell in love with her.

Marriage for many reasons was out of the question. But these two people set up a *ménage* together and have continued to live with and love each other for several years in one of the most beautiful relations between a man and a woman that I have ever witnessed. They share a variety of interests and, although the woman is far more

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successful than her lover, and consequently carries most of the financial burden, the problem of a struggle for dominance or prestige has never entered into their lives. Certainly their literary work has been improved by this relationship, and surely the mental serenity of the woman is greater than it has ever been before. Not all women who reach middle age have either the strength of character, the resourcefulness of spirit, or the financial security to follow this course.

I adduce this case simply to demonstrate that normal and happy sexual relations may come late in the life of a woman and in circumstances which in former years would have condemned her to social ostracism. Surely, when the circumstances permit, some such relationship is the ideal solution of the problem.

Let us put it this way: sex is an important ingredient of a normal life, but it is not the *only* ingredient that makes for happiness. The sexual desire, though it be masked and appear as something quite un-sexual, is one of the strongest forces that make up our lives. Some outlet for the desire to love and be loved, the need to create and to nurture, must be found, if mental and physical sanity is to be maintained.

What can a woman do? Three courses are open

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to her, and whether she reaches thirty-five or fifty-five without having experienced a full sex life, she must follow one of these courses. She can, in the *first place, accept the challenge of sex and love, seek it, find it, and enjoy it.* I have pointed out some of the difficulties of this course, both to the married and to the unmarried woman of middle age. Nevertheless, I feel this is the best course *when* it is possible for the woman to carry out her love life without jeopardising the rest of her existence. Certain risks inhere in all the worthwhile things in life, and these risks must be met in the sphere of sex as well as in the realm of business or social life. It is my feeling that a late marriage is better than none, and that a satisfying love affair is often as a wholesome an experience as a marriage, especially when the woman who enters into it knows what she is doing and is aware of its implications. This course demands courage, co-operative-ness, a sense of humour, a reasonable elasticity of spirit, proper opportunities, and often a certain amount of economic security. When a woman chooses to follow this course she should be armed with a definite stability of personality and emotion, which is the indispensable minimal prerequisite of success in such pursuits. It is at once the hardest and the best solution of the problem.

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The *second* solution of the sexual problems of the sexually unsatisfied woman lies in resignation and reconciliation to a life without sex. There will be many of my readers who will choose this path as the path of least resistance and the path of least danger. After all, our civilisation puts entirely too much emphasis on sex. Eventually the sexual instinct wanes in intensity. There comes a time in the life of every woman when sex is gently but surely relegated to an insignificant *rôle* in her physical and spiritual economy. What matter if that time comes a few years before its appointed hour? What matter if you turn your face from the storm and stress of emotional upheaval in which your more sexually avid sisters are involved, and choose to forego both the pleasures of sex and its tragedies?

### II. TO LOVE OR NOT TO LOVE?

There are a great many women who are, by constitution and by training, not highly sexed. They may have entered into sexual life, in marriage, and found it much over-rated. The failure of any satisfaction may be due to so many physical, economic, psychological, and environmental factors that I cannot even attempt to describe them all. Suffice it to say that these women expected little

of sex, and got little. It is, therefore, no great difficulty for them to face a middle age or an old age in which sex plays practically no *rôle* at all. They resign gracefully and they reconcile themselves with ease. The second solution is their self-evident solution.

The woman who has expected much of love and sex, and got little, may, however, find this solution much more difficult. And yet, because of other concomitant factors, she may choose this in preference to all others. Can a woman live without sex and be happy? The answer is, some women can. You yourself hold the final answer to the question. There is no doubt that a woman who has built up a beautiful—but sexually inadequate—relation with her husband will cherish the comradeship of a fine husband far above mere sexual gratification, and in the process of comradely co-operation with him will allow the sexual issue to filter imperceptibly into insignificance. In our civilisation the most superior men are frequently sexually inadequate. Many women much prefer to live a sexless life with a first-rate husband than to experience the most romantically extravagant sexual satisfactions from a stud-moron.

A great deal of sexual and spiritual unhappiness results from the fact that intellectual or artistic men,



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men of prominence and of distinction who are relatively sexually impotent, find themselves attracted, psychologically, to their opposites. These are the men who carry on the tragedy of Faust in their private lives, wooing younger and sexually more attractive women, more by the fervour of their personality than by their sexual virility. Some of these men are stimulated to great deeds by the very infidelities of their petty wives, as history gives ample evidence. No one has ever written the woman's side of the story. Men of genius or even of near-genius are hard to live with. But there can be no gainsaying that there are certain indubitable advantages in being the wife of a genius even if he is sexually impotent. These advantages far outweigh the physiological advantages of a complete sexual satisfaction for a great many women.

The reverse of the old situation of the impotent genius wedded to the sexually avid young wife is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon in these days. The first-rate woman, the woman who has attained prominence and distinction in her own right, often marries a young man of no especial qualifications beyond a handsome exterior and adequate virility. I have seen a number of these marriages, and with but few exceptions they have turned out badly. The first-rate woman has usually

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spent most of her life gaining fame. She reaches middle age and wants the enjoyment of sexual dalliance as well. Hers is not a happy lot, because, despite her well-won fame, she is still living in a man's world, and her dashing young husband all too often compensates for his own inferiority complex by assuming all the traditional masculine airs and prerogatives, to the woman's chagrin and disappointment. Sometimes, of course, the handsome young consort makes the most of his dependency and humbles his famous wife by his symbiotic dependence.

An unhappy instance of this type of relationship is demonstrated by the marriage of a business woman who at fifty-five had gained an international reputation in her field. Four times a year she was compelled for business reasons to travel abroad, and on one of her numerous trips she met a gay young adventurer just half her age. He was a spoiled child who had run through a small fortune in the four years of his maturity, but had managed to acquire a very glittering polish in the course of his hectic career. He immediately flattered the older woman by playing the assiduous courtier. After the first few meetings he began telling his new-found friend the stories of his many escapades, with the result that not only was her vanity touched, but also her

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sympathy. She married him, more I believe to fulfil her frustrated maternal urge, than for the purpose of real sexual comradeship. To the young man the marriage was the answer to a life-long prayer. His wife gave him at one stroke all the things he had never been able to achieve by his own weak efforts.

Her first mistake was to marry this stripling. A journalist commenting recently upon an international mystery involving the disappearance of a brilliant woman lawyer who eloped with a notorious international adventurer, pointed out with rare insight that the woman who has developed one-sidedly in her business or profession, at the expense of her sexual relations and contacts with men, is at the mercy of the first smooth-tongued adventurer who sets his cap for her love—and money. Surely this was the first mistake in this case. She made a second mistake when she introduced her young husband into her business. Brilliant as he might have been at cocktail parties, he was no asset in a business. He quickly fomented jealousies and tensions in her concern, with the result that a life-long partner severed his connections with the wife, and the business subsequently went to pieces.

The wife was unable to defend her husband's conduct, and after the damage had already been done, to save her face, and to keep her husband from

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becoming an out-and-out parasite, she set him up in another business for which he showed some predilection. But soon her husband, having escaped her vigilant eye and supervision, spent most of his time going from one cocktail bar to another, overdrawing his bank accounts, and getting into scrapes with unsavoury *demi-mondaine* ladies. The wife was constantly being called from her business to get him out of police stations and put him into hospitals to sober up. The more solicitous she grew, the more fantastic his conduct became; and the worse the scrape he got himself into, the more responsible the wife felt for his welfare. That her business suffered goes without saying. She aged visibly month by month and was compelled to take a "cure" for her strained nerves in a nursing home.

Finally, having lost most of her fortune, ruined her business, and lost her faith in men, she divorced the young man, settled a handsome sum on him to keep him out of her way, and went slowly about the difficult business of rebuilding her business. Within a month her ex-husband was back to his old haunts on the Riviera paying gracious compliments to his next victim. This case illustrates not only the fallacy of living a one-sided life in the pursuit of fame and power to the exclusion of normal sexual and social contacts, but also demon-

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strates the plight of the business woman who late in life attempts to express her normal sexual instincts without truly understanding either her own motives or those of the young man whom she chooses to be her mate.

The first-rate woman who has become distinguished by her own creative efforts would do well to accept celibacy and the splendid isolation of fame, in preference to sexual humiliation and the comfort of a husband. Let her marry only some one as famous as herself if she would be happy, unless she can afford to buy herself a villa on some enchanted island and retire thereto with her young lover far from the prying eyes of the world. Otherwise, she is more likely to find peace and happiness along the path of reconciliation to a life without sex. That there are exceptions to this rule goes without saying. However, the middle-aged woman who is famous and who weds a young man is usually buying love with the coin of prestige and fame, and in this transaction *caveat emptor*, let the buyer beware!

In India, prior to the British occupation, it was the custom to burn widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands, the theory being that a husbandless woman was a worthless bit of clay. As no pious Hindu would marry a widow anyway, the pyrotechnic, and enforced suicide of the Brahmin's

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widow was almost the only available course for her to take. This savage patriarchal rite, which fortunately has disappeared with the advent of Western civilisation, was called suttee. Suttee is prohibited to-day by law, but even in our western world there are a great many women who commit a *self-inflicted* psychological suttee when they become widows. Such widows attempt to make a virtue of their neurotic conduct. I am whole-heartedly in favour of re-marriage of both widows and widowers, wherever such a course is possible.

There are, of course, marriages which have been so complete, so beautiful, so other-worldly that even after the death of the husband, the relationship marches on unchanged. I do not refer to the mawkish sentimentality of neurotic women who because they are widowed make martyrs of themselves in order to gain sympathy or admiration. I refer to the quiet, clear-eyed women whose lives are beautiful monuments to the communal work which they carried on with their husbands while the husbands were still alive. Sometimes the very beauty of such relations makes resignation to a sexless life almost imperative to the widow, despite the fact that during her marriage a full and beautiful sexual life existed. Where such resignation comes naturally and spontaneously, it is my belief that a woman can

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really live on the memories of her love and be happy. But it requires a great woman and a great love!

### 12. SUBSTITUTES FOR SEX

The *third* course open to the middle-aged woman who faces a life without adequate sexual satisfaction is the course of sublimation or substitution. If your sexual libido is not absorbed in sexual love itself, you must transform it into something else, or focus it on some other object than a husband or lover. I do not actually believe that the libido can be transformed into anything else, but I do believe that if you are extremely active in other fields, the hunger of love and sex may be stilled. Many a woman has learned by bitter experience that you cannot sublimate sex, and that there is no substitute for love.

There is in every woman the desire to love and to be loved. Sex, along with hunger, is one of the most primitive and deeply rooted needs in a woman's life. Perhaps these are the only two basic biological instincts. Hunger must be stilled with food and drink, and sex must be satisfied with love. But just as people will eat roots and berries when they cannot get beef-steak, so women can be satisfied with substitutes for love, when sexual love itself is absent.

In a word, the sexually unsatisfied woman can

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bridge the period between sexual desire and sexless old age by a variety of substitutes. The sexual instinct has a number of objects and goals just as the hunger instinct has. The well-rounded diet contains proteins, carbohydrates, fats, water, salts, and vitamins. The well-rounded love life consists of a number of component instincts and objects. Just as you can keep alive on a diet of bread and water, so can you—if you must—satisfy your sexual nature and your sexual instinct with certain minimal solutions.

*The first, last, and best expression of a woman's sexual instinct is the love of a man.* The love instinct as we have seen, does not exist, however, in a single pure form. Within it are narcissistic, homosexual, maternal, creative, social, sympathetic, and other components. Occasionally we can emphasise one of these components to the practical exclusion of the others. The love instinct goes through a regular evolution, beginning with the narcissistic love of self, through the childish homosexual phase of "crushes" and heroine-worship, and up to the mature phase of sexual love, and ending finally in the supreme phase of altruistic philanthropic love, or artistic creativeness.

For various reasons that would take us too far afield into the realm of psychopathology this



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multiform love instinct does not always develop completely. You know women who go to their graves still caught in the infantile phases of narcissistic self-love; others who never got over their school-girl crushes and remain Lesbians for life; others again who love their husbands but not their children; still others whose maternal love overwhelms all other components. There are many women in whom the creative instinct in art or literature or music or drama is the equivalent of bearing children; and finally, there is that small group of women who have for one reason or another given all their love to mankind.

### 13. WHAT'S YOUR SEXUAL AGE?

The failure of the love instinct to develop completely leaves defects in the character, just as the failure of physical development leaves defects in the body. The frustration of love, in any of its phases, leaves scars in the soul. But a happy life is still possible to the woman who knows how to substitute a "higher" component for a "lower," or to develop another love component to compensate for the frustration of one or the other of the normal components. For example, the woman whose self-love was frustrated by brutal parents who ridiculed and

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humiliated her as a child, can find happiness in the altruistic, sympathetic, philanthropic component, as witness the splendid women who have been leaders in the fields of teaching, settlement work, social service, and allied fields.

The woman whose maternal instinct is thwarted by circumstance or organic deficiencies can express the creative urge that is normally elaborated in motherhood in the creative activities of the world of art. And finally that woman whose active love life is frustrated, by whatever means or circumstance, can "sublimate" that love by the substitution of the less personal but often extremely satisfactory activities involved in work, sports, religion, social service, teaching, creative artistry, and the like.

These are socially satisfactory substitutes for the sexual urge. There are others, such as crime, perversion, and neurosis which, while they are personally satisfactory compromises, are not socially acceptable. Sometimes a "nervous breakdown" may be considered such a substitute. It is art, but socially *bad* art. Socially unacceptable compromises lead to unhappy mental conflicts, to neuroses, sometimes to insanity. Where a woman fears that her attempts to substitute for the actual frustration of sex are leading her into the byways of nervous disease, her most sensible course is to consult a

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reputable psychiatrist, and submit to a psychological analysis and re-education.'

Probably not one woman in ten thousand experiences in her own life the complete evolution and expression of all the components of the sexual instinct. A certain amount of frustration is the lot of all women, and therefore in every woman's life there is a bit of compromise, of substitution, of "sublimation." Even the woman who reconciles herself to a life without actual sex experience must follow the path of sublimation to make her resignation successful. Resignation without some sublimation usually degenerates into despondency and melancholia. We live in a world in which absolutely normal codes of sexual conduct are often frowned upon by society. Some degree of sublimation is required of every woman. Happy is the middle-aged woman who successfully sublimates her sex when the normal expressions of love and motherhood are denied her.

Some form of sublimation is absolutely necessary to the woman who has neither married nor experienced sexual relations. The bachelor girl will do well to give this point her serious consideration. The wise mother will begin to learn a technique of

'The reader is referred to the author's books *How to Be Happy Though Human*, and *Nervous Breakdown: Its Cause and Cure* for further discussion of the rôle of frustrated love in the production of nervous and mental disease.

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sublimation to guard against the day when her children will grow up and leave her to live their own lives. The wise wife will begin early to develop prophylactic sublimations that will stand her in good stead should the misfortune of widowhood or sexual incapacity in her husband, due to whatever cause, overtake her. In our chapters on work and leisure we shall have the opportunity of examining the technique of sublimation in greater detail.

At this point suffice it to say that love, like truth, will out. The sexual instinct in its multiform components cannot be entirely denied or suppressed. The price of such suppression or repression is invariably some form of neurotic disease. But where, for one reason or another, the sexual instinct is denied complete expression in self-esteem, in sexual love, in motherhood, or finally in philanthropy, some form of substitution or sublimation which is socially acceptable and personally satisfying helps to bridge the gap between the period of active sexual life and the calm days of serene and sexless old age.

### 14. LESBIAN LOVE

I feel that a chapter on sexual morals would be incomplete without some discussion of Lesbian love, which is love between women. Homosexual attach-

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ments between women are far more common than most men—and many women—suspect. They begin often in the “crushes” of adolescence; they are sometimes present in the worship of actresses and cinema stars, and often in the identification of young women with older teachers or professors. In a world which so egregiously over-rates masculinity it is not surprising that a great many women accept the common fallacy of their innate inferiority, and hate their own femininity. Sociological and economic factors determine the forms and morals of our quasi-patriarchal society, but love knows no economics and no sociology. Love knows only love and its expression.

It therefore happens not infrequently that a woman finds herself attracted to another woman because the normal path of love has been barred by psychological and sociological considerations. We can hardly blame a woman who has suffered nothing but humiliation and ridicule and frustration at the hands of men, for turning away from men when she seeks an object of the love which she considers the most sacred gift she has to offer. To love a man—and to be further humiliated and ridiculed and subordinated—that would be too much! And therefore, like Sappho, the poetess of Lesbos, she gives her love to another woman. Some of these women,

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desiring to ape the hated male, assume the masculine rôle in the Lesbian relationship; others, whose fear dominates their psychology, prefer the love of these masculine women to the more dangerous love of masculine men. I cannot here go into the discussion of the psychopathology of homosexual love, but I do want to make it clear that homosexuality is not, as is popularly supposed, a product of pre-natal influences, of congenital predispositions, or of hereditary taint, all the pious twaddle of Lesbian apologists to the contrary notwithstanding. I consider books like *The Well of Loneliness* have a most unfortunate influence. They may be responsible for innumerable young women's becoming homosexuals. Any girl with the usual homosexual tendencies of adolescence may be led to believe that she is condemned and dedicated to a life of homosexuality by reading such pseudo-scientific hocus-pocus. For *homosexuality in women, as in men, is an acquired neurosis whose causes are rooted not in vague pre-natal influences but in easily demonstrable economic, sociological, and psychological determinants.*

In very young women Lesbian tendencies represent a stage in the development of the sexual urge; in mature women Lesbian love is a symptom of a sexual neurosis, and represents an evasion of the responsibilities of marriage and motherhood, and in

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both these cases it is a curable neurosis. But Lesbian tendencies sometimes appear in women who have been wives and mothers and have in no way evaded their mature sexual responsibilities. What of these women? Some of them discover these tendencies in themselves and attempt vainly to suppress them because they feel that they are perversions. They fear to speak openly of their love for other women lest they incur social disapproval. Often these homosexual tendencies are so deeply masked that they are unknown to the women who exhibit them. What of these women who become Lesbians after a full, satisfactory, mature sex life?

I think we must put it down as axiomatic that *a woman's sex life is her own business so long as she does not harm any one else by her sexual practices.* To my mind nothing is so reprehensible as the mature Lesbian who seduces young girls and sets them upon the unhappy path of homosexual love merely to gratify her own lusts or to demonstrate her power. Such women are infinitely more criminal than the poor prostitutes whom society punishes so mercilessly, or the young women who are ostracised for being unmarried mothers. These predatory Lesbians not only despoil the bodies of the young women they seduce, but despoil their minds. Yet at the risk of being denounced for unpardonable

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heterodoxy I must state that the love for one another of two mature women who have been wives and mothers must be considered as a reasonable sublimation of sex.

Masked Lesbianism is often at the basis of some of the best teaching and social service given to women by women. The activities of women's clubs are almost purely homosexual sublimations, which do not in the least detract from the value of these organisation activities. It is better that these homosexual trends be expressed in socially valuable and socially acceptable forms than that they be suppressed and emerge as neurotic symptoms such as malicious gossip, hypochondriasis, economic enslavement of servants, or tyrannisation of saleswomen, pupils, or children. And in an age in which the woman who commits adultery is ostracised, even though her husband is an intolerable boor, an inept lover, a sexual incompetent, a tyrannical egotist, or a whining neurotic, one finds it difficult not to have some sympathy with a middle-aged woman who wishes to maintain her social status intact for the sake of her children and her own self-esteem, to find a substitute satisfaction of her sexual desires in an emotional relationship with some equally unhappy woman. And I have seen such loves between women which were infinitely nobler and



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infinitely more decent than many so-called normal relations between husband and wife. And while I, as a psychiatrist, must approve of such relations in middle-aged women, as being within the range of the normal, let no reader misunderstand me as approving of homosexual relations between younger women, or between older women and younger women where such relations will distort and deprave and damage the sexual instinct and prevent the participants from later entering into normal heterosexual relations.

Whole books could be written on the subject matter which I have barely outlined in this chapter. It has been written as an instigation to further study rather than as an exposition of the whole subject. I have attempted to outline some of the basic principles underlying the sexual problems of middle age. It is my hope that these principles will be applied by my readers with courage and imagination to their own problems. In an age in which the savage taboos against normal sexual expression which are characteristic of Judaeo-Christian morality are happily being examined in the objective light of the sociological and psychological sciences, there is no longer any excuse for a woman to wreck her entire life on the hidden reefs of sex for want of adequate charts or social sanctions!

## V

### WOMEN AT WORK AND PLAY

IN the most primitive living organisms the sexes are not differentiated. The single-celled amoeba, a self-sufficient and immortal little microcosm, reproduces by simply dividing itself in half. The amoeba has no sexual problems because it is sexless. But as soon as living organisms become complicated, a tendency toward a division into the sexes becomes evident. The common earthworm is half male and half female. Later in the scale of evolution the sexes become completely separated, and in man this division reaches its final and most differential form. As the functions of the sexes differentiate themselves, correspondingly different structures appear, marking a sharp division of labour between the sexes. Nowhere in the whole scheme of nature is there so marked a differentiation of function and structure, and therefore so definite a division of labour, as in the case of men and women.

Nature has made men and women different in

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order to facilitate their mutual co-operation, but not for the purpose of enabling one sex to dominate the other. You must bear this principle in mind throughout this chapter because without an understanding of the biological function of the differences between men and women, it is impossible to attain a true understanding of their individual psychology.

### I. ONCE UPON A TIME . . .

In many of the most primitive human communities, agriculture is the source of the food supply. The primitive savage tills his fields in common with his neighbours and the entire savage community participates in the utilisation of the crops. Private property is unknown. Such primitive communities are almost entirely ruled by their women. The male may be gaudy in his war-like raiment, but it is the old grandmother who has the final say in all communal affairs. The reasons for this are not difficult to find.

You have but to put yourself into the position of the primitive savage, surrounded by natural forces which he can neither understand nor control, to comprehend why primitive men worship female goddesses and honour their women more than their men. The savage is terrorised by the fear of death

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and starvation and literally is afraid of his own shadow, which he conceives as part of his soul. His most immediate concern is for the fertility of his fields, since if his crops fail he will starve. Primitive man does not understand the relationship between the sexes and their co-operation in the formation of a new human being, as we, who have been brought up in an age of science, understand it. To him, there is a direct relationship between the fertility of a woman in giving birth to a child, and the fertility of a field which brings forth the blessing of food. He worships them both as the most necessary phenomena of his life.

As a result of primitive man's ignorance of his own *rôle* in the magical and mysterious phenomena of birth and fertility, all primitive agricultural communities are ruled by the mothers. The savage knows no science. His actions are motivated by the laws of primitive magic in which like produces like. The woman who can produce a child, according to primitive magic, has a more powerful "mana," or charm, than the man who cannot bear children. In these primitive communities the women not only do most of the work but also distribute justice and honour. The children are named after their mothers, and husbands are considered as convenient but not important luxuries.

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All the virtues in a primitive community are assumed by the women. The men, by contrast, are lazy, gossipy, mischievous, and vain. When a woman marries she chooses a younger husband and he must bring a dowry with him and must swear obedience to his mother-in-law. We call such a state of affairs a matristic society or a matriarchy, that is, a community ruled by its mothers. The highest forms of matriarchy were found in ancient civilizations, but matriarchal communities exist to-day in many parts of the world where agriculture is still the chief source of the food supply.

### 2. THE PATRIARCHAL RACKET

In matriarchal communities time hangs heavy on men's hands, and so they occupy their leisure moments with the two arts of hunting and warfare. Man's cultivation of these two leisure arts caused a vast change in the history of the human race. The relatively disfranchised men of matriarchal communities hunted animals of the field and forest, brought them back to their communities alive and domesticated them, thereby creating an entirely new source of food and wealth. Gradually, with the growth of that stage of culture which we call

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barbarism, the men began to collect herds of sheep, goats, camels, cattle, pigs, horses and other animals, and these domesticated animals became the chief source of the community's food supply.

Animals depend for their existence upon adequate grazing grounds, and whole communities had to follow their grazing herds to new territories as the old grazing grounds became depleted. The result of this change brought about changes in agriculture. Instead of living in one place and tilling the same fields year after year, men found it easier to depend upon their animals for food and so any agriculture which was carried on was of a temporary and seasonal nature. Little by little the men who had first caught the wild animals of field and forest and domesticated them recognised that they had become the masters of a new and better food supply.

With the discovery of iron and bronze, moreover, men were able to extend their warlike operations, and the earliest wars were wars for new grazing grounds, and of course the prizes of war were the enemy's flocks and herds. Whereas primitive agriculture was communal, in barbarism and war and private property we find the origins of "rugged individualism." The most doughty warrior got the largest share of the conquered herds. Having be-

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come the masters of the food supply, men refused to be ruled by their women. They desired to rule by and for themselves.

And with this change occurred the most tremendous revolution in the history of human morals and customs. From worshipping the goddesses of fertility, men began to worship private property. They built fences around their grazing grounds, *and the building of the first fence was the downfall of women.* With the change from communal acres to privately owned flocks and grazing grounds, matriarchy gave way to patriarchy, and the fathers ruled in the place of the mothers. And they ruled with the savage dominance of those who have been oppressed and humiliated, and have suddenly found power.

It would take us too far afield to trace the interesting history of the change from matriarchy to patriarchy. This complete upheaval of customs and morals must have been the most tremendous revolution that ever occurred in the history of the race. But unfortunately we have few records of it, because it began long before man had developed the written word. We can only reconstruct what happened by comparing our own patristic civilisation with the matriarchal communities which still exist. All the powers, honours, and prerogatives

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which women had held in a matristic society, the men now arrogated to themselves in a patristic society. The ancient Jews were among the first people who changed from the worship of Ishtar, Astarte, and Isis, all goddesses of fertility and love, to the worship of a male deity, Jehovah, originally a typically masculine war god who demanded sacrifices of blood and flesh. We live to-day in the six-thousand-year-old shadow of this change, because our civilisation is still definitely a patristic civilisation and our morals, customs, and social usages are a heritage of those old Hebrew hunters and shepherds whose ability to domesticate sheep and cattle gave us not only a new religion but a new social order.

### 3. PATRIARCHAL PROPAGANDA: THE MYTH OF WOMAN'S INFERIORITY

With the institution of private property by the newly dominant males an entirely new system of civilisation appeared. The men, having become the masters of the food supply, promptly deposed women from their previous high estate. In order to secure their new-found powers they made laws which virtually enslaved women. We can only assume that once the warlike males got their



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power, they made certain, by denying women all opportunities of entering into communal affairs, that women would never wrest that power from them. Men gradually arrogated all the fine character traits to themselves and considered women as second-rate men. Older men began to marry younger women and demanded that women bring a dowry into marriage. Fathers prayed for sons and were grief-stricken when their children were daughters. Since they could not prevent the birth of daughters, they either killed female children or sold them as slaves and concubines. Women became chattels. A beautiful daughter could be traded for so many sheep or goats; an ugly girl was only a useless mouth to feed. Up to this time no woman cared whether she was beautiful or ugly. Being a woman was enough to insure her dominance. With the change to patriarchy feminine beauty suddenly became an asset.

Then, with this change in affairs, a transmutation in sexual morality appeared. In matriarchal society, nobody cared who his father was, and it was easy enough to know his mother. Chastity and virginity were unheard of in matriarchal communities. It may come as an unpleasant shock to many women who have prided themselves on their beauty or their virginity to know that these are the

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marks of their slavery to a masculine ideal; that feminine beauty, like the intact hymen, had no marginal utility until some greedy man discovered its value in bargaining for sheep or cattle!

Now all this was changed. Fathers bestowed their flocks upon their sons. Because they had to know who their own "flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood" was, it became important to insure the fact that a bride had never known another man before she married her prospective bridegroom. Physical virginity became a bargaining point. Women were guarded from earliest childhood like so many precious vessels until they were safely married.

Once they were married their sole functions were to be dutiful wives, good mothers, or slaves about the household. An infraction of the sexual code of the fathers was brutally and severely punished. Any attempt of women to rise above their slave-like status was quickly and drastically suppressed. For some seven thousand years women have lived in bondage while the dominant males rationalised their alleged superiority by pointing out the slavish ineffectualities of their women folk, just as if the women were born ineffectual and not made so by masculine law.

As civilisation grew and men developed their

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knowledge of the arts and sciences, new opportunities for development were opened only to men. The only arts which were opened to women were the arts of coquetry and cooking. The only individuality that was allowed to a woman was the individuality which she might express in amusing her men in the dance, in the theatre, or by her devotion to the menial tasks of housework and home handicraft. As civilisation advanced, and more and more opportunities were given men for making a livelihood, women were rigorously excluded from all new fields.

The history of man's cruelty to women is one of the darkest chapters in the history of human kind. Church and State alike conspired to make women feel inferior. After centuries of such enslavement, it is small wonder that women actually *became* inferior as the result of the complete absence of any opportunity to develop their personalities. This was especially true since any woman who dared to rise above the depths of inferiority was promptly persecuted as a witch. How many millions of women paid with their lives for the economic dominance of the male, and how many more millions were the innocent victims of man's vanity and cupidity, no man will ever know.

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### 4. THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMAN

Woman's work in the early patriarchal societies is confined to menial and thankless drudgery. Women have not only the burden of conceiving and bearing the child, but they must also assume the full responsibility for its care and education. The arts and the professions are closed to her. Only the "dirty work" of the kitchen and scullery are left as her domain. If she manufactured anything, she was seldom allowed to sell it. It requires no feat of imagination to realise that the human spirit does not develop to its full flower in an atmosphere of greasy pots and dirty diapers. It is small wonder that after millennia of such slavery many women began to believe in the inferiority of their sex—an idea which men have "sold" them in the longest and most successful campaign of propaganda that the world has ever known.

Were not their mothers and their grandmothers and their great-grandmothers haplessly chained to the same inferiority? Protest was punished quickly and drastically. What remained but to glorify submission as a virtue? Is it any wonder that women began to hate the pots and pans, the brooms, the dust cloths, the scrubbing brushes, and the

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laundry tubs which were the sordid insignia of their lot? Is it any wonder that they began to resent their fate and protest against it by hidden sabotage? Like all slaves, women in typical patriarchal societies developed a slave morality of gossip, of malice, of sharp-tongued sarcasm, and of treachery. Slavery runs against the grain of the human spirit, and where it is imposed it always generates its own antitoxin. Is it any wonder then that women attempted by fair means and foul to raise themselves from the slough of inferiority by becoming courtesans and concubines? Is it any wonder that adultery developed in such societies as a counter-attack on the entrenched masculine prerogatives?

Patriarchal morality was firmly entrenched in all western countries until the beginning of the nineteenth century. And then an interesting thing happened. A boy, James Watt, watching the tea kettle steaming on his mother's stove, discovered the principle of the steam engine, and created the machine age. The first machines were crude and large. Women, whose physical powers had been atrophied by disuse, could not cope with them. But as the machines became more complicated and more efficient, they not only produced more but they compelled the first entrepreneurs of the machine age to supply an even greater number of

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skilled labourers to run them. As the machines were refined, an increasing demand for the skilled fingers of women operators appeared. The more delicate the machine, the more handily women could use them. As a result of this, the second major revolution in human culture occurred right under the eyes of the patriarchal mill owners who were so concerned with their own greed that they did not realise, until it was too late, that the power-loom and the typewriter had accomplished what centuries of feminist agitation had failed to do.

### 5. MEN, WOMEN, AND MACHINES

The machine enabled women to come out of the seclusion of the pantry and the laundry and enter into open competition with men. Once again the means was given them to earn their own living. To be sure, in the early days of the machine age the first woman workers were horribly underpaid and misused. But little by little they gained more power and more facility, until to-day women stand almost on an equal footing with men in the production of the world's wealth. Thousands of spindles and typewriter keys clicked out the staccato barrage which women fired as their first offensive

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on the strongholds of masculine power. Once the opening guns were fired by the courageous pioneers, other women came out of their seclusion and began clamouring for economic, political, and ethical equality at the gates of man's superiority.

Many of these apparently impregnable gates have crashed before the furious onslaught of the feminine shock troops. Little by little the worlds of commerce, art, science, literature, politics, law, and medicine have been invaded by women. No sooner was one taboo destroyed, than the next was made the target of a concentrated feminine "drive." Each stronghold of entrenched male prerogative fell to the unswerving attacks. In one short century women have accomplished what men have been saying they could never accomplish for seven thousand years. To-day, especially in Russia, woman can say that she has attained a position of practical equality with men for the first time in the history of western civilisation.

I cannot here enter into the details of this dramatic story of the emancipation of women. I leave this to the historians, the sociologists, and the economists. Let us merely sum up our data. Patriarchal men like to believe that theirs is the superior sex. History has disproved their contention, for objective investigators have shown us that

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when one sex is the master of the communal food supply, that sex is considered superior. The dominant sex is that sex which has the greatest wealth and the greatest opportunities for producing wealth. The alleged superiority of men, therefore, has no biological, mental, or psychological basis. Any existing 'superiority' is purely and solely a function of economic conditions. The historians of the future will not speak of our age as the age of stratospheric flights, or the age of the radio. They will, more probably, speak of our age as the age of the emancipation of women.

You must not be misled by the fascinating story of woman's struggle for economic and social equality into believing that the true emancipation of women is an accomplished fact. It is far from that. Men who have been brought up in the patriarchal tradition are fighting to maintain their superiority. Women who have tasted the joys of economic victory are fighting for their alleged "rights." The world is their battlefield and every home, every shop, every factory, and every profession is a small arena of war in which this great cosmic battle between the sexes is taking place in miniature.



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### 6. THE "MASCULINE PROTEST" IN WOMEN

It is just at this point that the psychiatrist must enter the picture. Cosmic battles between the sexes of such vast proportions cannot occur without leaving behind a ghastly toll of victims, both among men and women. The psychological consequences of this inter-sexual war are so important that I have felt justified in giving their historical background in such detail.

The chief psychological consequence of the traditional social attitude about the inferiority of women—for which, as you have seen, there is not one shred of evidence—is that curious psychological phenomenon, the so-called "masculine protest," a mental attitude first described by the great Viennese psychologist, Dr. Alfred Adler.

What is the masculine protest? It is a psychological attitude toward life based on the tacit belief in woman's inferiority, and an open rebellion against everything "feminine" in the patriarchal sense in which that much-misused word is usually interpreted. The woman who exhibits the masculine protest is the woman who refuses to admit her femininity in a world in which femininity connotes inferiority. Women see that men have most of the prerogatives even to-day. They are dissatisfied

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with being women. They want to be like men and so, instead of developing their own femininity to the highest point, they seek to exclude from their own lives anything which reminds them of their former state of slavery.

It is a well-known psychological fact that when slaves are freed, they become more arrogant than their masters. The same is true of women. In her desire to participate in the fruits of the new emancipation, many a woman attempts to deny her own femininity, and in effort to be "as much like a man as possible," she becomes a curious human caricature, a psychological hermaphrodite, which is something between a sexless woman and a parody of a man. This is the woman who denies her own sexuality and apes the externalia of the envied masculine *rôle* in an attempt to be "manly," which sooner or later succeeds only in being "mannish."

In our striving for superiority and security, we all like to exclude those things which remind us of our former inadequacy and dependence. At the same time we like to emphasise those traits and characteristics which seem to indicate superiority. So it is with the emancipated woman. The woman who exhibits the masculine protest has forgotten that even though she is striving for equality in a

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man's world, she is nevertheless a woman. While there are some exceptional women who are capable of losing themselves completely in their careers, experiencing all the joys of motherhood in the creation of a work of art or in the completion of a piece of scientific research, most women are women first and careerists only secondarily.

Many a modern woman in her desire to prove that she is "as good as a man" in her chosen field, has forgotten to be a woman, a sweetheart, a wife, a mother, to her own damage and regret. It is not at all uncommon for a woman in this modern world of transition to base her life upon a neurotic antithesis of "either . . . or." She feels that she must be *either* a woman, which she considers menial, *or* a careerist, which she considers worthy of her mettle. Being a woman is linked with household duties, child care, cooking, cleaning, sewing, for her husband. Such a woman sees herself in the traditional *rôle* of a feminine slave, and decides that she will have none of it. She chooses the other path. She goes in for a career with all her energy and initiative and eschews all of the prerogatives and the joys of being a woman for the sake of the glory of battling with men for prestige and supremacy, with man's weapons and in the masculine enemy's territory.

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We come now to the psychological crux of the problem. I am the first to grant that being a woman in the old-fashioned sense, which is the practical equivalent of sexual slavery, has little glamour for the modern woman. I will also grant you that the thrill of competition with the entrenched and arrogant male is something that tests the mettle, and thrills the spirit, of any independent woman. But in my experience the woman who is either all housewife and mother, or all careerist, is not a happy woman.

### 7. THE ETERNAL QUESTION: MARRIAGE OR A CAREER?

When, of these two great paths to feminine glory, a woman has chosen one to the virtual exclusion of the other during the entire first three decades of her life, she frequently realises at forty that she has missed something essential in life. I propose for your consideration a psychological law which I consider the keystone of the strategy of being a happy and successful woman. I propose, first, the thesis that none but the exceptional woman can ever attain true happiness in the pursuit of the "*either a female . . . or a career woman*" strategy of life; and second, the corollary that the sane and normal

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woman will find her happiness in the pursuit of the goal of being *both* a womanly woman . . . and a worker.

A magnificent example of such a sane solution of the career-versus-wife problem is that of the wife of an eminent physician who is the happy mother of two splendid sons. Before her marriage this woman was an accomplished musician and, while she was compelled to relinquish her active studies during the first years of her marriage, when she had to assume all the responsibilities of the doctor's household and the care and education of her babies, her interest in her career never waned. As the actual problems of existence eased in their intensity, she again devoted herself to her beloved music, no longer now as a performer, but as a champion of the place of music in the community.

She began spending her time fostering music appreciation groups in settlements and institutions; she sponsored promising young talent and obtained scholarships for worthy musicians, and served on the committee of every worthwhile effort for more and better music for her community. And yet she never lost her focus in her home, never forgot to be a devoted wife and an intelligent mother. To-day both her boys have come down from their universities and at fifty she is leading an active and

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useful career in her community mobilising the forces of unemployed musicians and arranging civic concerts and recitals.

The world depression, which caused thousands of women bereft of their incomes to face nervous breakdown because they had never learned to mobilise their resources, found her well prepared. Each year her sphere of activity and usefulness increases. She bemoans only the fact that there are but twenty-four hours in the day. Yet no matter how pressing her civic duties, she remains always the wife of her husband and the mother of her sons, the mistress of her household, a charming, gracious hostess, an ever thoughtful neighbour, an ever sympathetic and helpful friend.

Her case illustrates the very crux of my thesis that a woman can be *both* a woman, a wife, or a mother, *and* a worker, an artist, professor, or head of a business. I would be rash indeed to propose this solution in these difficult times were it not for the fact that among my own friends and acquaintances there are so many splendid women whose lives are monuments to the truth of my contention. Nothing is impossible to the woman who wants to lead a full life, and courageously proceeds to do so. I know a woman doctor, who is the mother of three splendid children, who finds time to run

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two clinics and a private medical practice. Another woman is an expert landscape gardener at the same time that she takes care of two little daughters, both under six years of age. Another friend is the active head of a chain of shops, the management of which would task the most resourceful man: she manages to run at the same time a beautiful town house and a home in the country, in addition to supervising personally the care and education of three young children.

Still another "yes-saying" woman of my acquaintance finds time to paint portraits while running her own household. She has specialised in the portraits of children, painting them while they play with her own little son and daughter. Another mother of my acquaintance finds time to be the curator of Chinese art in an important museum while attending to the duties of running a large household. Still another mother, finding that there were no adequate nursery schools in her community, established a school for her own children and those of her friends, finding time to take a degree at the university and to interest herself in international politics in her leisure hours. If you believe your case is "different," or if you feel that you have some special disabilities to contend with, look about you and you will find some woman in

your community who is confronted with greater obstacles—and who is conquering them! It is possible to be a womanly woman *and* a worker simultaneously!

I am certain that thousands of readers will agree with me that the career of mother and housewife need not be a drudge nor a disgrace if the psychological attitude of the woman who is following this career is correct. Granted the respect and the honour of a man who treats his wife as an equal, a companion, and a partner, no woman need feel ashamed or disgraced by sharing the common burden of life with her husband, by accepting voluntarily her share of the household responsibilities. There is in all the world no substitute for the joy of motherhood. There are few things that are more gratifying than a smoothly-running household, a household in which the spirit and personality of the wife and mother radiate through every object and every household ritual.

I believe that there are many women who find just as much thrill in preparing a beautiful table, in designing and decorating their homes, in attending to the niceties of being a hostess, or in the development of household arts and crafts, as other women find in running a business, practising law, or doing bacteriological research. Women are



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biologically and psychologically better prepared for the maintenance of the home than men. No woman who is not suffering from some sexual neurosis finds these activities ignominious. And most normal women who have not been psychologically conditioned by unpleasant experiences in their childhood find real satisfaction, real prestige and a real sense of accomplishment in being the mistress of a home.

I think most women will admit that, in this age of mechanical convenience, rapid transportation, and easy communication, running a home and bringing up children is not enough as a life profession for an intelligent woman. I am not one of those who believe in the typical patriarchal ideas expressed by Hitler, who has attempted to turn back the clock of civilisation seven thousand years by condemning the highly emancipated women of Germany to the pusillanimous slavery of "*Kirche, Küche, und Kinder.*"

On the other hand, I have seen too many splendid women who have missed something real, something deep, something satisfying in life by devoting themselves heart and soul to masculine careers. For thirty years, sometimes even for forty years, a woman can carry on the "either . . . or" technique without strain, but sooner or later there

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comes a time in her life when she feels an essential lack in her heart, and recognises, perhaps, for the first time, the hopelessness and vanity of her "mannishness."

### 8. CAREERS FOR WIVES

It seems only logical, therefore, to counsel the woman whose only profession has been that of mother and housewife to look about her for other work, just as the woman who has been a careerist must be counselled to seek the deep emotional and psychological sanctions that come in marriage and home-making.

To the woman who has never been anything but a mother and a housewife, the woman who arrives at the fourth decade with her job well done and time on her hands, I would suggest the extension of her horizons in study, in social work, in sport, in the arts, or in business. No woman who has done one thing all her life, unless that one thing is an artistic or social creation of highest merit, can find one activity satisfying all her life. Somewhere in every woman there is the desire to create, to perform, to do. This creative urge must be satisfied if she would enjoy the thrill of being a complete woman.

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Most of the women who are in their thirties, forties, or fifties to-day, were brought up in a strict patriarchal environment. Now that they have come to middle age and see their work well done they begin to look with questioning eyes toward a new world in which all conceivable values have been changing radically while they were busy baking cakes and sewing curtains. They see their sisters who have sacrificed motherhood and homemaking for the thrill of a career advanced to positions of esteem and prestige. They are caught by the aggressive nostalgia for power which is so characteristic of our age, and they, too, would like to feel themselves part of the vast and dramatic maelstrom of human life about them.

But they have misgivings, these good wives and excellent housekeepers. They feel that they have been trained only for the household. They fear that they have no talents and no technical training. To these women I say, no matter what you have been doing, no matter how you have been tied to your hearth, no matter how you have been educated in the belief that women are inferior, begin now to study and to strive for participation in that vast emancipation which has been taking place. Time will soon be hanging heavy on your hands and if you do not prepare now to utilise constructively the

leisure of the future years, you will be making yourself a bed of neuroses for the future.

If any reader does not believe that this can be done then let her go and investigate the lives of the most successful women in her community and she will see that my counsel is eminently practical. During the depression a great many women who developed hobbies and interests solely to keep themselves from being bored capitalised these hobbies, and often were thus able to maintain their homes when their formerly successful husbands were thrown out of employment by circumstances beyond their control. I cannot conceive of a really happy or successful woman who has not developed some activity which could eventually be turned into a business or profession.

One woman of my acquaintance was always complimented by her friends on the neatness and originality of her cupboards and their furnishings. Because of unfortunate circumstances she was compelled to divorce her husband and was thrown entirely upon her own resources. She went into business designing and furnishing cupboards for other women and at the present time is at the head of a flourishing business. Another woman of my acquaintance used to amuse herself by writing little sketches about her friends. To-day she is

using the material she gathered "as a lark" for the basis of novels which the critics have acclaimed because of their rare insight into human nature. The royalties from her books keep her exceptionally talented daughter at a university, whereas, without this income, the daughter would be compelled to sacrifice her education and spend her life as a typist or clerk.

And now for the woman who has a career to her credit. Let's make a psychological inventory of your assets and liabilities as a woman. You have spent years learning a profession; you have spent years in the market place and have an enviable business reputation. And now, just what have you? Unless you are an unusual woman you, too, have a nostalgia for a home, hearth, children. The unmarried woman who has sacrificed everything for fame, for money, for prestige, finds very often, when she has attained the goals of her childhood, that they are empty fictions without meaning and without reality. Professional prestige or business acumen, nay, even money in the bank, have a curious way of being small comfort on a cold night!

Now is the time to take a mental inventory and plan your future. If you have not married, it might be well to give serious thought to the very real problem of getting a husband. If you are now too old

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for motherhood it might be well to give equally serious consideration to the thought of adopting a child. You cannot go on working all your life, just for fame, or security, or money. These things must be shared to have value. No woman can work for abstract ideals unless there is *some one* whose love and esteem vitalises these ideals. There is no reason why you should give up what you have gained; no reason why you should make an abrupt about face. Remember only the one principle that the completeness and beauty of life can never be encompassed by an "either . . . or." It must be built in the form of a "both . . . and."

Money, power, prestige, mean nothing if they are not shared, and unless you are a Jane Addams or a Marie Curie, who can share with the whole world, you will need to share them with some one close and dear to you. If this is really impossible (and it seldom is when we seek the proper solution courageously), you may devote your life to the service of a group and thus experience the indispensable joys of knowing that you are necessary to something or some one. They also love who serve a greater social usefulness! It is the thesis of this book that woman is never too old to be a complete human being. The woman with a career will often find a true focus of her activities in the fields of social work, of politics,

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of social legislation, or of the extension of adult education. The first three or four decades are but a preparation, a sharpening of tools, a learning of techniques. Beyond that comes the work which gives a meaning to life.

A word to the widow and the divorcee. To her the problem of work often comes with dramatic suddenness. Family life is disrupted, the hearth destroyed, and perforce the necessity arises of developing a better occupational pattern. I have known many women who have clearly and courageously accepted this challenge, and, unintimidated by the magnitude of their task, have set out to build up an independent livelihood in the business world. And I have seen these women succeed sometimes far better than their feminine co-workers who have devoted themselves to a business or a profession from the beginning. Better a thousand times the most ill-paid position accompanied by a sense of psychological independence and self-reliance, than the most comfortable parasitism on the hearth of relatives or friends. Many a woman finding herself suddenly a widow has successfully carried on the work of a beloved husband whose inspiration and whose stimulus she was during his life. I can think of few monuments to a departed husband so beautiful as a widow's "carrying on" of his good work!

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### 9. WOMEN AT PLAY

The woman of to-day, whether she is housewife, mother, business woman or professional woman, comes to the middle decades with a heritage of leisure which is beyond the most extravagant expectations of her grandmother. Doctors have taught us how to live longer, and engineers have taught us how our work can be accomplished in a shorter time. Together they have made every woman in the world to-day the legatee of uncounted hours of leisure. It is obvious from the statistics of the life insurance companies, that she has a far better chance of reaching the Biblical quota of three score and ten years.

The problem of leisure was the greatest problem of the Athenian aristocrats in the Golden Age. The Greeks had a word for it. It was the word from which we derive our word school. The Golden Age of Greece was the product of the constructive use of leisure. We stand to-day at the threshold of another golden age, if we but seize our opportunities. This is the time when every woman must look upon the problem of leisure with a certain amount of objectivity. It is not enough to spend time killing time. The pleasures of the age-old profession of killing time are grossly over-rated. No woman has ever



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succeeded in killing time. Time, however, kills all women.

It is not enough for the middle-aged woman of to-day to play endless rubbers of bridge; it is not enough if she only seeks madly after pleasure in night clubs and cabarets; it is not enough if she amuses herself reading trashy novels; it is not enough if she spends her time in chatter, or if she burns up her energy running from one shop to another on endlessly fatuous shopping expeditions. Time is at one and the same time the greatest friend and the greatest enemy of woman. Time, utilised constructively, brings joy and meaning into living. Running away from time is a hopeless and painful profession.

The modern woman who wishes her middle decades to be interesting and her last years of life to be serene must develop some avocations and hobbies to keep her from being bored to death in her leisure time. The joys of hobbies are many. There are hobbies which are social and hobbies which are individual. The woman who has had an active business career will do well to cultivate a hobby which enables her to get along with herself in her lonely and leisure moments. The study of a language, the collection of books, china, or paintings, or participation in any one of the creative arts, will

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make a good hobby for her. The woman who has lived in her home for the most part will do well to cultivate a hobby which throws her into constant contact with the world outside of her home. The woman who has been delicate should choose a hobby which will benefit her health, a sport, travel, or some outside interest such as gardening, animal breeding, or the like.

All women have a deep biological urge to create. The woman who has been denied the joy of motherhood will do well to recognise her need and satisfy this creative urge either in some tangible artistic creativeness or in the creation of political, social or cultural institutions. The woman who has been selfish and self-centred will do well to cultivate a hobby dealing with social service lest she spend her old age in unhappy isolation.

### 10. HOBBIES FOR WOMEN

The best hobbies are those which are never finished. I refer especially to the hobbies which have to do with the creative arts. The ideal solution of the leisure problem is to have one avocation which you can follow in complete solitude and other avocations which require the social co-operation of other human beings. The collection of hobbies is in itself

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an interesting hobby. If you do not know what hobby to develop it is an indication of the fact that you have been estranged from life and so your first duty is to learn about hobbies and avocations from those who have been closer to the main channels of living.<sup>1</sup> Do not put off the joys of your hobby until to-morrow, for to-morrow you may be so lonely that you will only find time to be sorry for yourself.

It is my belief that no woman really knows herself until she has expressed herself in a hobby. I remember the case of one woman who consulted me for a nervous breakdown. It took her almost two hours to list her multitudinous symptoms. The trouble with her was that she was living in a vault, the ceiling, floor, and walls of which were made of mirrors. Wherever she looked or whatever she did, she was confronted with her own body and her own thoughts. I knew that what she needed more than anything else in the world was an extension of her mental and emotional horizons. She needed a vista! I took her to a pottery, threw a piece of clay on the potter's wheel and proceeded to show her how one makes a vase. Within half an hour her fingers were itching to try it herself. She has since become an

<sup>1</sup> The psychological necessity for avocations and explicit advice on their choice has been treated in the author's earlier book: *Nervous Breakdown: Its Cause and Cure* (Routledge, 1934).

excellent potter and has even expanded her mental horizon to include other artistic activities. To-day she is a completely happy woman and she has not had a symptom in years.

I took another patient who suffered from a nervous collapse to a playground in the slums. I told her that she was not to come back to my consulting-room before she had made a friend of at least one child on the playground. Her experiences that afternoon awakened her interest in a world of whose existence she had never known. To-day this woman travels all over the country lecturing to women's clubs, school groups and parent-teachers' societies on playground activities, and she has invented a number of play techniques which have been adopted for the training of children in far-away Soviet Russia. She, too, has never had a recurrence of any neurotic symptoms since she gave herself a meaning in life by the cultivation of a social hobby. Instances of this kind can be multiplied indefinitely. All that is necessary is the desire to expand one's mental, social, and creative horizons, and the courage to do it!

Never before in the history of the world have there been so many opportunities for study and recreation as there are to-day. Never before have books been so cheap and so easily available. Even the woman who lives in a most isolated community

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is now in touch with the throbbing centres of life all over the world. She need but turn the knob of her radio to listen to London, to Rome, or to Paris. If you have passed your thirty-fifth birthday and look forward to the coming years as years of emptiness and loneliness, the mere thought of this ordeal is enough to make you unhappy. But if you look forward to the years as years in which you will enrich your soul and fortify your life with the study of the great classics, the great music, the great poetry, the great drama, and the great history of human civilisation, you will look forward to these years as to a pleasant evening well spent in the company of beloved friends. All the spiritual, artistic, and cultural activities which were deferred during the dramatic decades which have passed, you will then be in a position to enjoy. Begin to-day to plan for that enjoyment.

I have emphasised the matter of hobbies and avocations at some length because I have seen too often the shadow of loneliness and terror engulf the women who are unprepared for the constructive use of their leisure time, when finally, in middle age, they are suddenly confronted by this problem. To the woman who is dependent entirely on her external environment, who has got her sole joy from the artificial pleasures of a mad and neurotic civilisation,

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the prospect of middle age and old age induces a veritable panic. She sees herself discarded and forgotten and in one last frantic attempt to win back for herself the applause and adulation that were hers during the days of her youth, she develops that most useless of all hobbies—the neurotic profession of being ill!

### II. WHY BE NEUROTIC?

As long as a woman is alive, she is a dynamo of energy and creation and, as long as she utilises these God-given creative forces constructively and objectively, her lot is likely to be a happy one. But if she has not developed an awareness of the world without, nor yet developed the kingdom within herself, then her energy inevitably must be directed into the socially useless channels of neurotic conduct. Have you ever stopped to consider that the women who spend their middle decades and their old age complaining, whining, speaking of their operations, running from doctor to doctor, are making an avocation of being ill? Have you ever realised that being a neurotic woman is a full-time profession? Do you know that being a neurotic requires twenty-four hours a day of undeviating devotion to the business of being unhappy and “misunderstood?” A neurosis

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fills both night and day with pain and anguish, with panic and terror, with fear and anxiety. One-tenth of the energy that goes into a neurotic style of life, if focused on some useful work, will yield ten times the satisfaction and the happiness.

Is it any wonder that a woman who has lived an active life, who is accustomed to constant utilisation of the energy she produces, should become mentally ill if she locks herself in a self-made vault? For those women who have lived unwisely the period of maturity is an unmitigated ordeal. In order to evade the challenge of reality they shut themselves off from the world because they feel that they are no longer useful. And in their self-imposed vault their mental and physical energy turns in upon themselves. What is there left but delusions and anxieties, fears and self-castigation? What is there left to interest them but the disordered workings of their own bodies? What is there left but the pitiful creation of neurotic pleas for clemency and extenuation? This unhappy state which is the all too common result of selfishness, timidity, ignorance, and the fear of failure, need never be the fate of the woman who accepts the challenge of middle-age and prepares to meet it.

Never before in the history of the world have there been so many or such rich opportunities for

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creative participation in the world's work. Never before in the history of humanity have there been so many fields of endeavour open to the woman who would grasp them. Never before have there been so many causes which cry both for courageous champions and for anonymous workers. Never before have the opportunities been so brilliant for participation in politics, in the professions, or in the arts. Never before have middle-aged women been so honoured by their fellowmen with important trusts and responsible missions. All about you, you will find the shining examples of women who have entered into the world's work as well as into the world's play, not only to the greater glory of mankind, but to their own infinite happiness and satisfaction. You, too, can join this gallant company!



## VI

### THE MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN DISCOVERS GOD

MANY a woman who reaches the age of forty after an active life in marriage or business in which religion and philosophy played no conscious *rôle*, suddenly discovers God. The reason for this is not hard to find. In the critical years of the middle decades, there are dangerous corners to be met and critical decisions to make. One of the characteristics of the first active decades is that we accept traditional values as they are given to us by our parents, teachers, or business associates. The unconscious mind is our ruler, and any insecurities which we experience in childhood are compensated for by our active and purely objective attack on the problems of life. By the time a woman reaches the age of forty or fifty, she has succeeded either in solving these problems of work, society, sex and leisure, or she has failed in her purpose and finds herself facing the future with uncertain and mingled feelings.

There are three great periods in life in which

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human beings feel themselves insecure. The first is the period of adolescence, the second is the period of maturity, and the third is the period of old age. The insecurity of adolescence is cured by an active attack on the problems of existence. The young woman finds a meaning in life in the joys of work, the joys of love and the satisfactions of motherhood and home-making. The critical insecurity of old age is often solved by the acceptance of help from one's children, relatives, or community. Sometimes the insecurity of old age is solved by blind faith and resignation. But in the middle decades the drastic solutions of the adolescent period and the passive solutions of the senescent period are neither desirable nor adequate. It is at this period more than at any other time of life that every woman begins to look within herself and search for new meanings and new values within her own soul. The need for a basic security which extends beyond the mere security of wealth or position becomes a paramount problem. The modern woman in search for new values discovers God—or a new vital philosophy.

### I. THE QUEST FOR SPIRITUAL SECURITY

During the early decades both men and women are prone to attack the problems of life in terms of

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activity, science, logic, and reason. It is the fond belief and hope of youth that everything can be solved if only it can be translated into rational and scientific terms. Youth is prone to drastic measures and to contrasting antitheses. Youth solves the problems of the world with a high hand and unbounded enthusiasm and hope. Youth believes in the magic of personal powers, in the efficacy of hard work, in the validity of pure logic and reason. Science is the religion of modern youth.

With middle age not only the situation, but the method of attack, changes. The woman who has reached the age of forty is already surfeited with rationalism, science, and common sense. She is beginning to search for deeper and more mysterious sanctions. There grows up in her breast a sudden nostalgia for the beautiful faith and security of early childhood. If she has succeeded in her life and made a name for herself, she may discover that the name and the fame that she has gained are empty fictions devoid of meaning or significance for her own happiness. If she has devoted her entire life to the laboratory, to the counting-house, to the schoolroom, or to the household, she begins suddenly to question the meaning and the purpose of her activities and she demands something more than the rational common-sense rewards which come from hard work

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and economic success. She begins to yearn for a philosophy of life which will give her meaning and values.

Occasionally this realisation of the need for deeper philosophic and religious meanings comes as the aftermath of some dramatic incident. I know of one woman who led a happy, care-free life, completely devoid of any inner searchings, completely arid of any philosophic leanings, until her forty-fourth year, when the ship on which she was crossing the Atlantic Ocean encountered one of those terrific winter storms which are the bane of north Atlantic shipping. She was sitting in the bar, dressed in full evening regalia, sipping a cocktail and indulging in nonsensical small-talk, when an enormous wave struck the deck, splintering the glass of the promenade deck and washing terrified passengers down the passage-way. In a moment of panic she rose from her seat and went to the window to peer out, just as an injured seaman, his face streaming with blood, was dashed against it. Perhaps she saw that agonised and frightened face for only a fraction of a second. Her companion whisked her away from the scene and accompanied her to her stateroom. In that moment, however, as if by a dramatic apocalypse in the thunderous battle between man, machine, and the elements, she experienced the meaning of life.

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As she told me later, recounting the incident: "I saw the agonised face of Jesus in the features of that sailor!" To-day she is a deeply religious woman, and she has relinquished much of the hectic activity that marked her former life in favour of study and devotion to her children, whom she had formerly handed over to the care of governesses and teachers.

Another woman of my acquaintance experienced something of a religious renaissance after the illness of her young son who was suddenly stricken with infantile paralysis at the age of eight. She had been a passionate sportswoman, a gay dancer at night clubs, a temperamental motor-car driver. Weeks of tense watching over the sick-bed of her child, weeks of frantic conferences with doctors and nurses, weeks of personal nursing not only of her son but of her nearly prostrate husband, changed her entire attitude toward life. She was not a woman to carry her emotions to church or to priest, but she did find in the study of philosophy and the history of religion the deep peace which she had never experienced before the illness of her son. From the glory that came through physical prowess in sports and dancing and motor-driving she turned, after this harrowing experience, to the quieter but more profound glories of human service.

But this realisation of a meaning in life need not

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be the product of storm or sickness. It may come quietly in the silence of the night, like the "still small voice" heard by the prophet in the desert. There was a woman who, for a lark, once spent the night in an isolated hut near the summit of a peak in the Dolomites. She returned to her hotel at the foot of the mountain the next day an entirely changed human being. "That awful brooding silence of the stars, that uncanny, enwrapping silence spoke to me as if in the tones of a full orchestra. It seemed to be wanting to say something to me, something of a deeper and larger purpose than our insane scrambling over crags and our insane running hither and thither on this crust of earth. I am going to find out that mystic purpose if it's the last thing I do on this earth!" she wrote to me, clearly indicating an entire spiritual renaissance in her life. Similar instances can no doubt be recalled by almost every woman who has lived close to men and women. Perhaps the awareness of deeper meanings is present in us at all times, but is awakened more easily when, after forty, we look within ourselves and quietly ask ourselves the eternal question, "Whither?"

To live is to engage in a search for values and meanings, but nowhere is this search so intense as in middle age. In the early decades a woman is carried away with the enthusiasm of love or the

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enthusiasm of a career. She plunges into the stream of life and takes all values as they are proffered without stopping to consider their ultimate significance in the cosmic scheme. But by the time this same woman has reached middle age, many of the values she so eagerly championed in youth prove themselves to be empty husks. She has tested them and found them wanting. Simultaneously other values which she discarded in the fever of her activity and in the zeal of her youthful surrender to life, suddenly appear in middle age in an entirely new light.

So it is that many a woman discovers a renaissance of interests in the world of the spirit, in the world of religion, in the world of poetry (which was either suppressed or entirely non-existent during the active period of the first four decades), after her fortieth birthday. She comes then to her realisation of the poetic truth of Wordsworth's lines:

“The world is too much with us, late and soon  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.”

Her spirit reaches out with vague tentacles to a cosmos whose boundaries extend beyond the limitations of business or love, and seeks a mystical fusion with God and nature. She is surfeited with business, she is tired of housework, she is bored by bridge—and she is ready for a new religion.

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### 2. THEY ALSO PRAY . . .

It is my feeling that every human being needs a religion, although some people prefer to call this religion a vital philosophy or "*Weltanschauung*." It is impossible for a human being to reach the age of thirty years without developing some philosophy of life, unless he is a thorough-going moron, a human vegetable who is content to find the meaning of life in the fundamental biological activities of nutrition and procreation. Man is the animal that creates values and meanings. Men and women must create such value and meaning in their lives or forego the prerogatives of humanity. Not to find these values and meanings is to expose oneself to the contagion of serious neuroses, and sometimes the inability to discover any significant values in life is the first step to suicide. The crystallisation of the values of life, together with a more or less unconscious apperception of one's own place in the cosmos, we call religion. Religion, in this sense, might be defined as the concretisation in ethical conduct of the mysterious ratio of man to the cosmos. A middle-aged woman without a religion is a lost woman.

When I say religion, I do not mean that a woman must be a Baptist, a Catholic, a Jewess, or a Buddhist



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to find a meaning in life. These religions are very good for those who can believe in their tenets and believe in them whole-heartedly. The essence of all religion is faith, and faith is super-logical, super-individual, super-rational. The power of religion lies in the fact that religion is beyond logical proof and unaffected by scientific laws of evidence. A rational religion is as hopeless as a mystical sewing-machine. The religious experience can never be a cerebral one—it must be emotional.

The formal and traditional religions have their place, but they are not the only valid religions. There are other religions, personal religions, which many thinking men and women prefer to create for themselves. It is a mistake to believe that a cathedral or a temple is the necessary appurtenance of a true religious feeling. A true religion needs neither a formalized faith nor ritual, neither a place of worship nor a definite creed. Yet every religion, whether formal or personal, represents a mystic fusion between the individual and the cosmos. Every religion is a system of metaphysical values and represents an escape from the hopeless narrow confines of human logic and reason. All work and no play makes a dull woman. All logic and no religion makes her a robot.

Many a woman having reached middle age finds herself completely out of sympathy with the creeds

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and religious beliefs which she was taught in her childhood. What an opportunity our religious educators miss by formalising religion, by insisting on rigid rituals, by attempting to justify religion with stupid rationalisations! How much better it would be if they left all dogma out of religious teaching and emphasised only the mystical, the beautiful, the emotional elements of faith! Once the damage is done by false religious teaching, no woman can accept her childhood religion and re-assimilate the religious forms which have become dead, empty, and meaningless for her. Religions, and by that I mean formal religions, are temporary things. They arise, they reach their apogee, they decline, and they disintegrate. But religion goes on so long as there are human beings, because there is a need for a super-individual faith in every human breast.

It is one of the egrègious faults of our mechanistic civilisation that we attempt to reconstruct nature according to human reason, and put pins into the cosmos (as if it were a captured butterfly!). We go on blithely attempting to rationalise life, nature, and the cosmos with all the vanity and impudence which we can command. Yet any honest examination must immediately make us realise that life is irrational and illogical. In the first three or four decades of a woman's life there is a strong temptation to follow

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the prevailing patterns of scepticism and rationality and to discard all religious activity as undignified.

With middle age there comes the beginning of wisdom, the beginning of a wisdom which inheres in the realisation that life and nature in all their manifestations, that time and death, living and dying, are in themselves not rational but irrational, illogical and unpredictable. To deny this irrationality of life is to forego the vitalising force of nature. Every woman must at some time renew herself at these deep springs of the irrationality of nature.

### 3. THE MIRACLE OF REBIRTH

Women being more nearly Nature's children than men do not offend so much as men in the fanaticism of logic. Women are closer to the rhythm of nature, because in their deeper experience of love, in their mystical participation in the phenomenon of childbirth, and in their profound emotional experience of mother love, they come closer to the irrational verity of life than men can ever hope to come unless they are truly poets or philosophers. This is the reason why women are so often said to be more innately religious than men. This is the reason why religion is such an important phenomenon in the life of a middle-aged woman. For at no other time in her life

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is the need for spiritual rejuvenation and renaissance so great as in this period when old values crumble and disintegrate, and the new values, deriving from a cosmic purview, must be created.

As I have said, many a woman who has been caught in the activity of a forceful and effective life can no longer accept the sanctions of her childhood religious training. She must seek for new religions, new sanctions. Some women there are to whom this is no problem because they possess sufficient intellectual integrity and emotional maturity and vitality to create new values for themselves. These women are the high priestesses of their own religions, which enable them to utilise effectually not only the rational gains of their earlier years, but also to mobilise the irrational, mystic and spiritual experiences of their maturity.

### 4. BLIND-ALLEY RELIGIONS

Every woman who searches for a new religion is confronted with a difficult problem. The frustrations and disappointments of life evoke general feelings of anxiety and insecurity in her mood. Many women begin to dream of themselves again as little girls walking beside their fathers or their mothers in the shelter and security of parental love. As the mood

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of anxiety approaches the crescendo of actual panic a vigorous search for a new body of sanctions begins and the woman is ready for a new religion.

In the analysis of cases of nervous breakdown occurring in the fourth and fifth decades my patients often bring me dreams referring to their girlhood. "I seem to be back again in the house where I lived before I went to school. I can recognise every detail of my room, the little white desk, the picture of the Dutch boys walking on the wharf. Something frightens me and I cry out. A man who resembles my father comes into the room and lifts me into his arms. I feel peaceful again." This is a typical dream of a woman who at forty-nine, having lost most of her money and her business, looks toward the future with uncertain feelings. In her unconscious mind she seeks for security as she knew it before her long career as an independent woman. She wants to lay down her cares. She recalls that her father called her "little lamb." She wants to be folded in his strong arms again. But her father is long since dead. She turns to the psychiatrist for help, for protection from her own fears. But no living man can assume the stature required by her quest for security. She is ready for God.

Here I must utter a warning to the woman in search of her soul. The world is full of men, some

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of them clever practical psychologists, some of them crass charlatans, some of them benighted fanatics, some of them vicious wolves, who prey upon the religious needs and the emotional insecurities of middle-aged women. The world to-day is full of crazy cults, each one purporting to be the sole purveyor of personal salvation and each one proclaiming its own smooth-tongued messiah as the true Messiah. Most of these cults are designed to substitute glib formulas for the crucial insecurity of their devotees, and most of their devotees are women who, not having been able to find values in their own lives, are ready to accept the machine-made, predigested, and specious sanctions which these cults have to offer.

A psychological analysis of existing cults demonstrates all too clearly that their chief value inheres in their ability to give their devotees a spurious sense of peace and harmony, a spurious, vicious, illogical and unsound psychology of a "second chance." These cults have no true religious value because they are little more than quasi-religious forms of neurosis.

Any religious cult that requires its devotees to leave their intellects and their critical faculties together with their umbrellas at the temple gate is a vicious cult. No woman should make the philosophical mistake of believing that religion and sensible living are mutually exclusive concepts. Religion must

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be a "plus," an addition to sensible living which gives meaning to life. Any religious belief which is a *substitute* for living is psychologically unsound.

### 5. MISCHIEVOUS MESSIAHS

I need not go into a description of the various fads of a quasi-religious nature. Their psychology is perfectly obvious. All of them represent the exact opposite of what I believe is necessary in any true religion. The false religions, such as spiritualism, mysticism, theosophy, numerology, astrology, Christian Science, Buchmanism, and their multiples and corollaries *ad nauseam*, are religions of escape, religions of negation. I hold it as the prime requisite of a religion that it be a religion of affirmation. Any religion which seeks to narcotise its devotees into a false sense of security, as is the case for example with Christian Science, is no better than any other frank neurosis. It is a false religion. The ostrich that sticks its head into the sand in order to be better able to deny the existence of danger, does not thereby change the reality of danger, even if it rationalises its foolish conduct by calling it "religion." Such "religions" are as bad for middle-aged woman as for ostriches!

In recent years an attempt has been made to introduce into the Western world certain philosophies and

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religions which originated in the East. The Yogi philosophers of India have created systems of beliefs which are characteristic products of the social, economic, cultural, and hygienic phenomena of their country. In teeming, overpopulated, taboo-ridden India a philosophy of personal salvation "by works" is as unthinkable as the doctrine of free will would be on an anthill. The only valid escape from the hunger and hopelessness of Indian life is to be found in a type of self-sufficiency which is utterly unsuited to our Western world. There is no appreciable difference between the trance states of the Indian yoga and the catatonic forms of dementia praecox as we see them in Western mental hospitals. For that very reason Indian mysticism holds a tremendous emotional appeal for the middle-aged woman who is frustrated by life and disappointed in herself, and as a result the various yoga cults are becoming increasingly popular. Any dark-skinned, saffron-gowned and turbaned Indian mystic who ventures to these Western shores, is immediately surrounded by adoring middle-aged ladies, who, in many cases are more interested in his sex-appeal than in his teachings.

The introspective religious practices of India are incompatible with Western minds, and in many cases the precepts of these Eastern religions and cults produce in Western devotees mental states and



emotional reactions which are prejudicial to mental health. Perhaps some day when our Western civilisation has become so overcrowded that there is no opportunity for individual salvation by works, we shall be ready for a new Messiah modelled on the ideals of the Hindu saints. Until that time, and in this age, almost any Occidental religion of affirmation must be better than any Oriental religion of negation and self-annihilation.

I think I can put it down as a categorical rule that no woman who has reached forty should become a spiritualist, a Theosophist, a Christian Scientist, a Buddhist, a devotee of any Yogi cult, before she has examined the matter with a sympathetic psychiatrist and analysed in herself the reasons and the necessities for such a course. For these are religions of negation, and while I have no quarrel either with their dogmas or their rituals, and do not wish in any way to reflect upon the integrity of their leaders or their ideals, religions of negation are dangerous and unassimilable to all but a very few human beings in the Western world.

This is not to say that one must have a *rational* or scientific religion. The abortive attempts at rationalism which are characteristic of so many reformed Protestant and Jewish cults have emasculated religion and robbed it of its value. The strength of the

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Catholic religion and of the orthodox Jewish religion lies in its complete irrationality, in its emphasis on faith, its dramatic and symbolic utilisation of ritual, and its exclusion of the intellect.

The formula of every religion must be basically irrational and illogical to be valid. In our attempts to be rational at all times, in our attempts to analyse, to weigh, to measure, to understand, we moderns have lost sight of the poetry of life and denied ourselves the profound emotional value of symbolic experience. We have, in a word, cut ourselves off from the healing and rejuvenating powers of the mysterious earth force, allowing ourselves to become deaf to the pounding rhythms of the sea and the quiet whispers of the wind by listening too intently to the cacophony of riveters and the dull clink of gold. At no time is it so important to return to this primitive fountain of strength and to these archaic well-springs of cosmic communion as in middle-age, and at no time is the need for the rejuvenating and irrational force of nature so great as in the decades after forty.

### 6. THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING IRRATIONAL

It matters little whether the woman past forty returns to the church of her fathers and embraces the devout faith of her childhood, or whether she

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fashions for herself in the creative poetry of her soul a private and individual religion which will enable her to taste of these healing springs, and allow her to draw into herself the magical strength and the mysterious afflatus of the cosmos. Some women may find this religion in the complete surrender of love, which, like life and nature, is irrational, illogical, and unpredictable. Some women will find it in the creation of a rich life of fantasy, and others, in their devotion to the arts. Some creative artistic activity should be part of the programme of religious development because art, too, is illogical, symbolic and irrational. Some women will be able to find it in the study of the mysteries of science, some in a new political and social philosophy, while others will seek this mystic fusion with the cosmos in the religious feeling derived from the pure enjoyment of untrammelled nature. Whatever form religion may take, and there are many, no religion is complete without a full emotional surrender to some super-individual Cause—be this Science, or Communism, be it Nature, or Catholicism.

The woman who has spent forty years in active participation in the world's work, should at this period take time to peer into her own soul, to examine her own emotions, and to probe into the depths of her own feelings.

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An interesting instance of the necessity of "looking inside yourself" is that of Evelyn T. who had spent her whole life running away from life. She was the type of woman who ran her household, her husband, her children, her church, her clubs. She was not happy unless she dominated every situation, and, as she seemed master of the most unbelievable sources of potential energy, she was known to all her friends as "the human dynamo." No social function, no committee, no campaign was complete without her, and she thought nothing of running three such projects simultaneously. She was on every committee of every club, organisation, or group with which she came in contact.

I once asked this charming woman why she didn't stop to determine where she was going with all this frantic activity. "Oh, you psychiatrists drive me crazy, always looking for hidden motives and complexes! I'm in love with life and I want to get every bit out of it that I can squeeze out with both my hands!" she answered, and thereby betrayed her own partial insight and her own inner panic. She refused steadfastly to examine the hidden motives behind her terrific drive for approval and domination. I knew these motives well because I knew the background from which she had lifted herself by main force, but she refused to accredit her own unconscious urges.

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Year after year she would suffer a physical breakdown. Year after year she had another favourite doctor who was the current Messiah. Year after year she returned from a summer of enforced rest in some spa or watering place, only to begin her mad drive all over again, until now she faces a problem which is beyond even her ardent endeavours. Mind and body have simultaneously given way in a panic of nervous breakdown, from which the chances of her recovery are very slight. Surely this was an avoidable tragedy due almost entirely to her unwillingness to look within herself.

At this point it may be well to discuss further a curious fallacy underlying Evelyn T.'s disinclination to talk over her problems with a psychiatrist. There are still a great many people in the world who, although they have no compunction about going to a doctor if they have indigestion or a headache, at the same time consider a visit to a psychiatrist a tacit admission of imminent insanity, "queerness," or downright feeble-mindedness. Mrs. T. often said, "I know myself better than any psychiatrist can ever know me!" This is true enough. No second person can ever probe the innate essence of another's soul to its final and ultimate verities. But the psychiatrist has the advantage of one thing: *a point of view*. Mrs. T. knew better than I all the vagaries of her conduct,

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but she could not do anything about changing that conduct, even though she knew it was ridiculous, because the motives were hidden from her own sight.

Imagine for a moment that you have a huge and disfiguring smudge of soot on your nose. You walk down the street completely unaware of the smudge on your nose, but you realise that people look at you and either stare or suppress a smile. You become angry, fearful, insulting, according to your nature. The more people smile at you, the more infuriated you become. You assume a haughty air, which only makes your situation more ludicrous. Presently you meet some friend in the street. He tells you you have a smudge on your nose. You laugh too, and the *meaning*, that is, the interpretation of people's conduct and your own reactions, becomes clear to you.

In a society as complicated as our own it is sometimes extremely difficult, sometimes completely impossible, to look into ourselves without the aid of some trained, objective observer. The psychiatrist is such a trained observer, and to consult him when your life is at sixes and sevens not only is *not* a sign of weakness, but it is a positive indication of insight and common sense. Like other physicians, psychiatrists are more interested in the prevention and amelioration of nervous disease, than in its treatment after serious damage has been done. To many women a

timely discussion of mental conflicts and anxieties with a sympathetic psychiatrist will open a vista into a new and richer world which was latent, but unfulfilled, in them. Others will prefer a similar discussion with a priest or rabbi. But some such inner searching at this time is surely as desirable as a complete physical examination at the hands of a competent physician when physical deterioration threatens.

Too many women run away from the necessity of looking within themselves by getting themselves involved in some side-show of frantic over-activity. They are so busy, they say, that they have no time for soul searchings. And yet nothing is so vitally important at this time as to ponder on the problems of life and death, nothing so desirable as the supplementation of the common-sense and rational conduct of life with the mysterious submission of religion.

Which religion a woman should choose and how she should serve it, must remain for ever her individual problem. But she must find for herself some cosmic philosophy, some super-individual system of values to give meaning and direction to her life. This new system of values must not only include an active affirmation and acceptance of the problems of reality, the problems of work, of sex, of social relations, and of leisure, but also an affirmation and an acceptance of her relationship to the cosmos.

## VII

### SAYING "YES!" TO MIDDLE AGE

IN the foregoing chapters we have examined some of the dangerous corners that occur after forty, and have indicated wherever possible certain common-sense considerations which can be used as a basis for overcoming the difficulties which beset every woman who faces the problems of middle age. We have developed the thesis that the middle decades of life may well be a woman's best years, especially if she accepts their challenge and meets it with courage and insight.

In our civilization there is an all too great emphasis on the joys and delights of childhood, youth and early maturity. We are a restless and aggressive people and the whole tenor of our civilisation is focused on the accumulation of wealth, honour, and power. This is a characteristic of any young civilisation. As our civilisation matures—and it is showing very definite signs of maturing—a change in focus will doubtless take place.

Few women will deny that under the present cir-



cumstances the average middle-aged woman does not have an easy time making an adjustment to the changed status of maturity and finding her happiness therein. On the other hand, the woman who has equipped herself for this problem and understands it, has more opportunities for making her life meaningful in this country than in any other country except China, which is the paradise of middle-aged women. In China when a young man is asked to guess the age of a lady, he always makes sure to guess her age a few years older than she appears to be, because in China the serenity of old age is worshipped by the young, and respected by all. But every woman who reaches the fortieth milestone cannot pack up her trunks and run off to China to receive the adulations of every young man she meets. And for the time being our own culture has not yet reached the mellowed maturity of Chinese civilisation. The women of to-day living in the Western world of to-day must, therefore, make certain compromises with her desires, and certain concessions to the realities of our machine age.

Two things are certain. If you assume that middle age and old age are curses, you will surely be unhappy in these years. An inexorable force pushes you forward and projects you, whether you will or not, into maturity. To resist this blind and primeval

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force of nature is hopeless and vain. Any woman who has the intelligence to look about her and observe that many of her sisters not only *are* middle-aged but *enjoy* middle age and its prerogatives, must understand that it is not middle age itself which is a curse, but the individual woman's attitude toward middle age which makes her unhappy. To live always in a world of souvenirs, to live for ever looking back at the lost paradise of youth, to live for ever hoping for a restoration of that paradise, is indeed a futile existence.

### I. GROWING UP v. GROWING OLD

We must say good-bye to the house of youth, that short and pleasant week-end of life in which we visited without responsibilities or cares, and return to the task of living, accepting its responsibilities and joys with a mature acceptance and a serene affirmation. There is no use in hating middle age, as there is no use in being panic-stricken at the thought of old age. The last decades of life for which, as Robert Browning said, the first decades were made, has its peculiar joys, its unique prerogatives, and its own individual happiness. Every woman must seek out those qualities which will make her middle decades worth while, and give a meaning to her life.

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It is equally fatuous to attempt to stay the hand of Time and to act "as if" one had never grown old. There may be some women who can deceive themselves by the various artifices of modern life into believing that they are still young. There may be some women who deceive themselves by acting "as if" they were still little girls, thinking that thereby they can change the march of events or delude their neighbours into thinking that they have not yet grown to woman's estate. What energy they misuse, and what opportunities they overlook in attempting to retain the *appearance* of youth without ever gaining its reality! How these women are secretly laughed at behind their backs, and how transparent their childish and romantic attempts at playacting appear to those who view them objectively!

The quality of youth is not characterised by temporal signs. Youth is not a question of being six, sixteen, or twenty-six years of age. The very essence of youth inheres in the readiness to accept challenges, in the ability to mould and adapt oneself to changing conditions, and in the elasticity with which one reacts to them. The quality of youth, therefore, may be present just as much in middle age, or even in the last decades of life, as it is in the first. Youth is a matter of one's point of view, not a problem of chronological age. There are sixteen-year-old girls

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who are old, rigid, unadaptable and pessimistic, and there are sixty-six-year-old women who bubble over with the constant joy of fresh discovery and new enjoyment of life. To attempt to mimic the *naïveté* of the wide-eyed wonder of sixteen when one is forty-six is a sign not of youth, but of emotional infantilism; it is a sign of neurotic and unhappy mind.

### 2. THE AMENITIES OF MATURITY

It must appear from these considerations that the only way any woman can remain for ever young, is to grow old gracefully. How can one grow old gracefully? To begin with you can retain a constant awareness of the world about you. In the cultivation of this awareness a middle-aged woman has a tremendous advantage over a young girl. The young woman spends so much of her time preparing to solve her problems and so much of her energy learning to use the tools of civilisation, that she has little time or energy left over to enjoy the use of these tools. Not so the middle-aged woman! The tools are already at her disposal, the techniques already have been learned for many years. Now she can go back and experience anew the immortal legacies which poets, artists, dramatists, and philosophers of all time have left to humankind. She has more time and patience.

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The great classics of human thought and human creation are hardly open to the very young. To enjoy Shakespeare, to appreciate the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, to surrender to the majestic symphonies of Beethoven, to thrill with the double thrill of intellectual and emotional enjoyment that comes in the sonorous ecstasy of the Bach B Minor Mass, require experience, and an almost religious devotion and objectivity to which only the rarest young people can aspire. These things are all open to the middle-aged woman. Into the rich experience of other human beings she can read her own experiences and by identification enjoy the double pleasure of sensual enjoyment and emotional understanding.

Not before the "*Sturm und Drang*" of a woman's life is over, not until she has been through her baptism of life and death, of defeat and hope, of despair and sacrifice, of frustration and of victory, can any woman appreciate to the fullest the wonders of the miraculous world in which she lives. With increasing age should come not only increasing awareness but also increasing interest in the analysis and understanding of the phenomena of life which go on in a never-ceasing rhythm about her. The landscape which is a pleasant memory of childhood assumes new values and new interests when revisited in middle age and viewed in the light of the experiences

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which have occurred in the intervening years. The masterpieces of literature, read during adolescence and under the stultifying conditions of scholastic compulsion, assume an entirely new value when re-read twenty years after in the serene cosiness of a woman's own hearth. Every woman can thus make little journeys of discovery to remote places, not only in the material world in which she has lived, but also in her own emotional and spiritual world. These are the values which ennoble maturity.

### 3. LOVE AFTER NOON

This great gift not only of re-experience but of new experience is not confined merely to the landscapes of childhood nor to the classics you have read and forgotten. It is spread over the entire world of human relations and human experience. You discover that the creative activities in art or in music, in craftsmanship or in interpretation, which were part of your youthful and adolescent pattern, become revived in your middle age, always with richer connotations and always with deeper meaning.

It is said of Clara Schumann, the wife of the great composer, that she did not learn to speak until she was nearly eight years of age, but that her life after this abnormally long period of quiescence was one of

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richness and beauty of expression, equalled by but few women in the history of the world. The period of youth, of adolescence, and of early maturity is a quiescent period of spiritual latency for many women. The mad infatuations or the easy sexual dalliances which marked your first decades, may become transformed and transmuted into the great loves of middle age.

As in the life of Clara Schumann, there may have been a period of quiescence in your sexual life because you were inwardly preparing a seed which, because of its very beauty, required a longer period of hidden growth and latent germination. Many a woman has never learned what love is until she has reached the quiet and the calm of middle age, until she has learned through bitter experience and through bitter struggle with the vicissitudes of an active life, how deeply she can share and how deeply she can love.

An interesting example of this late flowering of love is to be found in the story of a splendid woman who for years was the responsible executive secretary of an international organisation. Year after year she pored over her reports, doing the technical detailed work for this organisation. She was so vitally interested in her work that men somehow did not come into her life. All her masculine associates were executives, whose social and financial status, she felt,

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were so far above her own that she did not allow herself to become emotionally involved. One fine day this woman, at the age of forty-two, was sent abroad on an important mission which she alone could carry out because of her detailed knowledge. On the journey she met an architect who was travelling to the same city on a fellowship. Here was a man who was vitally interested in his profession and although he was a few years younger than she, there was a tremendous emotional attraction between them. The acquaintanceship that began during the journey ripened into love on foreign soil. The man came to her with his problems to get a fresh point of view. She in turn found herself able to talk to a man for the first time in her life as to an equal. They married. Each one has continued his work and has found an emotional counter-balance to the intensity of creative effort in the life of the other.

When I had counselled this young woman to marry prior to her journey abroad she had answered laughingly that she did not want to spoil the more than twelve years good work she had done by letting some man interfere with her activities. I had told her at that time that a good marriage would not only not interfere with her work but make it far more productive. Six months after her marriage she wrote me somewhat sheepishly that, while it hurt her pride to



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admit it, she felt that she was compelled to acknowledge that my advice had been sound, that love had made her work not less, but more, interesting, and that in six months of marriage she had accomplished much more than in the previous three years of bachelor-girl existence.

Biographies of great women are full of examples of such a late-flowering love. It is a mistake to believe that, just because you have passed the first period of sexual bloom and activity, love must therefore remain a closed book to you, and that you must spend the rest of your years regretting that you have missed your opportunities. Surely this is not true. The life stories of the intellectual giants of all time show that frequently it is not the precocious infant prodigy who reaches to the heights. Those men and women who in their earlier years showed the least promise are the ones, very frequently, who in full maturity develop the greatest intellectual powers.

So it is with love. If you have gone without love in your early years, the period of middle age should not be symbolised by the closing and barring of a gate, but rather by the opening of new doors and new windows to wider and more peaceful vistas. Love is never dead to those who know how to give it. And the late love that flowers after forty is often the finest and the truest love.

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### 4. FINDING YOUR NICHE AFTER FORTY

What is true in the world of the spirit and in the world of the emotions is equally true in the world of work. Many a woman who has passed through a humdrum existence for the first three or four decades of her life, finds that, with increased leisure, sensitised awareness, widened sympathies and greater vision, her life pattern undergoes a complete metamorphosis. Suddenly the latent powers which have been hidden during the first four decades, or expended in the trivial activities of everyday life, become mobilised in her and, with a new dynamic interest in the world about her, she finds new work to do.

Here is a case to illustrate the point. Helen A. married the day she came down from the university. She was just twenty-one years old, her husband just one year her senior. Together they looked for work in journalism, and Helen's husband found a job managing a small provincial newspaper. It was practically a one-man job, and Helen was drafted to do some reporting work and write some of the editorials, while her husband handled the business and general editorial conduct of the newspaper. Helen's work on the paper was of a rather dilettante nature, always

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secondary to her household tasks, her golf, her children. In the course of years she became just an average "small town mother," frittering away most of her time on small projects and activities.

Then came an important political campaign. Her husband found an issue on which he focused all his hopes for the future, and he threw the total resources of his paper into the struggle. Helen, naturally, was infected somewhat with his enthusiasm, but continued her usual daily routine. One night her husband was brought home badly injured in an accident. While she nursed her husband and attended to her household, Helen found her life suddenly crystallised into action. She was thirty-nine years old. She stepped into her husband's place on the newspaper and continued his campaign. The issue had suddenly come alive for her. She was amazed how easily she could write editorials, how simple it was to run the composing room and act as news editor. All her old training suddenly returned and she was supported in her work by the knowledge that she had not failed her husband.

Unfortunately her husband died of his injuries and, despite her best efforts, the cause for which they had both fought was lost. Until her husband's death Helen was just an average American woman, with average interests and activities. But from that mo-

ment she became a veritable avenging fury. She gave up the small paper which her husband had practically put on the map, and became an editorial writer on one of the most important national newspapers. She felt that the finest monument that she could build up to the memory of her husband was to bring his work to fruition. After two years of active newspaper campaigning, she felt that newspaper work was too slow, and entered actively into the political arena.

Since then she has mothered countless reforms, and put through much social legislation by the sheer force of her perseverance and indomitable will, and, if present indications are any criterion, Helen A. is going to find herself in a position of very great importance before she finishes her career. Remember, Helen began where most women are ready to quit! She was a woman of forty, a widow, a mother of three children, not overly endowed with worldly goods, politically on the unpopular side of the fence, and totally devoid of "pull" from the entrenched powers, when she threw her little black beret into the ring. After years of latency, her life literally began at forty. At fifty, to-day, she is a vibrant, healthy, active and happy woman "on her way!"

This cannot, of course, happen to the woman who closes her eyes and says good-bye to life on her fortieth birthday. It can only happen to the woman

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who sees herself as a contributing and useful member of society, to the woman who is aware of the problems of the people about her. The renaissance of middle age occurs only in the woman who throws in her lot with that gallant company who find meaning in life by striving to make the world a more civilised place in which to live.

As I have said in the chapter on work, never before in the world's history has there been such a need for good soldiers, never before in the history of the world have there been so many causes, so many great movements which require leaders and workers. If you cannot find such work to do, if you cannot align yourself with some activity which is more important for the development of civilisation than your own petty pleasures and your own animal comforts, you are either intellectually blind, or emotionally set against growing up. If you are psychologically so involved in the defence of your own ego that your entire world is bounded by your own interests, there is something radically wrong with your psychological make-up. You need the help of a psychiatrist to release you from the chains of your own egoism.

To live in such a self-made mausoleum, a living tomb of egoism and of timidity, of emotional shortsightedness and psychological weakness, is in itself the evidence of a deep disturbance in your sense of

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self-esteem. The woman who at forty finds no satisfaction in life, who looks to the future as to a prison sentence, who knows neither love nor interest, neither work nor recreation, is a woman who should take mental inventory of the crass mistakes of her own pattern of living. Such a woman would do well to betake herself to the nearest psychiatrist and immediately initiate measures to prevent the inevitable *débâcle* of mind and body which is the consequence of such a style of life.

### 5. TAKING YOUR PERSONALITY INVENTORY

Middle age is not a curse, nor is it a tragedy. Like every other age it has its problems, its opportunities, its pleasures and its compensations. If you are emotionally mature it offers advantages which make it the most glorious period of your life. If you resist the course of evolution it is a dread house, full of horror and anxiety. Nature has richly endowed you with the ability to adjust and to adapt yourself. Nature has beautifully arranged your life and your evolution in such a way that, while your body may suffer decay and illness in the course of time, your mind may remain for ever young and for ever active.

The cultivation, therefore, of intellectual curiosity together with the cultivation of serene introspection,

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offer you your greatest opportunity for happiness. The world within your own soul must be judged in terms of your outward experience, and probably no woman is capable of looking into the kingdom within herself unless she has reached the age of thirty-five. Prior to this time introspection is morbid. In middle age the search for values in the world within, and in the world of cosmic relationships, is a normal and desirable quest.

To those who have been constrained by the material necessities of life to confine their lives to the search for physical security, middle age offers opportunities for the exploration of a new world. The middle-aged woman may therefore make journeys of discovery which will give her all the thrills that more fortunate individuals have experienced and forgotten in their childhood. If you learn at forty or fifty to write a poem or a play, or to paint a picture, you will experience an inestimably greater pleasure in this late creation than the child who accomplishes the identical end with a superabundance of her creative energy, yet without any appreciation of its meaning.

### 6. PITFALLS AND SAFEGUARDS

There are certain things which the middle-aged woman who wishes to live a happy and harmonious

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existence should avoid as she would avoid the plague. The first of these is pessimism, for pessimism lowers the vitality, greys the hair, and destroys the attractiveness of a woman's soul. Pessimism can best be avoided by avoiding those human conflicts which are in themselves psychologically unsound.

I mean by this that you should show certain tolerance of the foibles and weaknesses of those who are close to you. If you would be happy, do not attempt to reform your husband or to domineer the destinies of your children. Do not stay too close to your family hearth. Do not spend too much of your time with middle-aged women who *suffer* their middle age. Divide your time judiciously between those who are younger than yourself, and so in closer contact with the changing world, and those who are older and more experienced in the technique of being mature.

If you wish to be happy, avoid extremes. Middle age is a time in which moderation in food and diet, in work and in exercise, in pleasure and in beliefs, in thinking and in emotion, is highly desirable. Excess in any of these activities must be deleterious. Lay your plans against the tyranny of monotony and ennui by mapping out a programme of activity for yourself. It is a good idea to sit down with a white sheet of paper and list your personality assets and



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your liabilities. Then make a plan for the strengthening of your assets and the conquest of your personality defects. Middle age lends itself better to the budgeting of time and the planning of activity than any other period in life. Make out a definite five-year plan of development for yourself and you will never find middle age dull or uninteresting. This is no time to muddle through life. Even if you have muddled up to the present moment, this is a good time to search your soul, make up your mind, and begin to live!

### 7. LIVE DANGEROUSLY!

Above all, learn to live dangerously! Life is very short, and the precious minutes seep through the hour-glass with unseemly haste. All the more reason why you should put aside the bogeys and taboos that you accepted uncritically in your youth, and seek that which you need to fulfil your life. Seek it bravely. Do not defer living any longer. Take chances! It is better to take chances, to try, to fail, and to try again—if you are certain of your goal—than to remain in cowardly and unhappy security to live out æons of regret for lost opportunities.

I wish that the scope of my book permitted me to write down the hundreds of instances that I know

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of women who, after forty, have determined to take their lives into their own hands—and make signal successes of them! I can only outline some of the more dramatic ones to show you what can be done.

I need not recall the thrilling life stories of such women as Florence Nightingale, Marie Curie, Helen Keller, Margaret Sanger, Jane Addams, Charlotte Brönte, Myra Hess, Eleonora Duse, Ernestine Schumann-Heink and countless others whose lives and works have added so generously to the sum total of human happiness. These great women, and many others like them, should be the great saints of womankind. Their biographies should be read and studied by every woman, before forty, at forty, and after forty. Even primitive savages tell their children the mythical exploits of their ancestors to stimulate their pride and activity. Women need saints and heroes as well as men. I hope that the reading of this paragraph will stimulate some woman to write an adequate history of woman's achievement in the history of mankind, either for her own encouragement, or for the stimulation and guidance of her daughters (as Gina Lombroso wrote her magnificent book *The Soul of Woman*), or for generations of eager-eyed girls who in future years will have to face the world and its problems.

But I am not writing about the great women of

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history, the Cornelias, the Elizabeths, the great Katherines. Others far better equipped than I have told these stories with beauty and sympathy. I want to sing the praises of women who are saying "Yes!" to life in less dramatic but nonetheless effectual ways. I want to toast the women who go on making the world a somewhat happier place to live in, devoting their time, their energies, often their private resources to the cause of human service. These unsung women, all of them over forty years of age, are carrying the banners of emancipation to the far corners of the world. They are the women who live dangerously—the women who refuse to accept bogeys and taboos because they are hoary with tradition!

I want to write about the woman who spent thirty-five years being a "good little girl" in the household of a narrow-minded Nonconformist minister (may the Lord forgive him his transgressions against the human spirit!). One day she decided she would no longer be a human turnip, packed her little suitcase, and went to live among those "unspeakable Russians" to teach handicrafts to groups of "wild children" in an out-of-the-way village in the Caucasus. There was a woman who took heroic steps to make herself happy and useful!

I want to write of the woman who, at forty-five, gave up a lucrative business, to work without pay

for the amelioration of the conditions of working girls in the mills; and of the woman who at this moment is probably wielding a pick and shovel in the wilds of a Yucatan jungle, digging for Mayan monuments to enrich a University collection. At thirty-five she was champion of her golf club, president of her local literary society; with no more worlds to conquer in her community, she decided to make a name for herself in archæology, a subject in which she had always been interested. For years her parents had frowned on her "fantastic" ideas of doing actual field work. For ten years she saved her pennies and bided her time. She simply would not be stopped!

But let us go on with our stories of the women who say "Yes!". There is the story of the woman who was an ugly duckling for forty years. Her younger sisters, all talented and beautiful, married successfully, and left her to sit at home, unwed, unwanted, unloved, to knit and listen to the radio. Then one day this woman made up her mind that she would not be a wallflower any longer. She wrote some sketches suitable for a children's hour on the radio, and has since become famous as an author of children's books.

You could, no doubt, add to the recital of my instances with further examples from your own experi-

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ence. All over the world to-day there are brave women who belie the old-fashioned notion that a woman is "done" when she reaches forty. Have you ever stopped to think that in Biblical times a girl unwed at eighteen was considered an accursed old maid? As time goes on and our civilisation lays the ghosts and bogeys that we have inherited from our patriarchal ancestors, woman's sphere of usefulness widens and expands; and with the expansion of her mental and spiritual horizons, the factor of Time becomes less and less important in a woman's life. A useless and parasitic woman is just as sorry a spectacle at twenty as she is at sixty. The woman who accepts the challenge of her years and makes the most of her potentialities knows no age-limit to happiness or usefulness. Most of the unhappiness I see in women is not the result of their years but the direct product of their vicious psychological attitude toward life. You too can say "Yes!" to life. You, too, can declare your independence of the conventional tradition that makes slaves and cowards of middle-aged women. Let the day that you read my book be for ever marked in your mental calendar with a red circle as the day on which *you* began to live dangerously!

Forget what the neighbours might say! Are their words going to fill your life with meaning? Break

down the walls that have confined your life to a monotonous round of boring and menial tasks. These walls are all of your own making. Give some one else the chance to assume the responsibilities and cares you have always undertaken—they can accomplish those tasks just well as you can!

And above all, do not worry. Worry kills more women than cancer. In all the history of the world no poem was ever written, no child was ever educated, no tragedy was ever prevented, by worry. You are forty years old, and all the worrying you have done has only served to annoy your friends and relatives. More than ninety-nine per cent of the things people worry about, *never happen*—and the rest can neither be predicted nor forestalled. Be kind, be generous, be sympathetic and be forgiving. Do not waste your time trying to be perfect. No woman was ever perfect. Get into the swift current of life, learn to laugh, and to live dangerously!

There is no magic formula for human happiness. No man can write a book and guarantee happiness to those who read and follow his instructions. Being happy is an art and, while the elements of that art may be taught, the art itself must be practised by the student before he can enjoy being an artist. Often this period of practice requires time and patience, and often the student becomes discouraged

with his work because there is no appreciable progress. But if the student of art is not afraid of making mistakes, and does not strive for perfection overnight, eventually the joy of artistic creation becomes his lasting reward. So it is with the art of being happy though middle-aged. There is nothing in middle age itself which can compel a woman to be unhappy. Most of the unhappiness which middle-aged women experience is the result of their ignorance of the laws of nature and of their fear of living itself. In other words, women are not condemned to be unhappy because they are middle-aged; they *make* themselves unhappy during the middle decades. It is not life which is at fault, but those who are living half-heartedly.

The great life force which permeates and activates every woman is healthy and wholesome. It is only when the normal currents of this great vital energy stream are dammed up by fear that conflict and unhappiness result. The woman who *avoids* the mistakes and misconceptions described in these pages will be happy, because she will be giving the great life stream of vital energy a broad and useful channel of expression. If she does not distort or frustrate the natural energy of life, life itself is very sweet. If she lives them fully and courageously, the middle decades should be a woman's best years.

## VIII

### AN OPEN LETTER TO MARY SMITH

MY DEAR MRS. SMITH,

It is with a feeling of real gratitude to you that I answer your long and interesting letter containing your reactions to my book, *A Woman's Best Years*, which has just been forwarded to me by my publishers. As a physician I am exceedingly happy that you have found help and guidance in my pages, and the fact that you now look forward to your menopause with courage and peace of mind is in itself an adequate justification for having written the book. Let me thank you heartily at the outset for your words of praise and commendation: these are balm to any author's heart.

But you have raised some exceptionally interesting problems in your letter, which call for further illumination, and the very fact that these points are not only the expression of your problems but also of the problems of a number of women all over the country, compels me to reply at some length.



## A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS

But first, may I make an author's apology? *A Woman's Best Years* sets out to solve some of the knottiest of human problems. Many women will read it. Some will be rich, some poor, some will be married, others single; some will live in cities, others on farms, some will be Catholics and some will be unbelievers; some will be at universities and others will have had very little education, some will be working and others unemployed. You can imagine how difficult it has been to cover all their problems in a single book. Often during the course of writing my book I was tempted to give up the task, because there were so many cases I wanted to cite as illustrations that could not possibly be included, and so much explanation of the theoretical points that seemed impossible to cover within the limited space of an ordinary-sized book.

If I had followed my natural inclinations *A Woman's Best Years* would have become such a mammoth volume that you would have been compelled to bring it into your living room in a wheelbarrow! As I have said in my Preface: this is a book of hints and suggestions which each reader must apply with some imagination to her own individual situation. No book in the world can solve all the problems of all the women who read it!

So much, by way of apology. The problems you

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have raised, however, are so universal in their importance that I am going to include the solutions in my book.

You write, *I am a married woman, forty-two years of age, the mother of three children. I live in a small town. I come of sound stock, belong to the Church, I went to a High School. I am of medium height and weight. My husband is a foreman in a neighbouring mill. We get along quite well, being human enough to quarrel occasionally and to disagree in politics. We are known to all our friends as a very happy couple and our home life is often held up to others as a model.*

*Many of the things you wrote in A WOMAN'S BEST YEARS hit me right between the eyes. I hope all your readers will be as grateful as I am for the information that is contained in your book. After reading it I discovered that I was becoming "just another middle-aged woman" and my imagination was fired to begin a new life. I want to live dangerously, and I want to be a complete woman. I want to make the remaining years that God will allot me the best of my life. But, Dr. Wolfe, you live in the capital and do not realise the problems of the woman who lives in a small town. We can now afford a servant to do the heavy housework only once a week. My husband comes home at six, eats his supper, reads*

*his evening newspaper, and usually retires soon after, tired out after a hard day's work. I am also tired at the end of the day when all the household tasks are done and the children have been cared for and put to bed. Once or twice a week we go to the cinema.*

*Now, Dr. Wolfe, how is a woman in my position going to carry out your prescriptions for middle age? I read the cases that you cited, and they seem so far beyond my powers and abilities that I cannot think of them for myself. Won't you give me a plan that will guide me on my way? Isn't there some less drastic way of "living dangerously" than going to Mexico to dig up ancient ruins? What can I do in this little town? I hope you will not consider me impudent for asking these questions when you have already written such a helpful book. You are, no doubt, a very busy man, and these problems may sound very childish to you, but to me they are very real. You have awakened in me a new interest in life. Now please give me some practical hints on how to make the most of it!*

No, Mary Smith, you are not impudent in asking for further help and I am never too busy to answer such very sensible questions. I believe I can best help you to make a plan for your life by drawing a picture with you, which you can keep as a chart of your own progress. But before we draw the picture let me

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explain my plan more clearly. Do you remember how you used to throw stones into a pond when you were a little girl and watch the waves spread in circles from the point where the stone entered the water? Do you remember how large the waves were close to the centre of the circle, and then how they gradually faded out until they were no longer perceptible? Keep that childhood picture in mind because we are going to base our whole plan on it.

Just imagine that when you were born the process was very much like the stone touching the still waters of the pond. The masculine element derived from your father was the stone, the feminine element derived from your mother was the water. When you were conceived a mystic fusion of male and female elements took place and thus created a disturbance in the whole cosmos. You began as a single cell, and when you were finally born into the world, your birth could have been represented by the first small, but strong, ripple. The second ripple was your childhood, the third your adolescence, the fourth your mature womanhood, the fifth your middle age, and so on.

An ideal, happy, mature woman can be represented by a strong, outward-bound, circular ripple. There is, of course, one difference between life and the ripples caused by throwing a stone into a pond. In real life there are certain factors which prevent the

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ripple from keeping its circular form. Events in your history, factors in your environment, physical disabilities or unsatisfactory opportunities for development, retard the progress of the circular ripple which we call maturity. Now if I were to make a diagram of your life it would appear not as a circle, but as a many-pointed star. The plan that I want to give you is one for converting this many-pointed star, some of whose angles are very close to the centre of the star and some of whose angles approach the outside limits, into as complete a circle as possible.

Now I want you to take a large piece of paper and a pencil and draw the following diagram. Somewhere in the centre of your paper make a big dot. That represents the beginning of your life. Then very close around that dot draw a circle so that its radius is perhaps half an inch long. That represents your birth into the world. Then draw another circle around the first circle, and this second circle represents your childhood. A third circle outside the second represents your adolescence. A fourth circle represents an average maturity. A fifth circle outside the circle of average maturity represents the ideal maturity towards which you are moving. The rim of the circle, finally, represents the limits of human superiority.

Now I want you to make four dots on the outside

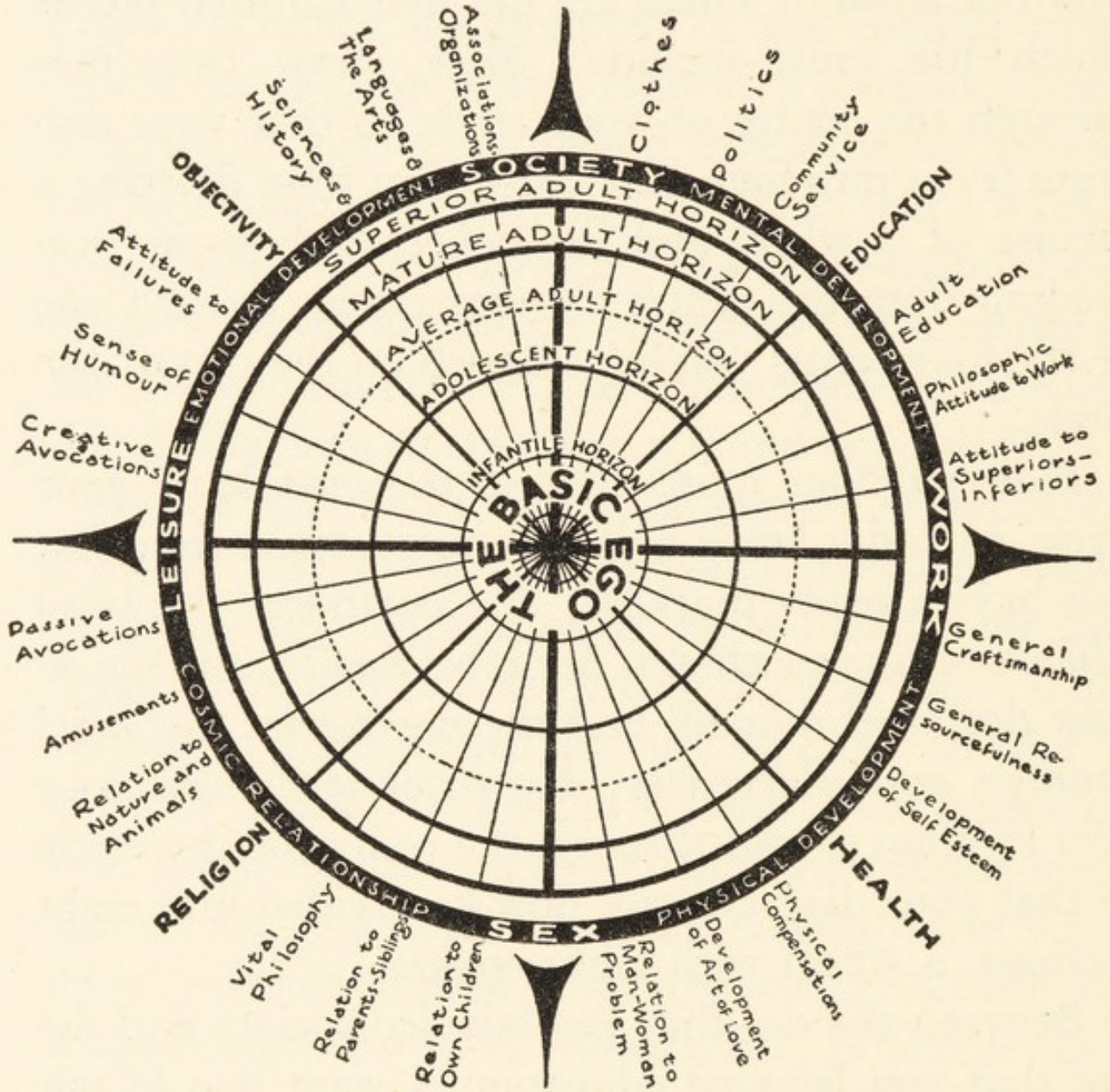
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circle at the points of the compass: north, west, east and south. Label the north dot *society*, label the east dot *work*, label the south dot *sex*, and label the west dot *leisure*. These are the four cardinal points which life must include. Now, draw two lines through the centre of your circle so that your diagram is cut into four pieces as if you were drawing a picture of a wheel and its spokes, each spoke proceeding from the centre of your circle, to each one of the four points you have drawn on the rim of the circle.

Now put four more dots on the outside of your circle, each dot being half-way between the four that you have already marked. The north-east dot label *education*, the south-east dot label *health*, the south-west dot label *religion* and the north-west dot label *courage and objectivity*. Now connect these four dots by lines drawn through the centre of the circle so that your diagram will now be divided into eight sections, a wheel with eight spokes.

Between the dot that you labelled *society* and the dot that you labelled *education*, I want you to put three more dots at equal distances and label these *clothes*, *politics* and *community service*. Three more markers should now be placed between *education* and *work* at equal distances and should be labelled *adult education*, *attitudes toward work*, *attitudes*

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*toward superiors and inferiors.* Between work and health mark three more dots and call them *general craftsmanship, general resourcefulness, development of self-esteem.* Between health and sex, three more dots, again, marked *physical compensations, the art of love and the relation to men and women.*

Now in the spaces between sex and religion make three more dots and call them *relation to your children, relation to your family* and next to religion place *vital philosophy.* From religion to leisure three more dots which we will name *nature and animals, amusements* and *passive hobbies.* Between leisure and courage, beginning nearest to leisure three more dots named *creative hobbies, sense of humour* and *attitudes toward failures.* Between courage and society, three more dots which are called *history and science* for the first, *literature and the arts* for the second, and *clubs and organisations* for the third.

Now you can connect all the dots through the centre so that your diagram represents a wheel. The hub of the wheel is birth, the rim of the wheel is maturity and the spokes of the wheel represent all the different paths from birth to maturity. This wheel of life is your plan for the future. What I want you to do now is to mark along each spoke the degree of development you have achieved along that path.



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Let me give you some examples. Suppose, for instance, that you are just a parasite, living on your husband's income, spending your time at useless occupations, such as playing bridge or gossiping. On the spoke labelled work you would have to place a dot at the level of childhood. This is at the level of the second circle, because you have not grown up so far as work is concerned. On the spoke called education, if you have only had a grammar school education, you would have to place your dot at the adolescent circle because you stopped your schooling before you were grown up. If you believe that on any of these spokes you are just the average, just about the same as all the women in your community, then give yourself an average rating. If you are less than the average, give yourself an adolescent rating. If you do nothing along the path that one of these spokes indicates then you must give yourself a childish rating. If you do more than the average, you can give yourself a mature rating.

If, for instance, you can make better jam than your neighbours, or you sew your own clothes, then you must give yourself a good rating in general craftsmanship. If you are taking any kind of course, whether you have undertaken a correspondence course or whether you are listening regularly to some educational hour on the radio, then you must give

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yourself a good rating on the adult education spoke. If you cry or have tantrums every time you are frustrated or have a failure, then you must give yourself a childish rating on the spoke we have called attitudes towards failure. If you have a creative hobby such as art, music, sewing or interior decoration, then you must give yourself a good rating on the creative hobby spoke.

If you are thoroughly unawakened in your love life, give yourself an infantile or adolescent rating on the spoke called the art of love. If you are married successfully and happily and have a family that you love, yours is the best possible rating on the spoke of sex. If you are friendly to people and go out of your way to be helpful when you can, if you belong to some community organisation and have devoted at least some of your time to social service no matter in what form, then you must give yourself a good rating on the spoke of society. And if you have not done these things, you must judge how far from being mature you are, and rate yourself accordingly.

Now what I want you to do is to go over your diagram carefully—and perhaps you will want to go over it with your husband or a friend—and come to a certain agreement as to how far you have developed and draw a dot on every one of the spokes, indicating where you stand on that particular path

to maturity. Then connect the dots so that you get a more or less star-shaped figure within your circle. Take your pencil and outline the rim of your wheel quite heavily, and then fill in your star-shaped figure in black. This leaves you, if you are an ordinary woman, a number of white spaces which represent the ground that you have still to cover in order to reach maturity and happiness. This diagram I want you to keep as a constant guide for your further development. It will give you an indication of your present stage of growth, and the path you must travel towards happiness.

I hope my diagram has helped you to clarify your problem, Mrs. Smith. Now that you have a notion of just where you stand in life, I want to give you a few practical hints which will help you attain maturity and happiness. These hints may be practised in any civilised place and with almost no equipment. I am going to list the qualities I want you to develop in yourself.

1. *Tolerance.* Much of the unhappiness in the world is due to the fact that people do not understand each other. We are brought up in such a curious way that when we meet a stranger our first reaction is to treat him as if he were a potential enemy. As a result we make a number of unhappy contacts with our fellow men, and our subconscious

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premiss that human beings are unfriendly and unkind becomes a fact.

Here is something I want you to consider. Every human being, without exception, suffers from a sense of inferiority. It makes no difference whether that human being is man or woman, rich or poor, educated or ignorant. Every human being believes that his sense of inferiority is the *only* one that exists in the world, and he therefore attempts to prevent other people from finding out how insignificant he really feels he is. By telling you this I am making you the master of one of the greatest secrets of social success.

Knowing that everybody in the world feels inferior and that every one is in the same boat with yourself, you can make yourself loved by everybody by behaving in such a manner that all the people with whom you come in contact will feel a sense of poise and security in your presence. You can begin by praising them for little things which you notice they do. This implies that you will have to sharpen your vision for details, and look for opportunities to be helpful. Even if people with whom you come in contact do things for what you suspect are not the best of motives, you can help them by attaching an apparently good motive to their acts.

Let me give you an example. Suppose you have a friend who overdresses, and you believe that she is

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overdressing so that she can create an impression and make other people feel inferior. You can compliment her on the dress and account for her overdressing as a gesture on her part to cheer up other people. In this way you will give her enough courage to dress normally. Go out of your way every day to make one person—preferably a person not in your own family—feel that the world is a better place to live in. Look for things to appreciate.

Instead of labelling the people that you know, try to put yourself in their shoes and try to understand why they act the way they do. In other words, make the study of human psychology and human behaviour part of your daily life. This is one of the most fascinating ways to grow up and it has the great advantage of costing absolutely nothing. Your laboratory material is always around you and the joys of such a study are beyond all value.

Much of the unhappiness in the world is due to the fact that people are always fighting each other like enemies of long standing. The only reason people fight each other is that they are afraid of each other. You can grow into your own maturity and find a meaning in your own life if, with the knowledge that you have gained from this book, you will attempt to make the life of some other person a happier and more constructive one. Many people believe that it

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is necessary to go to a university or to take expensive courses of study in order to develop themselves socially and mentally. That belief is false. Life itself is the best of all possible schools, and if you will study the motives and the conduct of the people in your immediate environment, you will find such a vast store of interesting material that you will never again be bored, and never again be able to say that it is too difficult for you to develop your social contacts.

If we would only remember that we are all in the same boat! Perhaps our civilisation is a leaky boat and we are all in danger of drowning. Certainly it will not do us any good to push and jam and scramble for the best seat. Imagine that you are in such a leaky boat, and that all the people you know are also in it. You can be the one who organises the bucket brigade and bales out the first bucketful of water to keep the craft afloat. Anyone who devotes himself to this task has maturity at his fingers' tips!

If you make your happiness depend on your background, your money, your opportunities, or your education, you are likely to be unhappy for the rest of your life; but if your happiness depends on *what you are doing* to make the world a more civilised place to live in, then you have happiness always within your grasp.

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2. Another thing that you should develop in your quest for security and happiness is the quality of *courage*. Now, a great many women have mistaken notions of just what courage is. Many people believe that in order to be courageous you have to be firing a gun on a barricade or stopping a runaway horse. This is ridiculous. *True courage consists in knowing your goal and moving forward to attain it despite the obstacles that stand in your way.* You, like every other woman, Mrs. Smith, have obstacles standing in your way. I want you to work out a five year plan for yourself, making this plan elastic enough to take care of all possible factors in your environment, and working for that plan quietly and steadily every day.

Courage can be learned! You build up courage in exactly the way you master a foreign language or learn to bake a cake. The first time you tried to bake a cake it was probably no brilliant success, but you learned something from your failure, and the next time you attempted to bake a cake it went a little better, and the next time still a little better until after you had baked a hundred cakes, baking a cake was no particular problem and you had completely forgotten the fear and anxiety which attended your first effort. So it is with courage.

To-day you may be afraid of something, afraid

to join the literary society, afraid to get into politics, afraid to take a course in writing, afraid to make a suggestion to your husband that has been on your mind for a long time. Take a chance! Nothing can possibly happen to you. I want you to build up an immunity to fear which is the one thing that makes most women unhappy. By attempting every day some little thing that you would ordinarily be afraid to do, you can build up an immunity to fear in precisely the same way that doctors build up an immunity to disease in a patient. By exposing yourself to gradually increasing doses of fear, you build up a resistance to the thing that you are most afraid of.

3. I want specifically to mention two things that will help to make you a grown-up person. One is, *do not be afraid of making mistakes*, and the second is, *do not try to be perfect*. In my practice as a psychiatrist I find a great many men and women who make themselves thoroughly miserable during their entire lifetime by trying to be perfect. The striving for perfection, whether it be in housework or in art, is nothing more nor less than a manifestation of the inferiority complex. Nothing in this world is perfect. As James Stephens says in his delightful book, *The Crock of Gold*, "Nothing is perfect, there are lumps in it." It is useless and time-consuming to attempt



perfection. To live is to be imperfect. Perfection is death.

One of the marks of a mature person is his ability to take failure with a certain sense of humour and proportion. Mistakes are the most valuable things in the world. It is a curious thing that in the history of human development mistakes have always appeared as something to be avoided, when, as a matter of fact, what we should realise is that it is through our mistakes that we learn most quickly and build our character most securely. A person who never makes mistakes is either actually dead or living the life of a human vegetable. The quest for maturity and happiness demands that we make mistakes.

Do not waste your time trying to have your home *perfectly clean*, or your children *perfectly* educated, or your dress *perfectly* sewn. Too much attention to details blinds you to the great moments of life. Do not be the kind of woman who is so busy counting the trees that she doesn't know she is in a forest.

4. Another thing I think you ought to develop in your quest for maturity is the quality of *imagination*. The most important thing that you must do in order to acquire imagination is to expose yourself to other people's ideas, and to try to apply them to your own life. One of the best ways of doing this is to read the books of the great thinkers and writers who see

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life more clearly than we ordinary people. If you want to be well beloved, if you want your conversation to be interesting, if you want people to consider you the life of the party, then you must give up the old bromides that you have learned as a child and put yourself in touch with the thoughts and ideas of the great spirits of all times.

Make it your business to read at least one good magazine and one good book every month. Magazines are so cheap and library service so well organised that there is no excuse for a person not to keep in touch with the great currents of human life to-day. You do not have to be a student in the sense that you spend eight hours a day studying a subject. All that is really necessary is to devote the last fifteen minutes of every day, just before you go to bed, to reading. I have never known a woman who did not waste at least fifteen minutes a day. Look over your work and your life and see how you can utilise a period of time which you are at present wasting in developing a constructive approach to maturity. A woman of my acquaintance learned to speak French and read it fluently by studying it for one year on the twenty minute underground railway journey from her office and back again.

5. The next thing that I think is important for you to learn (which also requires very little time and

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no equipment) is the *art of playing*. One of the reasons why so many women remain unhappy is that they take life too seriously. Our pagan ancestors made a game of everything. They played at love, they played at work, and they even played at their religion. A little fooling and a little fun is requisite leaven in the life of every woman. Cultivate this ability to look on the humorous side of life, to mimic, to lampoon, to parody, and to burlesque yourself and some of the things that are happening to you. It will stand you in good stead at a time when life becomes difficult and tragic.

6. Of course, one of the most important things that you must learn to do if you want to be young at forty, is to *develop your self-esteem*. I think that in my book I have already pointed out a number of ways in which you can develop your self-esteem, simply by getting rid of some of the traditional notions about your inferiority as a woman. But you must also do something active and constructive to build up your self-esteem. Self-esteem is the one quality without which no human being can really exist.

There are two kinds of people in the world. Those who oversell themselves and those who undersell themselves. The people who oversell themselves, who give the world the impression that they are

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better than they actually are, get into difficulties when they are compelled to "deliver the goods." But the people who undersell themselves are always in difficulty because they never get a proper start. Unconsciously they create such a bad impression of their own self-esteem that every one takes them at their own value and neither entrusts them with responsibilities nor gives them credit for the gifts that they already possess.

Don't be one of those women who go through life with sunken head and downcast eyes. Walk with your head erect, your eyes forward, your chest out and your abdomen in, as if you felt you were the Queen of Sheba. You will be amazed to see how much more others will respect you if you respect yourself. Self-respect, like courage, is not based on equipment or on opportunities, but on an inner radiance which comes from the realisation that one is useful and necessary in the world.

In order to build up your self-respect you must do one thing every day that makes you more responsible, that makes you a better participant in, and a greater contributor to, the life around you.

7. Above all *avoid social isolation*. This is not only the greatest crime against nature but also the greatest sin against man. The human spirit cannot grow in a cell. The most unhappy women I have ever

met in my life are the women who believe that they can attain a sense of security by locking themselves into a cell and avoiding all contact with people, things, ideas, and responsibilities. There is no greater mistake in the world. If only you would realise that solitary confinement is the worst possible punishment that a human being can inflict on another human being, you would also understand why women who inflict solitary confinement on themselves are so unhappy.

*The only real safety that exists in this world is the safety that comes from being thoroughly connected with men, women, and nature.* I wish you would imagine yourself as an island in the midst of a group of other islands. Give these other islands the names that you have applied to the dots on the rim of your wheel of life. Make it your business to build bridges from yourself to all these other islands. The stronger these bridges are and the wider they are and the more easily traffic moves between you and these forms of maturity the more secure and the happier you are going to be.

8. Try to avoid all such neurotic activities as *jealousy, envy, vanity, conceit, false humility, worry, the desire to domineer, to boast, to be indecisive, to procrastinate,* and the like. These are not only the expressions of an inadequate sense of self-esteem, but

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they are false and unsatisfactory methods of compensating for an inferiority complex. I have already told you how you can build up your self-esteem constructively.

If you find yourself torn by jealousy or spurred on by an abnormal ambition, if you find that you are supersensitive because of your pride, then perhaps it would be a good thing for you to take yourself to the nearest psychiatrist or mental hygiene clinic and see if you cannot find out the hidden subconscious reasons for these neurotic traits. I feel, however, that if you practise the constructive suggestions that I have given you, you will need no treatment at the hands of a psychiatrist. In a sense I have written this book, as well as my other books, with the avowed purpose of making my own profession unnecessary and obsolete! If all the people in the world had the courage to take chances, the imagination to make the most of their opportunities, the self-esteem necessary to serve their fellow men, there would be very little need for psychiatrists in the world!

9. When you have worked for these qualities, Mrs. Smith, you can begin to develop that indispensable ingredient of the good life, *a sense of humour*. Of course, it is quite impossible to tell anyone how to cultivate a sense of humour; but, like many other things, when you really know what a sense of humour

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is, it is easier to develop it. A great many estimable women believe that a sense of humour consists in the ability to tell stories or laugh at them. That is merely one unimportant aspect of the sense of humour. The sense of humour is the ability to see yourself as a small insignificant unit in the vast scheme of the cosmos, and still carry on with courage and optimism, with the avowed intention of making that little unit play its part in the grand strategy of our cosmos.

The sense of humour, in a word, is the ability to laugh at yourself. A marvellous example of a sense of humour is demonstrated in the story of a friend of mine, who, after working for many years in an office, decided to take the fatal step and get married. She knew very little about housekeeping and even less about cooking, but she started out with the thesis that a woman who was a university graduate and the manager of a large store, ought to be able to learn domestic skill in a very short time. She married a man who was an ardent fisherman, and on their honeymoon they went for a fishing trip. Here it was that her first test in cooking came. She decided on doughnuts, and her first doughnut could have been used as a miniature sample of a millstone! Was she down-hearted? No! With rare good humour she brought her husband her first batch of doughnuts,

and said, "John, don't you think these would make lovely bait? I've purposely made them very alluring for lake bass!"

If you have no sense of humour it is a certain sign that you are isolated from your fellow men. A woman who knows what is happening in Central Europe as well as what is happening in her pantry, a woman who has read Thomas Mann as well as her morning newspaper, a woman who interests herself in the tremendous problems of work, education, distribution, and consumption in this most interesting of all possible ages—that woman is not going to get herself into a panic because she has discovered another grey hair at her temples! A woman without a sense of humour is like a horse with blinkers. The horse sees a scrap of paper on the bridle path, and, because of the limitation of his vision, he thinks it is a roving iceberg and shies off in a panic. A woman without a sense of humour goes to pieces about a little nervous indigestion.

Can you imagine Marie Curie stopping work in her laboratory because one of the charwomen didn't greet her with sufficient courtesy? Can you imagine Jane Addams losing sleep because she wasn't invited to Mrs. Jones's bridge party? Can you imagine Ellen Wilkinson having a nervous breakdown because the secretary to the fourth under-secretary snubbed her



in a theatre lobby? What is it that gives these women a sense of humour? Nothing but the knowledge of the importance of their own work, the seriousness of their contribution to mankind. Contribute your bit, and you will never suffer from insults or discriminations or petty disappointments. Always have so much work planned ahead that any interruption or disappointment will simply leave you free to accomplish something that you have been wanting to do for a long time.

It isn't a bad idea to cultivate the knack of telling humorous stories. Nothing starts a conversation off better. You can keep a little black book into which you write down the good stories you have heard, until you get the "hang" of telling stories, and after a while the occasions themselves will spontaneously bring them forth. Many a woman owes her social success to the ability to tell an apt joke at the right time!

Go out into your back yard, Mrs. Smith, and look at the stars to-night. Try to envision the immensity of the cosmos in which you live. The light from some of those stars started to come to this earth so many millions of years ago that you would have to write a string of noughts round your dining-room table to get any conception of the time and the distance. To-morrow watch an ant hill, and try to imagine how

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important each ant feels in carrying out his appointed task. Better yet, get your doctor to show you a drop of ditch water under his microscope, and see what unknown world exist within that little microcosm.

If you can get some notion of the immensity of the universe in which you live, and if you can try to appreciate the intense struggle for existence that is going on all around you, then, Mrs. Smith, you will not stay awake all night because your husband has trumped your ace of spades, you will not get excited if your boy comes home from school with a bad report, you will not have a nervous breakdown because Amanda broke another of your good glasses. Presently you will realise that none of these things really matter, and you will wake up one morning to find that you have acquired a sense of humour!

10. Finally, Mrs. Smith, try to cultivate *the quality of zest*. Zest is the pepper and salt of our days, the appetiser of existence, the caviar of life. If you have ever seen a woman who wakes up in the morning and surveys the bleak day ahead of her as a day of drudgery and dissatisfaction, you will see a woman who has no zest for life. Zest may be developed in just one way. You have to make a plan for yourself and you have to work for the completion of that plan. With each little success you zest for

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living increases. You cannot ask for zest as a *premiss* of life. Zest and happiness are the *products* of the good life; if you like, they are the products of maturity.

From time to time a friend of mine makes the mistake of carrying out one or two of my suggestions and then telling me that he does not notice any change in his life. If you went to a bank and deposited a thousand pounds on Saturday morning and then applied on Monday morning for your interest, you would be met with a flat refusal. The interest in and zest for life do not accumulate after a brief, staccato investment. You have to continue for some time before you get any results.

A great many women are unhappy because they are putting the cart of happiness before the horse of hard work. They *demand* interest in life, happiness, zest, and joy of living, without making any investment in life itself. If you carry out my plan conscientiously, intelligently, graciously, and with imagination for a few months, I can almost guarantee that you will be happier and have more pep than before. But please do not go to the hospital and bring a sick friend a two-ounce jar of jelly and then write me that you have developed a deep social feeling and are surprised that you do not feel any happier or that your life is no more exciting than before. It requires

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a little more investment and a little more time than that. You must not bargain too sharply with life.

*The good life* is like a snowball. It accumulates happiness in almost intangible amounts as it rolls along. To-day you send a sick friend some flowers from your garden, to-morrow you help a woman with her child's dress, Saturday night you go out of your way to make your husband's favourite dessert, and Thursday morning you go to a town meeting and try to put through a reform for your community. Next week you learn how to swim or dance the tango, and the week after you take a chance and overcome an old fear; and presently you will find that the years are your friends and not your enemies.

Make your plan large enough to include successes that you do not dream about to-day. There is no reason why you should not learn to drive the car and take that cherished trip to the Lake District or the west coast of Scotland some day. Yes, go ahead and hire that typewriter and learn how to write your own stories! There is absolutely no good reason why you shouldn't learn how to sing, or organise an amateur dramatic society in your town! There are very few reasonable goals in life that cannot be attained by prayer and planning, by faith and hard work, by perseverance and good humour.

I hope that I have answered your questions to your

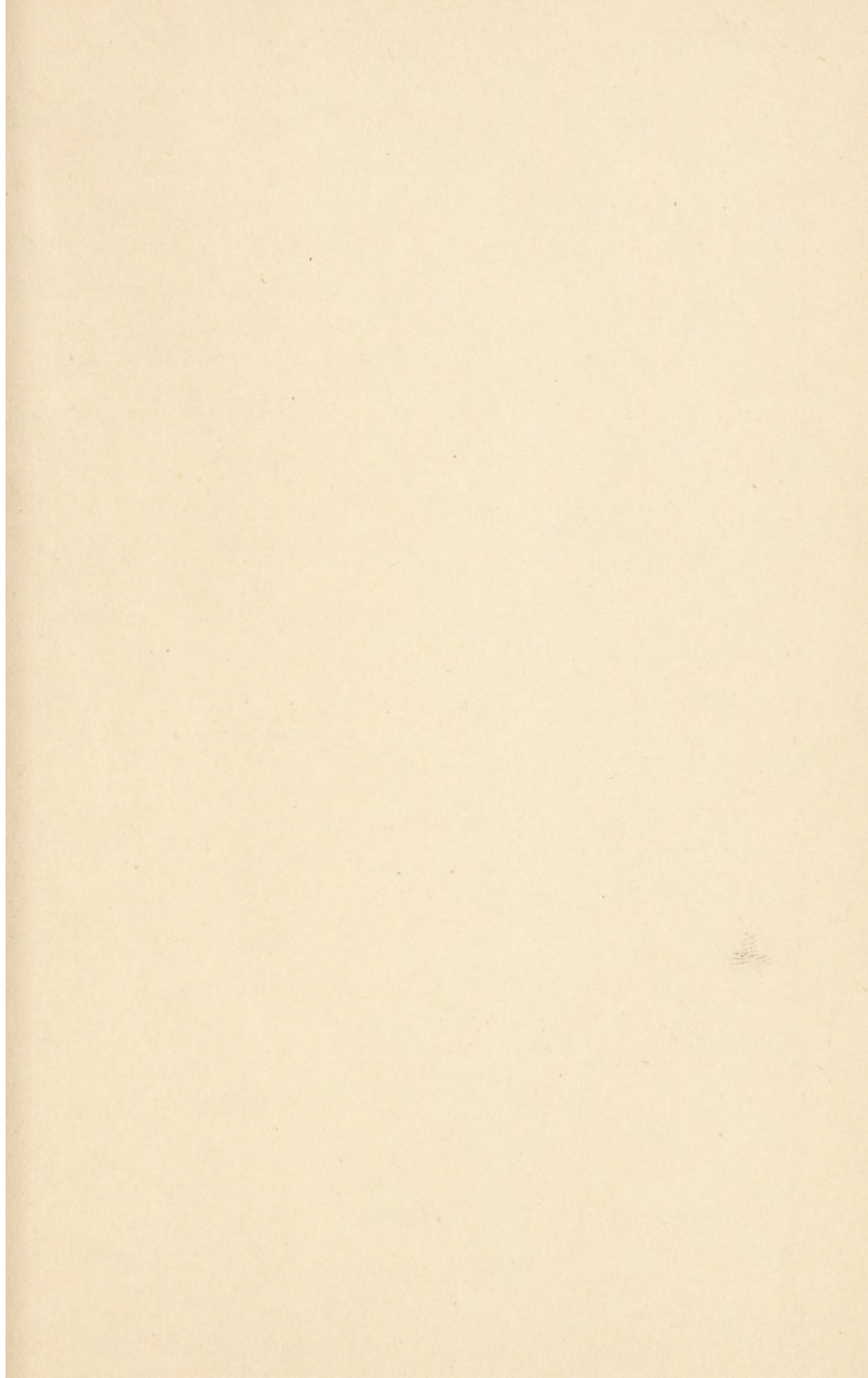
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satisfaction, Mrs. Smith, and that the few practical hints I have extended will be found useful and helpful in your pilgrim's progress to maturity. The defect in all books and all letters is that they cannot talk back, but I have made every effort to answer your objections almost before they have been made. I hope you have felt my deep interest in your problem and my sympathy for your difficulties. But, above all, I hope that you have sensed my faith in your ability to transform your middle decades into years of fulfilment and serenity, and that I have succeeded in communicating to you some spark of courage and enthusiasm for your task. For this is only the end of my book. It is the beginning of your life. Make it a good one!

Very sincerely,

W. BÉRAN WOLFE, M.D.

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