

Men, Women, and God

A. Herbert Gray

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MEN, WOMEN, AND GOD

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A DISCUSSION OF SEX QUESTIONS FROM THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

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

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

TO MY WIFE

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

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

Books of this sort have generally been addressed specially either to men or to women. I write to both alike because I am quite sure that until men and women understand and help each other, there is going to be no happy solution to the problems of sex. When they do so learn to

co-operate I believe we shall as a race find our way out into that larger and happier life which can only be ours when we have accepted the facts of sex and learnt to use them to the enrichment of human life and the glory of God.

A. HERBERT GRAY.

Glasgow, 1922.

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

Hebrew instinct declared that "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good." Christian instinct must repeat the verdict

with vastly increased conviction, for our humanity is such that the Son of God could wear it. He was not ashamed to call us brethren, and to be tempted like as we are. To suggest that in passion and in its exercise at the bidding of love there need be anything that is not holy, is to arraign the Creator. Sex love abused and misunderstood has indeed strewn the world with tragedies and disease. But sex love is going to remain. Not until we have learnt to make it an instrument for the perfection of life and the heightening of vitality can we hope to reach the life which the love of God designed for us; and to that we shall not attain until we have dared to acquire knowledge and through knowledge to attain to wisdom.

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

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

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

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

The hermits of the desert assumed that the way of true life lay in the

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

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

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

"Let us not always say,
'Spite of this flesh to-day,
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole.'
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now, than flesh helps
soul.'"

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

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

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

* * * * *

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

CHAPTER I

KNOWING THE FACTS

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

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

But though the detailed facts are all clean, and really easy to be understood, the manner in which they are conveyed into our minds is of vital importance. I do not think they can be fully conveyed through any printed page. They are too delicate for such handling. They are not

truly conveyed unless behind the mere words which express them there is a reverent soul that can impart the right tone and emphasis to them. I would quite gladly attempt to put them all down here could I only be assured that my words would only be read by men or women when alone and in a reverent mood. That being impossible I can only begin by insisting that they ought to be known. And this I can also do--I can assure all young people who read these pages that there is nothing whatever in the facts of the case to be afraid of--nothing that they cannot know with perfectly clean minds. There are no terrible mysteries in the matter. There are no horrors in normal sex life. The truth even about the ultimate intimacies of body between men and women is that when truly achieved they are beautiful, and holy, and happy.

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

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

Nor is it only for your own sake that you ought to know. If you want to

achieve helpful relations to men or women, and ultimately to achieve a right relation to husband or wife, you need to know the plain facts about our incarnate life. Men and women often make the right way of life more difficult for each other by mere ignorance. You need to know if you are to be really kind.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I know that it is easy to exaggerate the physical and mental evil effects of it. But what is beyond all question is that it produces bad

psychic consequences, and does so leave men out of conceit with themselves that when they realize that they have become victims to the habit their mental sufferings are often pitifully acute. Indeed, it is because my pity and sympathy have been so drawn out to many men I know that I cannot forbear to speak on behalf of those who may yet be saved from it. The facts about it are that the habit is often begun at an almost inconceivably early age. It is very often begun without any sense that it is wrong, and certainly without any knowledge of how evil it is. And once it has been begun, it is horribly hard to abandon. Uncounted good men have to confess to-day that in their younger days they never did achieve liberation in spite of constant efforts. Uncounted men have brought about in this way a certain perversion of their natures with regard to their sexual functions which clouded their lives for many years. And yet the cure for this situation is very simple and almost easy. The men who have completely escaped practically all testify that they owe their immunity to the kindly and timely advice of some wise senior. The habit is not natural, and therefore it is not hard never to begin it. If it has not been begun in boyhood a very little determination will keep an adult man from falling into it. And this means that in this case parents can, if they will, save the rising generation. Perhaps it is mothers chiefly who will have to render this service just because the habit is begun so very early,

while boys are still in very close association with their mothers. I may seem to be contradicting what I have just said about mere warnings, but I would certainly say that any sort of arresting warning is better than inaction in the matter. Yet even in this matter any kind of harsh warning is not the best way. A boy can be taught that there is a certain sanctity about certain parts of his body. He can be taught to treat them scrupulously and hardily. He can be given positive ideas which will save him, though I also believe that he ought to be told with definiteness to avoid this particular snare. I know of no other case in which a little wise love and timely vigilance may have such tremendous results in saving a child from future suffering and mistake. Does anything more need to be said to mothers who really love their sons!

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

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

be able to keep this whole matter clean for your children. Your generation has suffered much. The next need not. And remember that whatever doctors, teachers, and ministers may do for the nation, it must be parents who will save us in the long run.

You at least can get ready.

CHAPTER II

COMRADESHIP

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

Those who share the assumption on which this book is written will agree that an influence so strong, so profound, and so universal must have some fine significance in the divine scheme of things. It is an element in humanity which must affect the whole of life. To handle it rightly must be necessary if life as a whole is to succeed. And the first step towards a right handling of it is to accept the fact of it gladly and openly. The convention lingers that it is a little weak in a man to admit that he needs and craves woman's society, and that for a girl to admit the converse is not quite modest. And thus there is often a certain furtive element in the relations of the sexes between fifteen and twenty-five which is all of it a great pity. It is here that Mrs. Grundy has done us real injury. The poor old dear has been so fussy and nervous about it all. She has often tried to close the doors upon free and wholesome fellowship, and so has driven the young to find out other ways of meeting. But even she has not been able to keep the sexes apart. The truth is that the mutual relations of men and women in the realm of comradeship, and quite apart from marriage, may be so happy and enriching--so exhilarating and so bracing--that one may reverently say the whole arrangement of having divided mankind into two such groups, is one of the most splendid of the divine thoughts. For many a man the joy and worth of life depend largely upon women. The things he gets on his journey from his mother, his sisters, and his girl friends --from his wife, his daughters, and the women friends of later days are the golden things in life. And I know that many a woman would say a corresponding thing about the life career of a woman. That is God's plan--to make us dependent on one another for the stimuli, the inspirations, and the joys which prevent life from becoming drab and monotonous. "In the beginning God made them male and female," because He loved them. He made them gloriously different that they might enjoy and help each other.

It is one of the mysteries of history that for uncounted centuries man imagined that he only needed woman in her capacity as a wife and

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

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

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

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

None the less and although I belong to the older generation, I propose to offer some suggestions for this part of life. I cannot make much use of the word "flirting." It has nearly as many different meanings as Bolshevism. By some people it is applied to any high-spirited and happy intercourse between men and women, in which case it signifies only a right and good thing. Some people mean by it "playing at being in love," in which case it is a silly and unworthy occupation which saps the real love power in men and women. Others again mean by it the whole bundle of silly and sentimental manners which some men and some women assume when in the presence of the other sex, and in that sense of the word flirting means just exactly the foolish thing that common sense would declare it to be. What I am quite sure of is that success in this comradeship between the sexes depends upon the discovery of a right way which lies between the coldness which is the negation of good fellowship, and the undue familiarity which is both dangerous and undignified. We men have in the past been accustomed to boast that we will go just as far towards familiarity as women will allow, and have declared that this whole matter is one which women must regulate. Male opinion on the whole used to regard a man as something less than a sport who would not take liberties wherever he saw they would not be resented. To use any sort of compulsion was indeed held to be ungentlemanly, but short of that men have recognized no compulsion of honor bidding them refrain from familiarities. "That's the girl's affair," they have often said. But this is really a flagrant case of the way in which we men deceive ourselves and assume positions that are both dishonest and cruel. I call this particular one dishonest because it is absurd for us to pretend that our expectations and desires have no influence on girls, and that therefore we have no responsibility for events. Of course girls will tend to give what men in general persist in asking. They are just as human as we are. Our conventional assumption that they are always mistresses of the situation--models of perfect self-mastery and understanding--is ridiculous and unkind. It is the age-long injustice which men have practiced towards women to pretend that they are creatures without passion and by nature always in control of their emotions. We know it is not true, and yet we act on the pretence that it is. And I call this position of ours cruel because there is no reason whatever why we should try to lay on women the whole burden of refining and controlling our mutual relations. Why should we not take our share of the task? Since history began we have asked many things of women, and then kept our real respect for those who refused them--a mean and cowardly attitude. Women are not angels and it is mere sentimental nonsense to pretend that they are. But they can be splendid companions when men help them towards the attaining of that relationship. Often we have seemed to want of them only sentimental dalliance, with the result that they often grant it. But many women would rather pass men by altogether than meet them in that way, although most really long for some relationship that will call into exercise the mental, aesthetic, and spiritual powers of both men and women. Indeed there is ground for this charge against both men and women, that often in social intercourse with one another they suspend the exercise of the finer parts of their natures. We have all known men of great intellectual gifts and wide experience who when "the ladies" appear promptly put on the garb of mere triflers. And we have also known women with very real literary, or artistic, or intellectual gifts who treat men primarily as beings to be played with. And so do many people miss the enriching joys of companionship, and make social intercourse petty and wearisome. I believe most women want to know whatever is big and strong and efficient in men and not merely to find

out whether they are good at badinage. And though many men think they are afraid of serious and clever women, they really in their hearts want to discover the responsible and sincere qualities in the personalities of girls and not merely the surface ones.

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

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

And here I think I ought to put down for the sake of girls a fact of which they are often ignorant. When you allow men to embrace and kiss you--even when you allow them lesser familiarities--you may go your way thinking no more about it and undisturbed. The whole thing may not really have stirred you. But with men it is not so. Often by such things tumults are raised in them whereby the way of self-control and chastity is made cruelly difficult. Only some of you do it, and you have done it generally in ignorance. When you realize the truth you will see that it is unkind--possibly you may even realize that it is dangerous. And yet I do not want to overstate even this point. I heard lately of a girl who, having been told the truth, became so nervous that she was afraid to sit within five feet of a man and found general social intercourse spoiled for her. There are no dangers for men, but on the contrary there is very great help for men, in the society of girls who will meet them in a spontaneous, natural, and friendly way. It is when the girls who should be their natural companions are found to be prudish and stiff that men are all too apt to look for other girls who will at least be friendly and often much more than friendly. All that I want girls to know is that there are dangers on the horizon of this part of life, and to ask them to use their wisdom and their common sense. What I ask of men is that they should cease meanly trying to avoid responsibility in this connection, and should face their half of the problem. For the problem is worth solving. Happy, free, wholesome

companionship between men and women is a bracing and splendid thing. We cannot possibly solve the whole problem of human life till we have attained to it.

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

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

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

CHAPTER III

LOVE

The crowning fact about sex is that it makes possible the experience of being in love. I am sure that all possibility of a right handling of

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. And then, fifthly, at some point in its growth love summons passion into life. What has been hitherto an emotion of the heart becomes also a tumultuous activity of the whole being, and love having mastered the whole incarnate nature of each in turn drives the two together in that oneness of the flesh which is the decree of God. No doubt it is just here that the compulsions of civilized society set a serious problem for ardent lovers. Primitive men probably knew nothing of a period of engagement, and lovers would proceed to become wholly wedded just as soon as nature laid her compelling hand upon them. But it is our glory that we are not simply the tools of natural forces. We belong to the directorate in this life, and even on the force of love we can impose times and seasons. But when the right time does come, then lovers who have already been attaining to union of heart and mind express their passion also in the union of their bodies, and this wonderful experience, when it does so enter life, is realized as something sacramental. It is literally and exactly an expression in the terms of the body of something which is already a spiritual fact. Nothing satisfies real love except this complete mingling of two personalities. It is not satisfied without physical intimacy, and yet physical intimacy alone is not enough. That which is satisfied by mere physical intimacy is not love. The full human passion which alone deserves that name calls also for intimacies of mind and spirit--for the interplay of two personalities through the whole stretch of their powers. But it cannot be too strongly said that on the terms I have indicated the ultimate bodily union of two lovers is a beautiful and happy thing. It is felt to be something with large spiritual consequences. In some mysterious way it really does bind souls together. Each knows that henceforth he or she is bound to the other for life, and a man is

usually moved by a glowing sense of reverent gratitude to the woman who has thus trod with him the strange paths of that new country. Considered apart from love, such an experience may seem to be gross, because apart from love it is gross. But as an incident in the communion of two loyal hearts it is realized as a pure and natural thing. Through it the flesh is caught up into harmony with the spirit and is thereby redeemed. A certain new balance and repose of being is attained whereby a whole personality will experience a wonderful sense of liberation. [Footnote: I do not think the creative instinct often enters into consciousness at this point. It does so with some women, but with very few men. As a rule the real content of the experience is just an ardent desire in each for utter nearness to the other. It is the expression of their love that they desire. It is each other that they love--not as yet any third person.]

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

Its most obvious result is that it compels a man to work, and to work hard. We are mostly born slackers. We should like to take many holidays, and if we were left alone we would do it. But parentage binds us to the wheel. We discover that we have got to face the grind, because the plain alternative is that the bairns would starve. And so we do it. Of course at times we rebel. You may hear men every now and then complaining half cynically and half humorously that, having once been indiscreet enough to fall in love, they were thenceforth swept along by rapids till at last they found themselves involved in all the paraphernalia of family life from perambulators to doctor's bills. But there are few men who do not know in their hearts that the toils have been the making of them. If love led only to delights, it would ruin us. It is because it leads also to heavy labor that it makes us. It is because I see this so clearly that I am not so much distressed as some people are over the fact that motherhood also means very hard work. [Footnote: No doubt in our disordered social life it often means far

too much work. No doubt thousands of mothers are simply crushed by it. But it is not a good thing when mothers can evade even reasonably hard work.] The great discoveries of the moral and spiritual worlds are only made in and through work--yes, and sometimes through work that is sheer grind. There is no other road to moral or spiritual maturity either for man or woman. I have this deeply rooted objection to inherited wealth--that it makes possible an escape from this redeeming discipline, and by removing one of the normal consequences of love often leads to the spoiling of love.

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

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

It is life stories of this sort which alone reveal the meaning and purpose of God in making the sex interest so almighty and central in life. We do not understand love till we have thus looked on towards

the end. When it is allowed to run its true course it does in this way redeem life.

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

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

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

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

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

Unreturned Love

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER IV

FALLING IN LOVE AND GETTING ENGAGED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER V

OUR MORAL STANDARDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Reasons for the Christian Standard

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

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

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

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

with the woman he loves, and self-abuse is ultimately a serious evil just because it defiles the mind.

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

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

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

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

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

Let me answer the last query first. I do not think the union of true lovers apart from marriage is impure. I believe that such lovers make a very serious mistake--a mistake that may turn out to have been cruel. I

believe that society is utterly right in condemning such unions, and that those who really understand will always refuse to enter on them. But impure is not the word to apply to them. They are clean and beautiful compared to the bodily intimacies of those who marry without love. And yet I do not think that even emotionally they can ever be perfect. Sexual intimacy is not the perfect and sacramental thing which it is meant to be unless both parties come to it with free and untroubled minds, feeling that what they do is a right and happy thing. But in the unions of unmarried persons there generally lurks some half-hidden sense of shame. Some part of the being of one or the other really endorses society's standards, and even love cannot dispel the shadows thus created.

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

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

All this may be accepted as establishing a case for permanent unions as

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

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

I assume that I am addressing honest minds that wish to handle the issues of life sincerely and wisely, and to them I am sure it must be worth pointing out that it can never be right for individuals to order their lives on principles which could not be given a universal application. I can well understand a passionate couple being quite sure that they will hold to one another throughout life, though they be in no way legally tied. I can imagine that many such couples would resent as a profanity the mere suggestion that they could ever want to part. But imagine what society would become if legal ties were abolished. You and your man or woman may be quite sure that you would never part, but you know that thousands would. Couples would set out on the joint life with little thought, and allow the first painful misunderstanding to part them. Many men would shake off their obligations almost as soon as they found they were becoming heavy. Both men and women would pass from one temporary union to another, mutilating their better natures in the process. Thousands of women would be left in helpless loneliness. Tens of thousands of children would go uncared for and neglected. The picture becomes more horrible the more carefully you look into its details. And as you look you begin to see the real value of our moral standard. It is not an instance of the fussiness of Mrs. Grundy. It is not an instance of slave morality imposed upon free people. It is not one of the arbitrary dicta of a tyrannical Church. It is rather the embodiment of the wisdom learnt

through ages of varied and often tragic experience. It is an attempt to conserve for each rising generation the possibility of the best in the field of sexual experience. It does point out the way of happy, healthy, and complete life.

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

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

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

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

I cannot, however, believe it to be a Christian interest to maintain the mock appearance of a marriage when (if ever) all moral content has disappeared from it. Christianity calls for an unlimited forgiveness. But when forgiveness and patience have failed and either husband or

wife has found another connection or has even ceased to have any vital relation to his or her partner in marriage, then I feel that that marriage is morally dead. And dead things should be buried if possible.

There remains the question of remarriage.

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

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

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

CHAPTER VI

A MAN'S STRUGGLE

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

Let me attempt first of all to clear away certain mischievous delusions about the subject. It is actually believed in many quarters, and half believed in many more, that continence is bad for a man. It is only "natural," men often say, for an adult man to satisfy his desires, and

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

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

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

But at all costs let us be sure that we live full lives. I heard lately of a man who was so constantly assailed by sexual cravings, and so convinced that in him they were abnormally strong, that he went to

consult a psychotherapist. When he had been fully examined it was found that in him sexual cravings were really rather weaker than in the average man, but that in the house of his life they had no rivals, so that he imagined them to be almost all-powerful.

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

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

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

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

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

Further still, a great many broad stories have in them a minimum of humor and a maximum of dirt. By a strange perversity men who are scrupulously clean in body and who have both intellectual and artistic

capacities will stoop to defile their tongues with such things. There are few colleges or offices where public opinion entirely forbids them. But they do a deadly work none the less. They cling about the mind with fatal tenacity. They surround the subject of sex with unclean associations. They defile the inner house of life. And it is in that inner house of thought and imagination that the real battle of purity is fought.

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

A similar thing is true of pictures. Some day we shall as a race recover the sense that the form of a woman is one of the most beautiful things in all God's earth. We shall look at the great statues and pictures which do justice to that beauty with no other feelings than thankfulness and joy. But there are very few men who can do that today. What has made it impossible is the existence of pictures of a suggestive kind, which are handed round in furtive ways, and are literally drenched with unclean associations. For which reason it is a real point in connection with a man's struggle that he should have nothing to do with suggestive pictures. Many years ago I had a friend with great intellectual power. He held a position of great responsibility and was widely respected. He also had conspicuous literary gifts, and knew how to work hard and well. But he brought to me the greatest shock I have ever had in my life. When he was well on in the forties he suddenly fell with a crash, and had to fly the country. He was never able to show his face in England again, and died a diseased exile in a foreign land. And all because he had been overtaken by sexual sin of an indescribably shameful kind. The shock he gave me was one of sorrow, for he had been a friend. But it was still more one of amazement that such a thing could have happened to such a man. Later I came to understand. When his effects were being sold there was found in his study cupboard a great pile of indecent French plays and novels. That was what did it. In secret he had for years debauched his mind, and inevitably in the end his thoughts brought forth fruit. That experience taught me once for all how certain it is that the inner world of thoughts is the real place where a man attains or misses purity.

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

interloping thoughts or imaginations to run riot there.

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

We are so made that religion is a divine possibility for all of us. Indeed it is more than a possibility: it is a necessity if life is ever to seem complete. Without it all other things fail in the end to hold off attacks of disappointment and ennui. Because we were made with the capacity for it, we cannot be content without it. It may take many years for a man to discover that without religion life is going to be a failure; and it is that discovery that constitutes for many the tragedy of middle life. In early days the varied interests of life carry many through in some sort of satisfaction. And yet even with the young the life that is without religion is of necessity an unbalanced life. Parts of the man or woman concerned are inactive, and the other parts occupy too much of the stage. Till an interest in God--that greatest of all interests--has entered a man's life attention is too much concerned with other things. Till the spirit is awake the body obtrudes itself too much on consciousness. And thus a man fights the battle of

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