

CHAPTER XII
SETTLING DOWN

Texas

DEAR MRS SANGER

I wonder if you could help me solve my problems too It is not wrong teaching that causes my aversions to sexual relations with my husband for I had no teaching whatever Never the less my indifference to same is about to disrupt our home—I love my husband and desire very much to enjoy martial relations with him but find no real pleasure in it and never have though I have endured it for eight years and have borne two fine children For their sakes, can t you help me preserve our home?

MRS W H M

CHAPTER XII

SETTLING DOWN

What is it men in women do require?

The lineaments of satisfied desire.

What is it women do in men require?

The lineaments of gratified desire

—*William Blake*

THE honeymoon is the period during which the young wife and husband establish mutual adjustment and spiritual harmony

The period which follows is more difficult

The problem during the first two or three years of married life is how to keep romance alive in spite of the influence of the prosaic demands of everyday life How to make love and romance the crowning power to success instead of a hindrance

The first few years of married life are difficult because of the multitude of pressing problems they thrust upon young wives and husbands

First of all these years are usually ones of great economic stress particularly for hus

178 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

bands whose salaries are small The young man is making a great effort to establish himself in his work his business his profession He often needs all the capital he has to get himself established If he is ambitious he is putting tremendous energy in his work hoping thus to provide comforts and luxuries for his wife and the family to be

If this is the case the husband is liable to fall into the tired business man psychology to return to his home in the evening worn out by his work or his struggles during the day for an economic footing Love should increase his efficiency self assurance and ambition Or if his economic problem is already solved and there are no serious financial worries the young couple may seek hectic diversions in what is known as the younger married set as though afraid to remain in each other's company This endless gregariousness of social gaiety dinners and country clubs is often a symptom of no community of deep interests and often it gives rise to temptations quarrels and jealousies which unite to destroy the romance of a couple for whom during the honeymoon life was full of promise

Or happiness in marriage during these years may be wrecked by fear—in many young wives the fear of pregnancy. This fear becomes a reality. She becomes a mother before she is ready to have a family. Young, full of life, entitled to develop to maturity this love and romance many young wives who enter matrimony with bright dreams of the future find themselves all too soon slaves to children slaves to poverty slaves to the never ending rounds of household toil. Romance cannot live or bloom where fear and discontent thrive like weeds.

This is the great central problem of the young married couple and is discussed in a later chapter.

The important aim during the earlier years of marriage must be to live out this romance to discover in marital love a source of renewed energy and vitality a reservoir of self-confidence mutual aid and spiritual and physical vigor.

In order to bring this about mutual love must be protected cultivated rejuvenated and constantly refreshed. While it must be made a part of the whole of life it should be looked upon as the source the ever freshening foun

180 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

tain from which strength is derived It is for this reason that like all growing organisms, love must be tenderly cherished and cultivated if it is going to bear the fruit of continued happiness

Certain times certain periods, must therefore be held sacred to love Every outward gesture every ceremonious act, every formality through which this deep inner love finds external expression must be carefully observed not merely as an empty duty, but as a symbol

I am not one of those who believe that once embarked on the sea of matrimony all personal boundaries should be cast aside or that personal privacy should be discarded

Easy familiarity invasion of personal and individual rights or impositions on the good nature of those with whom one lives in the most intimate associations—such actions as these growing into habits are bound to cause the greatest unhappiness It is therefore advisable to arrange the living arrangements in so far as it is possible and practical—so neither husband nor wife may slip unconsciously into a relationship that wears down the velvety surface of romance and love to that of threadbare habit

Petty quarrels, bickerings and disagreements over details non-essential may become a habit. When they do, a separation, at least a spiritual separation has already taken place. And a separation of the heart is more injurious to love than a physical separation. Petty quarrels inevitably lead to more serious ones. They may be patched up, patched up again and again, yet each quarrel is a mar on the perfect weaving of two lives, which marriage should be in reality as well as in theory.

More tact is needed in adjusting the relationship between husband and wife than in less intimate relations. Tact is quite compatible with frankness and honesty. A certain amount of individual privacy should be made possible in every home, for both husband and wife. In these days of high rents and crowded apartments, this is not seemingly possible. Yet if this need is foreseen and discussed frankly at the beginning, if this right is openly recognized, misunderstanding may later be avoided.

Let the wife keep alive the innate modesty natural to a normal woman. Do not allow the performance of daily acts of hygiene in the husband's presence, dressing and undressing,

182 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

hair curling teeth cleaning etc for careless exposure of body lessens the effect its beauty has on the husband Try to avoid that slump in the relationship, where each "gets used to all those little tendernesses and charms which at first were a source of stimulation and delight Keep intact all the gifts of love for the great drama Don't scatter heedlessly the charms that should be reserved for a special time and place See that your love life is the source of your health life

Those who have failed in marital life to discover the inexhaustible source of energy and life giving power to be derived from happiness in marriage have at their command only a small part of the power which they actually possess and which is released through sexual expression

Energies which slumber deep within one's nature are called forth into human activity by this power of love This is true in a real sense and in no mere poetic or sentimental fashion

Unhappy people are notoriously listless and inefficient or nervous in the workaday world And the maximum of happiness and poise is attainable only from the reservoir of love, the communion of sex

The man who has found enduring and *cumulating* happiness in his marriage relation, who has freed himself of the hampering inhibitions that destroy his confidence in himself, and has found increased strength and courage in this living relationship, is spurred on to make full use of his mental and physical resources

LIVING life to the full, exercising the full emotional life one is less liable to disease, neurasthenia or depression

But sex love and happiness in marriage, I repeat, do not just happen This love is a plant that must be carefully nurtured and cultivated

Eternal vigilance is the price of marital happiness Therefore the young husband must never let his relation with his wife sink to the level of routine habit, of everyday monotony He will refreshen the romance by gifts and surprises No matter how limited his income, no matter how tiring his work, he will never place a higher value on the external things of life than upon this, the eternal source of his power and strength

Men in many cases destroy the marriage relation by allowing it to drift into a sort of

184 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

master-slave relation—the relation out of which modern marriage has at last managed to elevate itself. But the master-slave relation is sometimes as much the wife's fault as the husband's.

Therefore in the initial conference when such things are decided unpleasant or disagreeable tasks and household duties should not be turned over to the wife. Such tasks shared equally become unimportant. Bearing them alone they become burdens.

The nuptial relation must be kept romantic. When either feels that fatigue or monotony is beginning to enter the relation he or she must take the initiative of intensifying and rejuvenating it, instead of merely complaining of the behavior of the other. There are a hundred possible ways of breaking the habitual routine of surprising the mate into a fresh realization that he or she is taking too much for granted.

Every human being—it is one of the weaknesses of human nature—naturally tends to form habits. This is perhaps truer of the marriage relation than of any other. And it is habit that kills romance rather than faithlessness or fickleness.

Love like every other function must be exercised translated into action in order that it may grow and develop. Most people are too likely nowadays to suppress the outward expression of this emotion. Constantly inhibited or suppressed the emotion dies a long lingering death. Therefore since love is the most valuable emotion given to human beings they must seek to express it. Unclamp this emotion let it have full healthy exercise. Let it express itself in words in gestures in actions. Dramatize your love whenever possible however possible. It will repay you many times and it will grow strong according to the exercise it is given.

Do not be afraid to take the brakes off your heart to surrender yourself to love. Neither spiritually nor physically can love thrive when it is subject always to fear tension and strain. That is why there should be more of the spirit of play in the marital relation.

It would be a good rule to make at the beginning of marriage and to follow with the same regularity that is given over to personal hygiene or any of the wholesome normal functions of life that a certain number of hours daily should be given over to this intimate

186 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

seclusion of husband and wife during which they may play together to delight in each other's presence to leave aside the duties and thoughts of business and expenses to probe beneath the outward surface of each other's nature and thus to arrive at a full understanding of each other and the nature of the spiritual bond which unites one with the other

Lovers in their play says Havelock Ellis are moving amongst the highest human activities alike of the body and of the soul They are passing to each other the sacramental chalice of that wine which imparts the deepest joy men and women can know They are subtly weaving the invisible cords that bind husband and wife together more truly and more firmly than the priest of any church'