E 892

THE BACHELOR WOMAN AND HER PROBLEMS

By the Same Author

STRAIGHT TALKS TO WOMEN
SEXUAL PROBLEMS OF TO-DAY
HOW TO ENLIGHTEN OUR CHILDREN
MATERNITY AND INFANCY
HEALTH AND SICKNESS IN THE NURSERY
REMINISCENCES
ETC.

THE BACHELOR WOMAN AND HER PROBLEMS

By

DAME MARY SCHARLIEB

M.D., M.S., LL.D. Ed., J.P.

WILLIAMS & NORGATE LTD

38 Great Ormond Street

London, W.C.1

PUBLISHED IN MCMXXIX
MADE & PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY UNWIN BROTHERS LTD
LONDON AND
WOKING

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

THERE ought to be a reason for every book that is written, some motive for the expenditure of time and labour; and this motive may be either a desire to teach, a hope of amusing, or of cultivating the æsthetic sense of the public.

Among the books written with the intention of teaching, there is a whole library that has been produced within the last twenty years having for its object the instruction of women in the care of maternity and infancy. Another collection of somewhat similar books has been produced dealing with older children, adolescents, and young people. But amongst these many volumes there are few, if any, dedicated to the promotion of the welfare of the single woman. Yet the single woman—*la feme sole* as the lawyers call her—exists in relatively large numbers, and the proportion of these citizens to their married sisters appears likely to increase rather than to diminish. The whole subject is one of great importance to the welfare of the nation, not only to the unmarried women themselves, but also to their married sisters, their brethren, and the children of the nation.

Unfortunately, there is no doubt that *les femes soles* are neglected by the men and women who produce the literature which is intended to promote the welfare of the public. It is impossible not to understand the public enthusiasm for motherhood and for childhood. The very picture galleries make their appeal for appreciation largely because they include so many glorious representations of the Holy Mother and the Eternal Child; and, apart from the religious side of this appeal, there is a strong universal suggestion made to one of the primary instincts and passions of human nature.

It is true that in the great picture galleries of Europe there are many portraits of virgin saints, but probably they are presented to us in all their vivid colouring, not so much because they were virgins, but for the saintliness with which they met the circumstances of their lives. For instance, we have St. Catherine of Siena because she was called the Bride of Christ, St. Catherine of Alexandria because she was broken at the wheel on account of her refusal to marry. Another favourite subject of mediæval art was St. Ursula with her ten thousand maidens, because these young women (the daughter of the king and her attendants) fled from the court of her father in order to kneel at the feet of the Pope and obtain his sovereign permission to remain in virginity.

It is to be observed that these beautiful women were immortalized by the artists not because they were virgins, but because the circumstances of their lives were so dramatic. So that in looking at these masterpieces of art our sense of the value of motherhood and our recognition of the infinite purity and unconscious dignity of infancy lifts us into a higher appreciation and respect for the wonderful and beautiful conception of the intimate relation existing between the mother and her child. Again and again in glorious form and in glowing colours the gospel of the infancy is preached in every considerable collection of the works of art in Italy and France, in Germany, Holland, and England. But whether it be the Pitti or the Uffizi, whether it be Dresden, Leipzig, Paris, or London, we look in vain for any representation of the unmarried woman immortalized as the type of an enormous class of women selected and portrayed simply because she was unmarried; and yet these unmarried women are among the saviours of society, which owes much of its safety to their renunciation of status and of joy. Of course there are not wanting examples, and noble examples too, of *la feme sole*, but she was not painted because she was unmarried; that was looked on as an accidental circumstance, and Florence Nightingale with her lamp, and Elizabeth Fry with her prisoners, are preserved for the

admiration of all future generations, not because the one was unmarried and the other married, but because the one was the soldiers' friend and the other was a great social reformer.

It seems, however, as if a new era were opening before us, and that the present day may be considered as an epoch marking the rise into political, social, and scientific value of women. If this be the case, and inasmuch as the married woman has generally her own special duties to discharge, the newer spheres of work to which women are called will be recognized as especially the vocation of the unmarried.

Undoubtedly in ancient times, and well through the Middle Ages of history, the unmarried woman enjoyed a position and a reputation which had a dignity and a value of their own. We find evidences of this both in sacred and profane story. For instance in Jephthah's daughter, who perhaps belonged to a band of young women sworn to preserve their virginity in the hope that from one of their number the Messiah might be born. Again, we have records of the vestal virgins. The laws of their community were very strict, and if broken were punishable by burial alive. Later on in Christian days there were orders of virgins vowed to the service of Christ, who, however, are not to be mistaken for the religious orders of later days.

After the disruption of the Church the position of women altered somewhat, and the value of *la feme sole* suffered an eclipse. Her merits were unnoticed, defects exaggerated, until her status became very poor, and the description of her as "old maid" gave rise to no dignified or loving affection for the unmarried woman either in public or in the home circle. Eventually the hour struck for the rehabilitation of the unmarried woman, and from the days of Mary Wolstonecraft and Florence Nightingale it gradually became evident that the greater leisure and independence of the unmarried woman's position gave her certain advantages which were denied to her married sister.

Probably some who read this book will say, "But why is it called 'The Bachelor Woman'? We have always understood that bachelor women are women living by themselves, or possibly with one or two comrades in rooms or in flats much the same as many young men live, but in this book more or less description is given to the lives of women some of whom truly live the bachelor life, but the larger number of whom are still with their families working in settlements, hospitals, schools, and colleges, while a not inconsiderable fraction of the whole are domiciled in convents and other religious houses." The truth is that it is exceedingly difficult to find the

title that suits all the women for whose sake the book has been written. Such a title as "The Unmarried Woman" was considered by some people as really meaning the unmarried mother, and with her sad history the book has no connection. It was thought that "The Spinster Woman and Her Problems" might be a true description of the subject-matter, but one or two ladies were very unwilling to accept the old-world appellation of "spinster," while the absolutely legal definition of *la feme sole* did not appear to be rightly understood by the majority of my friends. Finally the present title was suggested and accepted, *faute de mieux*.

This, perhaps, is a convenient moment for a few words about the real, true bachelor woman. She, too, has her problems, and it appears probable that these problems arise from the fact that what usually turns out to be a transitory condition in the case of young men frequently proves to be permanent in the case of young women. This is to be regretted because the intellectual and moral circumstances of the bachelor woman would very generally tend to a want of development of her character, and, indeed, to an over intellectualization. It is not a bad arrangement for student days when all the time available and all the concentration possible are needed for the young woman's preparation for her life-work.

At that time she needs just what a young man needs. She requires to be warmed, clothed, fed, and lighted without any personal trouble. Therefore the various forms for bachelor existence are convenient and good for her, but such a method of life makes no appeal to her affections. There is practically no one needing her assistance; father and mother, sisters and brothers, husband and children do not, in a sense, exist for her. Care free she may be, and free, too, she is from all the varying, changing, kaleidoscopic circumstances of life which are absolutely necessary to the perfection of character. It may not even be a selfishness *à deux*, because it may be herself, and herself only, in her rooms or in her "digs" as she calls them. Probably it is under these circumstances that the foundations are laid for the peculiar atrophy and withering of sentiment, joy, and unselfishness which ought to be her inheritance when adolescence is passed, and she has to work and be judged by the standards of unselfishness.

THE BACHELOR WOMAN AND HER PROBLEMS

Chapter I

THOSE WHO ARE BORN UNFIT FOR MARRIAGE

FOLLOWING the plan that we have prescribed for ourselves, the first group of Unmarried Women must be those who for some reason are congenitally unfit for marriage or for parenthood. It is but a small group, for so great is the genius of the human race that almost any deficiency or deformity can be remedied or in some way ignored when so great and valuable a function as wifehood and maternity is at stake.

Thus in the case of conjoined twins, such as the Siamese Brothers, Millie-Christine, and other dual individuals, a way has been found so to arrange as to permit of impregnation and of parturition. Women so handicapped have been carefully considered by the Eugenics Society, and, although with a certain fear of reproducing the deformity, marriage has been found possible in

the majority of cases. Indeed, in the case of conjoined twins there is no reason why the trouble should recur. It is different where there is a definite deformity owing to deficiency or redundancy of a certain part of the body, as, for instance, in cases of club-foot, club-hands, and supernumerary or deficient parts. In such cases there is more tendency to the reproduction of the deformity or deficiency in the next generation. Here the laws of Mendelism and Heredity tend to come in, but even here there is much scope for error, and we are constantly learning that defects are more likely to be reproduced than are diseased conditions, which, after all, must be regarded as acquired characteristics.

We are gradually learning to believe that physical disabilities are both more and also less transmissible than they have been held to be hitherto. It is but a few years that both men and women feared to marry a partner in whose family one or more members had died of cancer. Now, although we are still unfortunately without any real knowledge of the true nature of cancer, we have by experience learned certain important truths. For instance, that married couples, one of whom has this dread disease, may live together as husband and wife through the months and years that may elapse between the recognition of the disease and its final end, but it is not found

that such husbands and wives convey the disease to each other.

Secondly, it is a matter of common knowledge that although surgeons and nurses must necessarily be more exposed to infection, if cancer be infectious, yet in spite of handling such patients, of operations, and of the many cuts and pricks that are accidentally inflicted in the course of duty, surgeons and nurses have not a higher percentage of cancerous trouble than has the community in general.

In the case of tuberculosis, children are not born with tubercle, as they probably would be were it directly transmissible from mother to child, but we find the children suffering from tubercle from somewhere about six months of age, as they would be likely to do if tubercle be infectious and not hereditary. The fact that children do suffer severely from tuberculosis during the later periods of infancy appears to indicate that by that time they have been infected by their mother's breath, by her sputa, and by living at close quarters in rooms which must be teeming with the bacilli of tubercle, and whose wants are constantly being served by the same dirty rag that receives the diseased secretions from the mother's lungs and air passages. In pointing out this frequent source of infantile infection, care must be taken not to minimize the frequent

occurrence of infection of the throat, stomach, and the intestinal tract by tuberculous milk.

It is common knowledge that many young couples have hesitated to marry, fearing that they may transmit to their offspring insanity or a tendency to insanity. There are forms of insanity which are due to syphilis or to some other disease which interferes with the healthy development of the brain, but it is scarcely probable that the overmastering selfishness or the terrible want of balance which frequently appears among the early signs of mental unsoundness should be directly transmissible. Rather would it appear to be likely that some moral cause must be looked for in such cases, and that the absence of a high moral standard in ancestors may be responsible for its appearance even to the third and fourth generation. As a writer on surgery some time ago remarked, a tendency to wooden legs is certainly observable in some families, but the explanation of that fact is to be found in the martial ardour that has been transmitted, and leads son and grandson to the field of battle. In other words, it would appear probable that greater care in mating, and the knowledge that the integrity of both body and mind is generally expected and held essential, would lead young men and women trying to keep "fit" to cultivate their powers and to respect the laws of Hygiene.

The question ought not to be, "Is such an individual attractive to me?" but rather, "Will such an individual make a good partner throughout life and a good parent to our children?" In saying this one does not want to be understood as ignoring the part that love ought to play in marriage. The prudent choice of a suitable partner should be added to, not substituted for, the quasi-divine influence of mutual love. It is surely asking for trouble to marry an individual who is quite evidently unsuitable for the duties of parenthood. From this it would appear that individuals contemplating marriage ought to be much more careful than they now are as to the fitness of their partners, and while we know well that human beings are not to be mated like sweet-peas or white mice, there should nevertheless be shown suitable caution in the selection of partners.

In mating, one of the first considerations must be that there is not too wide a disparity in the matter of age; and although there are people who may be considered older or younger than their birth certificate would have us believe, a great disparity—such, for instance, as twenty years—is a decided handicap to married happiness. Twenty years would be a disparity likely to cause an undue difference in habits, tastes, and affections, and wifehood might easily degenerate into a status too greatly resembling that of the nurse

or the handmaiden. For instance, where a young girl marries a middle-aged man, their ideas as to public duty or private amusement might naturally be found likely to differ too greatly.

It is also well in selecting a partner to be careful that any couple shall not be too widely dissimilar as to status, education, and culture. It is scarcely possible to imagine married happiness in the case of a couple, one cannot say a pair, one member of which is European and the other a South Sea Islander, because hopes, joys, sorrows, and ideas would in such a couple lead to a disparity that could not be harmonized.

In considering the suitability of a partner to the marriage contract, as people ought to do when they contemplate marriage, it has to be remembered that every individual consists of body, mind, and spirit, and that any part of the threefold nature may be defective from birth or from infancy; also, it is true that defects or deformities which appear to be slight at birth or during infancy may become not only more evident, but more incapacitating as time goes on. Thus in the first page of *John Halifax, Gentleman*, the doctor gives a favourable reply to an old nurse's question as to the perfection of a new-born female child. "No," she said, "it is not all right, doctor," and she points out to his understanding eye what looks like a very small deviation in the line of the child's

spinal column. That apparently trivial deviation announced to both doctor and nurse that a deformity of the infant's back existed which caused neither pain nor inconvenience to the baby, but which announced a condition of things which would entirely prevent the child when a grown woman from the proper fulfilment of maternal duties. In like manner many defects and deformities become deplorable handicaps as adolescence merges into mature age.

Defects in the bony structure of an infant may or may not present an absolute bar to wifehood and motherhood, and as before remarked, they nearly all admit of such treatment or of such management as to permit the individual to be fit if she so wills it. It is not, however, to the benefit of the public that any gross defect liable to reproduction should exist in husband or in wife.

Defects of the mind are more serious than are those of the body, and the great trouble is that they may not be recognized or rightly understood in time to provide against the evil they may probably entail.

First, it is to be observed that the public has a deplorable habit of thinking that the words "mind" and "mental" are synonymous with "intellect" and "intellectual." Few mistakes could be more serious. A deficiency of intellect may indeed prevent a child from acquiring languages

and from solving mathematical problems, and such defects may be easily recognized and are of great importance; these mental defects, which may truly prevent a child from learning to read, to write, to acquire languages, and solve mathematical problems, are, indeed, mental, but they do not affect the whole territory of the mind.

We expect from human beings understanding, memory, will, and wisdom, also the whole gamut of the affections. Deficiency in any of these factors renders the sufferer unfit for marriage, but the existence of such deficiencies can only be revealed gradually, in proportion to the child's age and his opportunities of evidencing mental perfection or imperfection.

This is one of the great and important problems of life, and is one of the subjects which ought to receive the careful attention of the State and its doctors, the Eugenics Society and its philosophers.

No matter which faculty is absent or deficient, and no matter whether the trouble is discovered in childhood or in adolescence, the one great deficiency, so great as to entirely unfit the sufferer from marriage or from civil existence, is the absence of the faculty of wisdom.

There are some people who have no aptitude for music, some are unmoved by colour, by any of the beauties of poetry—well, we deeply regret

their deficiencies, but such deficiencies would not interfere with their suitability for marriage; whereas foolishness, a want of wisdom, the inability to appreciate truth, justice, or goodness, ought to be a complete bar to free choice of partner and to parenthood.

All such defects are inborn. Insanity is to be looked upon as an accident, but mental deficiency, whether intellectual, moral, or spiritual, is an inborn condition, and therefore, of course, irremediable. It is hopeless to attempt the development of what never existed, but it equally follows that while certain mental defects are recognized at birth or during infancy, others can only become evident as childhood merges into adolescence and adolescence into adult life.

It is also necessary to remember that it is not always easy to distinguish between absolute mental defect and backwardness of any individual. Backwardness may be the result of bodily illness, of long-continued semi-starvation, and even of an unfortunate environment such as certain children suffer from when their fathers' work or circumstances lead to a frequent change of school, or where there is a complete want of sympathy and understanding between child and teacher. The deadening effect of physical shortcomings, such as impaired eyesight, imperfect hearing, adenoids, and such swelling of the tonsils as to

prevent the child from making normal progress in school, are all circumstances outside its real nature, and mercifully they are subject to change and to amelioration, which may lead to the apparently defective child advancing in educable capacity and taking rank as a normal individual. All this has to be remembered in the case of adolescents during the momentous years when their fitness or unfitness for marriage has to be decided.

Looked at from this point of view, the physical examination of school-children assumes a new importance. It is quite easy to say, What has all this got to do with marriage? but surely it is entirely relevant, and just as no truly mentally defective child should be permitted to marry, so no pseudo-defective should be permitted to join the army of the outcasts and the unfit. All possible efforts should be made from the highest to the lowest classes to find out the why and the wherefore of apparent dullness of intellect, and to have teeth, tonsils, and adenoids so dealt with that the child may be fit to profit by the education provided, and that an effort should be made to combat the effects on the intellect of unfavourable surroundings in any rank of life.

The medical inspection of school-children has been gained, but practical benefits to be achieved by it still depend almost entirely on education

of parents, educationists, and the public. So long as people hold that, while physical defect or physical illness is a subject for sympathy and commiseration, mental defect deserves only disgust, annoyance, and apology, the battle of the unfit is not won.

It is quite true that a relatively small number of children in our schools are fit neither for education nor for marriage, and that something must be done to prevent them from reproducing their kind; but a still larger proportion are *apparently* unfit, owing to bad parental habits, to drink and to misery, and nothing but a sympathetic and understanding effort to provide a suitable environment all round will save us as a nation from misery and disgrace.

So much may suffice to draw the attention of the public, parents, educationists, and statesmen to the fit, the unfit, and the unfortunate of our children with regard to bodily and mental capacity for marriage and for citizenship. Is it possible that there is yet another class of unfit, those who are imperfectly developed in their spiritual nature? Are there children whose one and only defect consists in their inability to adapt themselves to their circumstances on the spiritual side? What of those whom we only lately learnt to recognize—the children who grow up *moral imbeciles*? This is a very small class, but so far

as we know at present there is no cure for an original deficiency of the old pagan virtues, for those unfortunate beings who are deficient in the master-virtue of all, that is, in *wisdom*. Is it by any means possible by treatment, moral or physical, to help those who are so sorely handicapped? So far we know nothing, and so far there is nothing to help us; but at any rate the class, small as it is, could be still further reduced, if we were not unfortunately permitting the introduction among us of the pseudo-moral imbecile, young people of doubtful moral stability, who are made constantly worse than they are or need be by their unfortunate environment.

Pseudo-moral imbeciles are not difficult of manufacture, and the moral constitution of the nation has lately been particularly favourable to their generation. It may not be possible to say whether the present wave of materialism and indifferentism is due to moral exhaustion following the war, or whether it is a mild form of Bolshevism and Communism. There must be some reason for the extraordinary disregard not only of organized religion, but even of those pagan virtues, such as fortitude, prudence, truth, and love of justice, which have made the English rule not only tolerable but even acceptable to many nations which could not be expected to sympathize with our religious ideas.

The fact of the Pax Britannica, and the assurance of even-handed justice in law court and in municipal office, has helped our Hindu, Mohamedan, and even heathen fellow-citizens to endure what they cannot but often consider hard-heartedness and failure of sympathy. While we never possessed the devout enthusiasm of the Italians and Spanish, while the grace and logic of the French are as far from us as the extreme orderliness and industry of the Dutch and the Germans, we have for long years possessed a good working morality, a sense of fairness and of level-headed justice. We must of course avoid Elijah's great error, and in our jealousy for the worship of the Almighty, and in enthusiasm for our own religious forms, we must not too hastily assume that His worship has perished from the land, that we and we only are left to do Him honour. The prophet of old was rebuked by God's own statement that He still had a faithful remnant who had not bowed the knee in worship to Baal, and who had not transferred to him the adoration of their lips and their hearts.

Mercifully all this is true; but while the temper of the nation persists in allowing Socialist Sunday Schools, blasphemously and seditiously sowing in our children's minds opposition to God and to King, we cannot feel surprised at the existence of a natural harvest in theft, arson, perjury, and

even murder. Thus we are making for ourselves swarms of pseudo-moral imbeciles.

This is not the material out of which women fit for wives, mothers, teachers, and other leaders of the nation are to be formed.

In the consideration of those who are born unfit for marriage, attention is, of course, drawn to a class of women very small, but individually important, who entirely lack the primary sexual organs and abilities, which being originally non-existent cannot be supplied by surgical skill, no matter how great. Such accidents may occur in any family of the human race, but whereas the absence of certain organs of reproduction may in Christian countries render a marriage null and void and cause much personal misery and distress, the disaster does not equal that caused as, for instance, among Hindus, in whom the failure to beget a son to perform his sire's funeral rites automatically consigns the father's soul to perdition.

With reference to these few but important cases of absence of essential organs, and considering the spread of information as to physical conditions, probably there will after a time arise a general custom of young men and women who intend to marry exchanging certificates of physical fitness.

Even now it is quite evident that young people

are taking increased interest in their own health and in the hygiene of the future, while the knowledge of the organs and functions of their own bodies and instruction in a simple unbowdlerized physiology results in young women who contemplate matrimony consulting a doctor, very frequently of their own sex. The days when young men and maidens married without the smallest understanding of that adventure are certainly gone.

Chapter II

WOMEN WHO HAVE FAILED TO MARRY OWING TO THE EXIGENCIES OF THEIR LIVES

HERE we find the largest class of all, viz. the women for whom there is no mate.

In considering this class we find that in the borough of St. Marylebone there was in 1921 a population of 104,173. Of these individuals, 31,572 were men, while 53,139 were women, the balance being children of both sexes under 15 years of age. A further fact recorded was that out of the 53,139 women, more than half, i.e. 27,822, were unmarried.

Here the two chief points presenting themselves for consideration are:

1. Why did the females so greatly outnumber the males in the borough?
2. Why did more than half the women of marriageable age remain unmarried?

With regard to the first of these classes, it must be admitted that the conditions of this time were abnormal. The decade which closed in 1921

included the four years of the Great War, during which time St. Marylebone contributed her fair share to the Roll of Honour. The men who were killed outright were not the only victims: many thousands of others were maimed or so seriously invalided that they were rendered unfit for marriage or for the burden of supporting a wife and family.

This may be held to account in some degree for the apparent failure of men and women to mate, but at the same time it must be remembered that in the ordinary course of events, although 106 boys are born to every 100 girls, all the 106 are not born alive. More boys perish in the birth than do girls: this is on account of the greater size and harder ossification of their heads. These physical conditions of male infants tend to make the process of birth longer and more exhausting to both mothers and children, therefore labours with boy babies more frequently terminate fatally to the mother or child, or to both, and in those cases in which the child survives he loses both the natural protective environment of his mother's body and also her milk, which would have been his specially suitable food. Even if the birth process be not so absolutely disastrous, both the mother and the boy baby are left in a condition of greater exhaustion, in consequence of which the mother is not able to secrete an abundance of

healthy milk, and the little boy, who was already handicapped for the race of life by the severity of his birth, has yet an additional difficulty to face throughout infancy. These facts account to a great extent for the greater morbidity as well as the higher death-rate which exists amongst male infants.

Another source of the inequality between the number of boys and girls reared to maturity is to be found in the greater daring and the more strenuous nature of work and play among the former. It is evident that the risks to life and limb incurred by boys during childhood and adolescence greatly exceed those of ordinary girls.

Among other factors which determine the number of marriages, it is to be remembered that whether the nation be at war or at peace the social and economic conditions of the present day are less favourable to early marriages and to the rearing of normal families than were those of the last century. The scale of living has risen out of proportion to the rise in wages and salaries. It is true that more money is earned at the present day, but it is equally true that conditions of life which were looked on by our fathers as being the luxuries of the rich are now considered to be the necessities of the decent. Undoubtedly better education, better housing, more space, the quantity and quality of food and

clothes, the increase of holiday time, of culture, and of leisure are all most commendable, but they do not promote marriage, and on the other hand are really inimical to *early* marriage.

Again, it has to be recognized that the influence on men of these difficulties which prevent or discourage marriage are equalled and perhaps excelled by the effect on women and girls of a greatly increased economic independence and the political development which they now enjoy. Here also the influence of the war spirit, definitely strengthened by the determination of women and girls to secure higher standards of comfort and a greater measure of independence, have issued in increased facilities for self-determination. During the war, and since the war, women and girls have been able to secure much of the work that was formerly reserved for men only, and although the effect on their lives has been to secure greater freedom and enhanced value, a higher position and increased pay, all these conditions have made it more difficult for men to marry, and have increased the hesitation with which those among them who are not well paid or highly endowed seek alliance with women quite equal and possibly superior in social status.

Another totally different set of circumstances tend to make women hesitate to accept offers of marriage. Psychologists have much to tell

us of complexes and stresses, and unfortunately a considerable number of women and girls have memories of childhood and youth rendered hideous by distressing episodes of ill-treatment not only by brutal and vicious outsiders, but in some cases at the hands of a father or elder brother. Memories of such injuries are not only likely to act as beneficent warnings in case of need, but unfortunately they inflict serious injury on that part of the mind which is called the affections. There is nothing wonderful if a girl or woman whose earliest sexual perceptions were warped and poisoned by such ill-doings shrinks from even the most honourable and happy proposals. It is evident that she has been so ill-used and deceived that she looks on such experiences as being just what a person might expect, and it is difficult for her to realize that such mischances and sorrows, far from being common or normal, must be looked on as both rare and unnatural.

In such cases it may be that the whole organism is disharmonized and functions badly because, owing to such psychological wounds, the endocrine organs are thrown out of gear; the girl who had been a healthy normal child appears during adolescence to be anything but normal and healthy, her development may be unduly sudden, she appears to leap from the child into a melan-

choly, depressed woman; or, on the other hand, the normal ordinary changes of adolescence do not occur, and there is a peculiar morbid shyness and reticence about her which entails the absence of the comfortable and natural mental and moral equilibrium which ought to characterize the adult woman. Thus in not a few cases a sympathetic and keen-eyed observer will notice that girls who have been quite normal and even exceptionally well developed both in mind and body during the first twelve to fourteen years of life fail to undergo the satisfactory evolution into perfect womanhood which was naturally expected. And one of the most interesting questions in practical medicine at the present day is the one which relates to the application of endocrine therapy, i.e. treatment by extracts and sera of various organs to those cases of ill-developed womanhood which have been so badly misunderstood and inefficiently treated in the past.

Human nature, human injuries, temptations, and difficulties are probably much the same now as they were in past ages; but whereas formerly when a doctor or an educationalist had charge of a young girl upon whom the burden of development seemed to be pressing too heavily, the only idea of relieving her anæmia or of supplementing her want of vitality and *joie de vivre* consisted in the old-fashioned prescription

of iron pills and sea air, we have gradually come to understand that her whole being cries aloud for sympathetic understanding, for an intelligent recognition of her life's problems and her sexual difficulties. She requires not only tonic and stimulating treatment, not only the various excellent preparations of iron and other drugs offered without stint by those who study the subject, but also heart-to-heart and really comprehending conversations with some adviser, priest, doctor, or friend, man or woman, as the case may be, but at any rate someone who has psychological insight and sufficient intimate knowledge of the present organization of society so as to understand the need or imperfection on the one hand, and the suitable remedy to apply on the other. In the present state of society there are many such women and girls, and fortunately there are many means of supplying those needs and assuaging those sorrows, but it needs much experience and kindliness of heart to bring together the two sides of this equation.

Another group of impediments to marriage is to be found among our social conventions. Naturally these vary with differences of civilization and of race, and probably to the philosophers of Europe and America our own conventions appear to be more comprehensible and also more helpful than are those of alien civilizations. We

only have to read the many books dealing with this subject, such, for instance, as Havelock Ellis's, to understand that these conventions undergo continual alterations. Still altered and altering as they are, they yet exercise a great, although diminishing, influence up to the present day, and therefore they interfere more or less with that freedom of the intercourse between the sexes which is amongst the best and the most efficient of the preliminaries to marriage.

For instance, some forty to fifty years ago the conventions and customs of society in Britain precluded all true intimacy and real mutual understanding between marriageable men and women. It is true that they had advanced further than the excessive rigidity of Jane Austen's days. It was no longer considered necessary for the young man first to approach the lady's father and humbly to obtain from him permission to talk to her, and, as the phrase ran, "to pay her his addresses," but there still existed a feeling that the whole enterprise was one of great daring, and involved the confronting of some unknown and wonderful experience in any interview between man and maid more private and more intimate than that of the ball-room, the hunting-field, or the picnic. Both the young people felt that a quiet walk together, whether along the shore or in the wood, was beyond the bounds of what was known as

comme il faut. As a matter of fact, although there was no material *purdah* in our homes, there was between the inmates a spiritual veil which hid the real form and features of both lover and beloved, consequently the couple advanced but little in real mutual understanding until after marriage.

Things have altered and somewhat for the better, and it is interesting to note that opportunities for unveiling and for learning something true and essential about each other's moral and spiritual personality has come to our young people in the manner that many other blessings have come, through the good offices of work and play equally enjoyed by both. Work, which was originally regarded as a curse, or at any rate as a misfortune, now shows better than any other circumstance how the many vicissitudes of life are likely to be met. It tells more clearly than anything else can tell how far courage, cheerfulness, skill, and vision exist in the opposite number.

The consequence of the older convention was that most young couples came together either owing to a plan prearranged by elders, or under the influence of an overwhelming physical attraction, or as the result of a sudden surprise. They had very little opportunity of mutual knowledge and understanding.

Another of the older conventions still holds sway. It was probably in consequence of the fact that the bridegroom was supposed to be the breadwinner, therefore the superior of the contracting parties, that he should take the initiative and make the proposal of marriage, whereby he offered his money, his position, and his personality for acceptance or rejection by the lady. Under these circumstances it was of course natural that the man should make the offer, but the situation is not without humour, for it shows how completely the woman's body, soul, and spirit were supposed to weigh little or nothing in comparison with the man's money and position. Are we justified in arguing from this that under our modern circumstances, when boys and girls study and play together, when men and women work together, and when frequently the bride's position and finances compare not unfavourably with those of the bridegroom, *she* may be found proposing an alliance that shall be of equal value and blessing to the pair?

Other circumstances which may interfere with marriage may perhaps be found in certain conditions of health, which, while not entailing death or chronic invalidism on the part of the woman, may yet preclude all hope of motherhood, and therefore make marriage less probable. These conditions, however, exist in so small a number

of cases that they are of little consequence to the present argument.

There is, however, an important group of causes of the single life. They are found in unselfish acts of renunciation, not very common, it is true, but of great moral importance. This moral importance arises because such unselfishness prevents the marriage of certain citizens whose influence on the race is valuable, and who are especially desirable as parents. There are men and there are women who hold themselves debarred from marriage owing to duties that they think they owe to, or devotion that they feel for, certain individuals. For instance, the only son of a widowed mother, or the devoted sister of a lonely brother, and, indeed, people in all manner of mutual relations, whether of family, affinity, or friendship, feel that it is right in their case to refuse or to postpone happiness for themselves in order to fulfil what appears to them to be a sacred duty. The cogency of this may not be very obvious to the outside world, and yet it may absolutely govern and probably ruin the life of the individual concerned. For instance, a working-class woman whose sister and brother-in-law died before they were thirty years of age, leaving a family of six tiny children, took these little orphans entirely into her own keeping and brought them to maturity. She secured for them

adequate education and honourable employment, but in doing this she necessarily renounced her own prospects of a good husband and a happy home. Probably many such cases occur without being recognized, but there are few of us whose memories do not include some such instances of devotion.

Again, in considering the causes of celibacy one must remember the men and women who, having had one great and overwhelming experience of a true and absorbing love, feel themselves quite unable to contemplate matrimony with any other individual. The loss of the ideal may have come through the death of the beloved or from some utterly unexpected revelation of the fact that all was not as it had been imagined to be. The awakening from the happy dream has so altered all the aspects of life, and has so reduced the hoped-for future to a dull drab level, that the refusal to mate and the breaking of the happy dream are not to be wondered at.

Chapter III

THE RISKS AND DANGERS OF UNMARRIED WOMEN

THERE is a popular idea that unmarried women are in some way or another defrauded of a part of their inheritance and are in need of sympathy and commiseration. The feeling on this point is really very odd, because the sentiment in question is not exactly a whole-hearted sympathy such as each good citizen should have for every other, nor is it a half-reluctant admiration of a person whose lot in life is hard and whose manner of bearing the burden is admirable; nor is it even a half-contemptuous, half-pitying recognition of the difficulties and supposed abnegations of the condition. The feelings with which a certain class of the population looks on its unmarried women is a queer mixture of all these.

Apparently even from ancient days the married state has been looked on as being the most happy and normal for both men and women, and while it has been calmly assumed that most unmarried men would by fair or unfair means console themselves for the non-existence of partner and family, it has also been assumed that the woman deprived

of the dear delights of husband and children would be too good on the one hand, and too unimaginative or too unenterprising on the other, to console herself after the fashion of her brother.

Nowadays we see quite clearly that all this is an illusion. The unmarried woman is as a rule very well contented with her position in life, and the honour and satisfaction which she sees in it is constantly being more and more recognized by the public. No doubt every position in life has its disadvantages, and every relationship of life has its difficulties; and whereas there are certain special risks to body, soul, and spirit in the environment and duties of the married woman, so there are certain drawbacks and certain injuries which are more likely to happen to the mind and body of the unmarried.

Among the drawbacks in the lot of the unmarried woman must be reckoned the injuries to character and failures of development which may be caused by unfulfilled desires. Powers of mind and body which are not used are liable to atrophy; just as the eyes of certain fishes which originally were possessed of normal vision become blind by long periods of life in a dark cavern, so human beings whose powers and gifts are not kept in constant exercise will eventually be as if they had never possessed them. We do

not look for the loveliness of the Greek form among pleasure-loving and self-indulgent sybarites, nor for rapidity of thought and masterly powers of argument among the untrained and badly educated. It is therefore probable that if it be true that certain powers and virtues are absent in the unmarried, whether men or women, we should expect these deficiencies to exist on the sweeter and more gracious side of their characters. It would be reasonable to suppose that individuals who had never known the joys and sufferings connected with married love might be found deficient in unselfish devotion and in parental tenderness, but it is by no means certain that the deficiencies of character shown by the unmarried are of this nature.

It is fair to suppose that whereas an undisciplined and merely natural marriage may help the formation of the couple's character but little, and the marriage may prove to be a selfishness *à deux*, yet the life of a single woman, if it be equally undisciplined and as wanting in all that goes to develop character, may be quite as poor a performance, and may turn out to be one as entirely fruitless and as much to be regretted as is that of the selfish husband and wife. The man or the woman who is "spoiled" and over-indulged by an uxorious partner may indeed become a characterless mollusc, while the starved and case-

hardened solitary is likely to be as little sympathetic and as little perceptive of the needs of others as is a hermit crab or a sea-urchin.

Again, there is in all human beings, men and women, adults and children, a tendency and temptation to put oneself first always, and not only to desire the chief seats in the synagogues and the uppermost rooms at feasts, but also in these modern days to be for ever in the limelight, to grow for evermore like the Kaiser, who was described by one of his officers thus: "My master is the man who would like to be the baby at the christening, the bridegroom at the wedding, and the corpse at the funeral."

Our sympathies need to be kept not only warm and strong, and to be well developed and widely diffused over spouse and children, family and friends, but also to be directed towards nation and race.

Again, injury may be caused to the unmarried individual, perhaps more especially to the unmarried woman, by an inner conviction that she has missed her vocation. To some women the idea is still insistent that her true aim and object in life is wifehood and motherhood, and that therefore in failing to marry she has failed to attain full development and individual perfection. There is a fallacy here. If marriage were the woman's only vocation it would have been

made possible for all women, if necessary even at the cost of monogamy. Had it been necessary to feminine perfection, public conscience would have insisted on a plurality of wives. Far from this being the fact, we see in every age and in practically every nation certain women set apart for duties and achievements that were incompatible with their other functions so long as they were liable to the interruptions and distractions natural to the married state. Whether we consider the Hetairæ of Greece, the Vestal Virgins of Rome, the Nuns of the Middle Ages, or the Religious Orders of to-day, we see bodies of women held in well-deserved admiration and respect because by renouncing for themselves the joys of wife and mother they have secured by their own loss and detriment certain great advantages to the body politic.

As a rule this sublimation of vocation ennobles and specially develops the woman who makes the sacrifice, but it is a matter of history that in some instances "the good for others sought" has been purchased not only by individual pain and loss, but at the price of a stunting, hardening, and warping of the character. This, of course, would account for dryness, hardness, want of sympathy, and also for the loss of feminine grace and charm in those whose circumstances have been too hard for them. Such a spoiling of the nature is to be

attributed less to the fact of single life than to the much harder fact that the life lived is without any very near and dear influences, without any individual depending on her whose needs might have stimulated and developed the motherly side of ths woman's nature.

The single woman is not unfrequently a perfect model of motherly graces and affections, and in the cases where she falls short in this direction it is nearly always due to the fact that she has had no children, young people, nor even dependent animals, upon whom to lavish the wealth of her affection.

A somewhat unexpected consequence of the want of natural and desirable outlets for love and all the motherly virtues may be found in what are sometimes called "absorbing friendships," or "obsessive friendships."

There are people who entirely condemn a great and passionate friendship between two people of the same sex. They say, and no doubt they say truly, that there is a great risk, that such a stirring of emotion without any practical outcome must of necessity be bad both for the lover and the beloved. Anyone who has had much experience of school life, indeed, anyone who has lived much in communities of women, cannot but call to mind various instances in which such a friendship has been wholly bad, and may have led to

very serious injury to the moral natures of both the parties concerned. But surely, as in other cases of friendship and platonic love, each case must be judged on its merits and by the effects that it produces. The two chief tests available for the detection of the healthiness or the unhealthiness of the position would be the selfishness or unselfishness evidenced, and the influence of the passion on conduct and character.

There are plenty of instances in literature, both sacred and profane, of such friendships whose singular beauty and whose power to develop character for good is everywhere acknowledged. Such friendships, for instance, as those between David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, Orestes and Pylades. It is true that in all these instances the lovers were men, not women, but this apparently makes little difference. It is also to be noticed that in the cases of most successful intimate friendships there is some great disparity either in age or in station, the one partner being markedly older, wiser, stronger, or more richly endowed than the other, as, for instance, in the case of Ruth and Naomi. While this is true in the well-known classical examples before us, and while it is also true of a form of hero-worship between pupils and professors, masters and boys, there is a similar friendship which generally occurs somewhat later in life, in which the

partners are found to be more approximately on an equality.

These master-friendships between members of the same sex appear to be beneficial or disastrous in proportion to the wisdom and unselfishness of the one who receives the adoration. The schoolmistress or schoolmaster who is worshipped by a pupil receives the adoration in a perfectly calm, and in a sense in an unmoved, manner; just as a mother, while deeply appreciating a child's affection, is not inebriated by it, so the superior in a *wise* absorbing friendship takes all the incense, flowers, and songs in so motherly, and in a way so superior a manner, that the reaction on the junior is all to the good. Where the outcome of an absorbing friendship is deleterious, and tends to the junior partner becoming as it were a slave or a parasite, it is because the senior is not sufficiently big to carry unmoved and unspoiled all that the junior offers.

In Clemence Dane's remarkable story *Regiment of Women* we have a wonderful picture of the disasters likely to occur where a clever, egocentric individual becomes the cynosure alike of children and of junior mistresses. It appears to be a matter of a morally weak soul becoming inebriated by the partially fermented and very "heady" new wine offered by individuals, her juniors in age and in development, although not

her inferiors in intellect, and distinctly her superiors in *morale*. In Miss Dane's poignant story there was such a mistress high in importance and position on the School Staff. She was worshipped by a young, half-developed, but very charming teacher, and by a poor little scrap of an artistic child with great dramatic and poetic possibilities. The young teacher made the painful discovery that the woman she worshipped was an incarnation of selfishness, a veritable vampire, while the poor little girl, used and toyed with for purposes of self-aggrandizement only, sought refuge for her broken heart and misplaced affections in suicide. Such is the end to which such unwholesome worship tends, an end by no means inevitable, not even probable where the adored is truly worthy; but the position is one that needs to be dealt with after the fashion of John Nicholson, who, when he found the Sikh officers serving under him were set upon worshipping him, beat them with the flat of his sword, and thereby cured them of their hallucinations, although, as some of them wisely remarked, that was really the way in which a proper god would receive his devotees.

If only the senior partner can be sufficiently greater, wiser, bigger, and, in one word, more "motherly," the love of the senior for the junior being absolutely unselfish and unmoved by the

passion that is evinced by the so much smaller, feebler, and less developed personality, all will be well. To put the thing very briefly, the love of the elder, so much like that of a mother, must be affection as well as passion, calm, deep, and true, without the foam and fury of passion as generally understood. She should be able to receive the caress and the love of the younger without losing her balance, and without feeling any ministration to her self-appreciation and self-value.

In this way possessive, absorbing, obsessive friendships or adorations may be transmuted from sentimental follies, dangerous alike to worshipper and worshipped, into instruments of tremendous uplift and sublimation. Where the choice of friends has been wise, the warmth and depth of the friendship will enable each to supplement the deficiency or weakness of the other, and may provide them both with exactly the object of love, devotion, and appreciation which each nature was craving.

A wise and good friendship between two women may be the consolation and satisfaction that is necessary to secure such a degree of development as may be possible to each. It is to be remarked that many single women, realizing their own incompleteness, are led to special friendships as the best consolation for a contrary tide in their life's ocean which has hitherto involved

isolation. It is quite a mistake to think that the majority of single women are ardently desirous of the completion of their nature by marriage. There is a want in their natures, but it is not this: very often the unfulfilled desire is for motherhood. There is an incessant aching longing for the fulfilment of that primary feminine instinct, and very often the thing that is needed to secure happiness and perfection of character is that the woman shall have opportunities for the management and care of children. Thus she should adopt a child, or she should undertake some position of trust and importance in an institution for children, or she may find scope as nurse, governess, or teacher. There is one thing essential to her happiness, and that is that she shall have the real care and responsibility for one or more little ones.

Here again the subject is complicated by the fact that whereas some women are drawn to the care of infants, there are others whose motherly instincts are far more deeply and readily satisfied by older children. They instinctively desire to be the guides, the instructors, the mothers of adolescents, whose needs are chiefly moral and intellectual. To such the office of nurse or the adoption of an infant would be useless. What they are yearning for is the care and guidance of a child or children further advanced in development,

and their bread of life is to be sought as teachers, elementary, more advanced, or specialized, as the case may be. So that whereas the one class of women find a deep delight in the bathing, dressing, and feeding of the infant, who watch its development with the keenest of joy, there is another to whom all such work appears monotonous, if not menial, and whose mother-hunger is only to be assuaged by the opportunity and ability to teach and to assist the development of the adolescent.

Besides this, a certain number of single women crave for "self-expression," whether it be exemplified in professional or social ambition: they want to be first with, and essential to, someone or something. Of course, such ambitions are not endearing, they rather tend to egocentricity, and, indeed, to selfishness; the desire to be first with someone is apt to lead to undesirable developments in the character, and sometimes the desire to be first in some business or enterprise may tend to peculiar devotion to some art or trade. The woman, in fact, becomes more man-like, and seeks to excel her compeers in professional or business excellence. Undoubtedly the whole subject is full of difficulty: the desire to be first will lead to untiring perseverance, it will shut out all lesser aims and all small vanities; on the other hand, it opens the door as aforesaid to egocen-

tricity, and to the frame of mind that desires superiority over others for oneself. It does not necessarily lead to a desire for money or for rewards, but it certainly does lead to coveting the first position. It is at total variance with Longfellow's advice,

> If one by one thy hopes depart,
> Be resolute and calm.

Or, as Keble says:—

> Thou art thy Saviour's darling, seek no more.[1]

Much less soul-destroying, and by no means unknown amongst single women, is the desire for something new in life—a love of adventure. It is much more characteristic of the young, and is well described by the German word *neugierig*. This we see in men and women from whom come the travellers, the explorers, the mighty hunters, and the Arctic voyagers. It is not quite the same thing as the desire to excel at home. There, as a rule, must be someone who is one's competitor, someone to take the second and less obvious place; whereas a person who sets out to cross a desert, or to climb Mount Everest, has probably no visible competitor. On the other hand, some single women suffer from a sense of inferiority, of having missed the mark, of not being quite complete, but of having an unfulfilled mission.

[1] Keble's *Christian Year*, Monday in Holy Week.

Such sensations and self-judgments may be entirely mistaken, and due to disappointment. In the great number of instances they have entirely fulfilled their vocation, and are amongst the most useful members of the whole body politic. It should never be forgotten that to them we owe the fulfilment of many arts and callings for which the married woman has no time.

It is the old question of suitable division of labour.

Reflecting on all these things, one is led to believe that one of the greatest difficulties of the unmarried is in many cases a self-dissatisfaction. There is probably no great or overwhelming ideal or task in her life; there is just the common round, the daily task, the prosaic duties, or, as I once heard a woman teacher say, "There ought to be for everyone what unfortunately there is not, a great and overwhelming ideal; there should be some inspiration, something that would make us see that the pains of life are really joyful in proportion to their magnitude, and that true joy lies in the offering of some really great gift on the altar of one's love. A mere ordinary animal instinct of self-preservation does not suffice. If you look for it you will really find among the people who you least expect to possess it, even in the most ordinary men and women, a vast fund of heroism and fortitude." This is what

really counts, and it is in the absence of such an ideal that the drabness and want of interest in life is found. It is the whole difference between the voluntary renunciation of the ordinary good in life in order that one may obtain extraordinary good, and in this purchase of "good for others sought" do we attain not only to the highest duty, but to the highest joy of which we are capable.

The present illustration of this truth is to be found in the fact that in the voluntary renunciation of a certain order of joy our ideal of monogamous marriage is attainable, but in order that it shall achieve the maximum amount of good it must be done with gay and unflinching courage, upholding and raising the moral standard of the nation and making possible the Christian home.

Among the component parts of our own race the ideal of marriage has hitherto been that it is the union of Christian man with Christian woman, one at a time, the partners taking each other for better for worse, for richer for poorer, until death should them part, and it has always been assumed that this was the only form of respectable, legal, and Christian marriage. During the last seventy years views on this subject have greatly changed, and it is now perhaps necessary to point out why the Christian ideal of marriage is the one not only inculcated by our religion and

upheld by our laws, but also that it is really the form of union which holds out the best hope of security and happiness to the whole family, especially to the woman and to the children of the marriage. In our own country the law has been in accordance with our religion that divorce should not be lawful saving for the cause of adultery, and there was a very considerable doubt as to the actual meaning of that phrase. Some people held that the word adultery as used by St. Matthew did not really mean unfaithfulness after marriage, but unchastity in premarital days; but at any rate, from a careful consideration of the New Testament, the Church was led to hold the belief that marriage in the case of Christians, at any rate, was indissoluble except by death. It is true that some individuals held that the bonds of matrimony could be dissolved in the case where one of the partners to the union had broken its vows by the commission of adultery. Even then in the case of the woman a petition for divorce could not be successful unless in addition to unfaithfulness she could prove cruelty on the part of her husband.

Recently there has been a great stir as to making the obtainment of divorce simpler and cheaper. It has been alleged that not only unfaithfulness in either party to the marriage contract suffices as a ground for divorce, but that so does also

habitual drunkenness, insanity, illness, penal servitude, and, one might almost add, incompatibility of temper. Indeed, there are good men and women whose compassion is so deeply stirred by the wrongs and pains suffered by a comparatively small number of individuals, that in order to afford them supposed relief they are willing to so relax the bonds of matrimony that no married couple can be considered safe or stable in its union. The door has been opened to a most immoral and underhand practice known as collusion. In such cases the man, knowing that he is technically innocent, and knowing that his wife greatly desires freedom from the tie that binds them together in order that she may enter into union with some other man, will put into her hands a statement of intimacy with some other woman that can be held as proof of his infidelity. Such conduct is warmly praised by certain authors and in conversation by certain men and women as evidence of a true nobility of character and a large-hearted generosity willing to sacrifice itself for the sake of a suffering partner. The dishonesty of this line of conduct ought to be sufficiently evident, but unfortunately our moral vision appears to be imperfect.

An unmarried woman is probably as liable to the wrong and sorrow of divorce as is her sister. It is of course true that having no husband she

cannot herself suffer the pain and grief of being divorced, but it is equally true that she may possibly desire somebody else's husband and succumb to the temptation of what is probably the most selfish and terrible form of theft that it is possible to commit. The human race is greatly tempted to selfishness, to the contemplation of circumstances as they affect themselves, and to the peculiar wresting and blinding of judgment whereby we are apt to think of things as they concern our own supposed welfare. In the matter of divorce it is fatally easy to misjudge the words and the deeds of other people. It may be quite possible for a woman, whether married or unmarried, to covet and earnestly to desire the possession of the love of some man who has already vowed his life to the service of another woman, and consequently she is predisposed to believe that the man of her choice is not happy with his wife. She may come to believe that the wife is neglectful, cold, and unsympathetic; she may, more or less sincerely, think that if she had the management of that man's life she could help him more efficiently than does his wife, and that her influence on him would be entirely for good. So earnestly and so sincerely does she believe all this that she cannot believe in the truth of the old maxim, *Audi alteram partem*. It is the old story of the focus of the view. When our eyes

are adjusted for near vision and such as is suited for near work we have but the haziest idea of the distant landscape; consequently when anyone has bent the eyes of their mind to a contemplation of all that detracts from and injures our neighbour's worth we cannot realize the broad facts involved, and very naturally our judgment is warped and spoiled.

People are apt to imagine that it is a matter of considerable importance as to who originates the line of thought and conduct which leads to divorce. This is true so far as the individuals are concerned. The one who has conceived the wrong intention and selfish line of conduct is no doubt the one most greatly to blame; he or she is the individual primarily responsible for the shipwreck of everyone's happiness. This individual ruins the home and deprives the children of the marriage (if there are any) not only of the care of one parent, but by dissolving the family union also destroys the wholesome protective atmosphere which really constituted home and afforded the environment most suitable for these young people. The individual in question, the one who is really responsible for the divorce and for all injury that may be caused by it, may be in a sense entirely innocent, his or her moral life may be above all suspicion, and his or her motives are entirely for the good of all con-

cerned; but where the wrong comes in is that such an individual has at some time given way to an entirely self-centred view and has desired some other person's partner, has taken the best possible means to commit what may be looked upon as a theft, and has failed to gauge the ruin that must ensue.

The public in general have not an altogether correct idea of the meaning of some few words which do not indeed come into our daily life, but which are of great national importance. Up to the present time *Divorce* has meant not only the separation of man and wife at bed and board, but also the breaking of the chains which bind them to each other so as to confer on them freedom to contract a fresh marriage. Therefore it is the married only who can seek for and acquire divorce; but the unmarried, whether youthful virgin or elderly spinster, may excite such desire in another woman's husband as to lead him to seek for divorce from his present partner in order to marry another.

Finally, in considering the question of divorce it is essential to remember the many cases in which it is obtained by means of terrible dishonesty. These are the cases in which a woman, married or unmarried, conceives a great passion for a married man, and without realizing the wrong inflicted on the man's wife and on their children,

uses every influence and employs every means in her power to have a divorce pronounced so that her passion may be satisfied, and she may even hold the wife up to scorn and derision if she objects to part with her husband and to break up their home.

Nullity of marriage implies that although a man and woman have entered into a civil contract whereby they both intended marriage, and although their marriage may have been blessed by the Church, there has been some overwhelming and irremediable impediment to the consummation of their marriage, whether this be a physical or a legal condition.

By *fornication* is meant the cohabiting of man and woman without civil contract or sacramental marriage. It is frequently advocated at the present time as being a free loving union, whereby their lives may mingle much or little, according to desire, untrammelled by any bond, whether legal or ecclesiastical. This was the form of union largely practised in Russia and warmly advocated by the Swedish lady, Ellen Key, and others in Sweden, America, England, and to a lesser extent elsewhere. The chief idea of Ellen Key and others who think with her is what they call *Free Love*. In their eyes love sanctifies all. For instance, she says, "Those who love each other are man and wife," and by this she does not mean any

temporary relationship with definite bounds, but it must be, she says, "a synthesis of desire and friendship." What Ellen Key and her associates do not take into practical consideration is the position of the children of such unions. Children there will be from time to time, no matter what precautions may be taken, and the position both of the children and the women is disastrous.

A variety of these unions is what is known as *Companionate Marriage*. Here any two persons enter into intimate relationship for an indefinite period, just so long as pleases them both. It is understood that they are to be faithful to each other so long as love lasts. It is claimed, and not only by Ellen Key and her followers, that such a relationship is honourable and can be proclaimed to the whole world, and children conceived during such relationship would have some legal claim on their father. We are told that in the early days the laws of Spain recognized such concubinage.

The great hope and the safeguard against the acclimatization of such ideas in our midst is partly our sense of public justice and the hope that the Christian ideal of a home can never be so entirely lost.

Still another set of dangers are peculiarly liable to injure a lonely woman, namely those which concern the body and its very natural desire to

avoid pain or discomfort on the one hand, or to provide itself with some solace for the hardships of life on the other.

Hard-worked and lonely individuals are especially liable to these temptations, and no one is more likely to suffer from strain and stress than is a delicate intellectual woman, who is only too likely to overwork herself in body and mind, and to treat both with but little consideration. Often when the day's work is accomplished the solitary worker feels herself, as the saying goes, "tired to death." She returns to her lonely domicile exhausted by work, and it may be dispirited and despondent owing to the annoyances which she has experienced. Of course, a cup of tea or coffee would make all the difference to her, but it is difficult to find strength and courage to make the water boil, to see about the milk, and, indeed, to incur the little additional labour that a refreshing cup of tea or coffee must involve. How much more easy to pour out a glass of wine or to mix a whisky and soda, and here comes the trouble. Not that a glass of wine or a whisky and soda would in itself be wrong or tend to a risky habit, but it is the dependence that the lonely and overworked are likely to place in what is so easily procured and so quickly effectual. Little by little the habit may be formed of taking alcoholic stimulant on an empty

stomach and when badly depressed. The danger is at first sight so small and apparently so insignificant that the single woman runs a great risk of acquiring a habit that she herself would be the first to reprobate. Another somewhat similar trouble is to be looked for in the difficulty of sleep, which is liable to occur in any overtired and overworked person. It is very desirable that after a long and fatiguing day any worker should rest before the evening meal, but what is to be done when there is no one whose joy and duty it is to provide dressing-gown and slippers, a cheering fire, and an easy chair?

The case is harder still where the bachelor woman has not only to provide all these things for herself, but what ought to be a quiet, restful evening must be given up to such work as correcting exercises, music scores, drawings, or any other such duty which is likely to fall to the share of the educationalist. No wonder that when the food has been inefficient, eaten without preliminary rest, and followed by two or three hours of brain-work, sleep should indeed be far away. Of course, the lonely woman realizes quite clearly that sleep purchased by artificial means is not a good and refreshing sleep, and that the mere reliance which she learns to place on some drug is really a feeble capitulation to the need of the moment. But these are the ways in which many

well-endowed and valuable workers sap their health, both physical and mental, and lower themselves in their own eyes by acquiring the habits of the alcoholic or the opium-eater.

Other habits there are which war fatally with self-respect, and which tend to make one of the earth earthy, and as much a captive as Gulliver found himself to be when bound by the infinitesimal but terribly strong threads of the Lilliputians.

Chapter IV

POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO MARRIED LIFE

THE longer one lives and the more one thinks, the more clearly does one understand that the two great prescriptions for growth of character and for the developing of the spiritual part of man's nature are to be found in two successive revelations made by the Author of the Universe.

According to the edict of God interpreted by His servant Moses, the one hope for the rehabilitation of the human race lay in work for which man was fitted and which might be trusted to repair his ruin in body, soul, and spirit. The prescription worked, and so far as we know the record of the race-work it was effectual in developing man's character and in ministering to his happiness. There came a time, however, when more was necessary, and on this occasion God was His own Interpreter, and speaking in His manifestation of Himself in the likeness of man, He said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," and verse upon verse, and chapter upon chapter of the New Testament are devoted to a description

of this perfection, and to teaching man that the way to perfection is Love. This Love was said to be the fulfilling of the law, and men were warned that they must first love the brother whom they could see before they could love and gratefully adore the Father Whom they could not see.

From this does it not follow that in any scheme for human perfection work and love must play the leading rôles? Therefore we find, as we should expect to find, that the married woman, fulfilling an early command, "increase and multiply, replenish the earth and subdue it," must of necessity lead a strenuous life. For nine months she builds her child, she brings it forth by labour, the very presentment of pain and endeavour; she nourishes the child as you may say with her own blood for nine months, and for some twenty years she remains the nearest, best, and dearest lover and guide that he can have. As a rule the relationship of mother and child is perfectly successful. It is a symbiosis (a living together), and the mother's physical frame and character are developed, thanks to those things which she suffers, while the child advances from being an unconscious and invisible speck of jelly to living in the likeness of a young god, with perfect endowments of every part of his nature.

How then can the unmarried woman hope to

compete with her married sister in health, in happiness, and in self-expression? It would be impossible, unless, like her married sister, she be willing to die that others may live, willing to spend and to be spent for the service of humanity, and to grudge no expenditure of time and strength, of health and possessions. The mere idea of finding employment, of passing time, of pursuing a career, could not possibly suffice. Every woman, married or unmarried, must obey the ancient command, "This do and thou shalt live," "Go, work this day in my vineyard, and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive." Work for work's sake only is not enough. The motive with the mother was the welfare of her offspring, and the motive in the case of the unmarried woman must be the welfare of the race.

The necessary combination of work and love may be found in many different occupations and positions. Take first one of the most obvious, the sublimation of the maternal instinct, i.e. the sublimation of the primitive instinct to create something. We know that in primitive civilizations, whether in distant ages almost beyond our ken, or at the present time among the child races, women have found and are finding their vocation in assisting their man in his work. This work may be a simple form of agriculture or the tending of domestic cattle. In all these efforts to

replenish and subdue we find mankind making, with the assistance of his women, paradise on earth, in which, as Rudyard Kipling says, the horse is his first servant and the dog his first friend.

Naturally, under such circumstances, marriage both early and fruitful was the rule and not the exception. In more advanced civilizations the surface of the globe has been parcelled out among the nations, and large families are no longer needed to hunt the wild beasts or to care for domestic cattle and to help as in the primitive agriculture of former days. Marriage, therefore, is out of fashion, and at present the unmarried women outnumber their married sisters. Even so, unemployment became the lot of many unmarried women, and was the origin of the disesteem and social failure which was her lot of latter years, until some seventy or eighty years ago the only two employments that were considered suitable for unmarried ladies were those of governessing and dressmaking.

The unmarried woman, through no fault of her own, was at that time living a life at variance with the Divine command; there was little or no work that she could do or that she wished to do, while her natural instinct for love was turned upon itself and lavished upon secondary objects, chiefly dogs, cats, and canaries, creatures which, making

but little mental and moral appeal, very naturally could not satisfy her. It ought not to have been any matter of wonder that women, both the fully grown and the adolescent, were discontented and full of unsatisfied aspirations, and that marked injustice produced rebellion. Before the Great War, 1914 to 1918, there was much dissatisfaction in the one sex and an unduly patronizing and semi-contemptuous feeling in the other. The war, which was so great an evil under many of its aspects, has at least this to its credit, that it taught us that the women were quite able and quite willing to do the work to which they were suddenly called with courage, aptitude, and success.

And so things have greatly changed, and many of the employments, arts, trades, professions, and callings, formerly open only to men, are now available for both sexes, and in the future appointments will probably be awarded not on the ground of sex, but on the far better consideration of fitness. Women are now to be met with who cope very successfully with various civic duties. Women Magistrates, Prison Officers, Guardians of the Poor, Borough Councillors, and even Mayors, are becoming common objects of the country; they have proved themselves to be thoroughly efficient, full of initiative and sympathy. In the political world the women have

now not only the vote, but they are Members of Parliament, with their own Secretaries, Agents, and other Assistants.

Besides these civic and political employments, women are distinguishing themselves in many arts and industries of life. They are painters of portraits of animals and of landscapes, musicians, barristers and doctors, orators, teachers and students of divinity.

Much needs to be done not only in the callings which have been recently opened to women, but quite as much in certain employments dealing with the care of the children, the aged, and the sick. It is obvious that both as employment and as a source of joy adoption is frequent, but when a child is adopted it must not only receive maintenance from the adoptive parent, but also it must receive the affection, education, and training that would have been the inheritance of a natural child. Much has been done lately to make the law of adoption better understood, and to defend the supposed relationship from injury that might be received either from the adoptive parent on the one hand or from the adopted child and his own natural family on the other. It was manifestly unfair that after anyone had assumed the guardianship of a child, and had spent on it not only money but affectionate care for years, the child's own parents, or people representing them, should

be at liberty to take that child away. Equally was it unfair and wrong that a child should be brought up to recognize certain people as its father and mother, and then to find that owing to a change in circumstance its future was gravely compromised.

If human life be carefully studied, we shall realize that there is work for all, interest and happiness for all, whether married or unmarried. "The world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," as Shakespeare assures us. Well, in every big and interesting drama we find a few distinguished characters with much to say and much to do, and a host of people whose mission is apparently much less important, but who are really essential to the piece. So, too, in every great enterprise, army, navy, or industry, there are a few chiefs, generals, admirals, and magnates; but, after all, for the execution of the design, soldiers, sailors, and working men and women are essential. Here is this drama that we call *Life*, and no doubt we see, or think we see, that some of us rise to very dignified and useful positions. We have the fathers, the mothers, the teachers and the priests, the parliaments and the municipalities, but, after all, how would the world fare without those men and women who may be looked upon as the muscles and the framework of the body politic? As representing these, we have

to look to an abundant supply of healthy men and women, among whom we find that some are married and some unmarried.

To the married couples we look for the generation of the children and for the care of their infant days, but surely something less than half the work of the world would be accomplished if it were not for the bachelors, both men and women. We need them for the perfection and for the filling-in of many pieces of useful work that would otherwise never be brought to perfection.

This is not the place to consider the sphere of usefulness of the unmarried men, but somehow the world takes it for granted that they are necessary, and that they have a definite work, and no doubt this assumption is absolutely correct; but the single woman has had scanty justice done to her, and so far as literature is concerned her work may have been unloved, unhonoured, and unsung. Does it not remain true that in the last resort the unmarried, the bachelor woman, is the one person to whom we all appeal in the tight corner and in the moment of emergency? Is she not the one human being above all others on whom we can rely and count, just the one not too much involved in her own joys, sorrows, inevitable duties and engagements, to be able, and indeed delighted, to come forward to give

a helping hand and a sympathizing glance in all the trials and perplexities of the world? The truth is that the bachelor woman is in a better position to help than is anyone else: she has not become ensnared in a network of duties and responsibilities, she is not bound by official relation to husband or to children, she has no axe of her own to grind, no selfish ends to serve; she is at leisure from herself and probably from her surroundings to help and to sympathize. Also probably the single woman has not been spoilt by friends and relations crowding round offering her exaggerated sympathy and undue help in the lesser ills of life. She has learned how to meet her troubles, and knows the remedies which are applicable to each set of difficulties. She is a tower of strength to brothers and sisters, to nephews and nieces, and to friends. All the same, the bachelor women are not to be considered as only some manner of "Universal Aunt," or glorified "enders and menders." Neither are they merely the pain-bearers and the burden-carriers to the community; they are all this, but they are more: they are individuals who by position and training, by their very freedom and their independence, are essential to the welfare of the nation. The people who look on them as women in want of a career or as seekers of means of subsistence, or as searchers for an anodyne for

wounded feelings, or questors for a spiritual bromide to allay undue irritability, make a great mistake. The unmarried woman is just a human being having the same gifts and faculties, the same capacity for health and for sickness, the same stops and strings to produce music or discord, as the rest of the community.

Taking the circumstances of her life on the whole, the bachelor woman has at any rate as good a chance as her married sister (possibly a better one) of health and happiness. It is true that there are certain experiences of life that do not fall to her share; it is true that, like certain knights of old, she is fighting a lone hand. Against these losses may be set the very evident gains of independence and of being, as someone once said to me, "a person in herself." Her affections, her intellect, and her will are hers without let or hindrance, without demur or question; and whereas the married woman must take thought for the feelings, the predilections, and even the prejudices of her husband and her children, the unmarried woman is free to satisfy the dictates of her conscience, and even to gratify her personal preferences.

In considering the question of celibacy, whether it be of men or women, it is necessary to remember that there is a wide difference between individuals who simply fail to marry and those

who for a definite object, such as the life of prayer or loyalty to a past love, have not desired to do so. In the case where it is simply accidental, the decision cannot be considered heroic; but where marriage and all that it implies has been intentionally and definitely renounced, and the individual (whether man or woman) has remained working in the world or has retired into the cloister and taken certain vows, the decision may in very deed be considered heroic. Whether it be loyalty to some definite lover who has been loved and lost, or to some high and greatly revered standard, or whether the person has remained single in order to cherish helpless children, old parents, or sick people, there has in very truth been self-sacrifice. In the cases recorded of virgin martyrs and the celibates of to-day, it is easy to understand that they enjoy a certain exaltation of spirit and the glow of accepted renunciation. Just as men wounded in battle frequently fail to realize their injuries, so those individuals who have devoted themselves to the good of family or cause to their own great loss are usually unconscious of the nobility of their actions. It is true that by their celibacy they may be serving family, nation, or race, but the hero is unconscious of all this, and would be much surprised if told that by such sacrifice untold good had been purchased for others.

We can all bear pain better when we see that it is accomplishing some definite object, or that it is as it were incense offered to our ideals or as glory given to our Supreme Lover. In either case, the great deed of renunciation is performed, and the spiritual exaltation which accompanies it is in very deed the champagne and morphia which transmute suffering into joy. The supreme example of all this is given us by Isaiah when in his portrait of God's suffering servant he tells us that "the burden of our transgression was upon him and by his stripes we are healed." Originally this was probably applicable to a devout Jew living in Babylon, who as the exponent of a higher type of religion was the fine flower of his race, the spotless witness to monotheism amidst a sensuous and idol-loving people. So nowadays we glory in the devotion of our X-ray men and our general practitioners, our submarine men, our aviators, and those men who went to the war, killed or ruined as the matter may chance. So in their different sphere it is with the women who have renounced the love of husband, the joys of home and of children, in order that the Christian nations may uphold their high ideal of monogamous marriage. But in order that the self-dedication may be complete and recognizable, in order that it shall take a worthy place in our national pantheon, it must be not

only complete, but bright, cheerful, and unflinching. Such self-sacrifice will unfailingly command the respect, admiration, and love of all who see it.

There is no doubt that in this manner we have up to the present upheld the sanctity of the Christian home; in spite of many difficulties and of wavering ideals among some who ought to be most steadfast, we have maintained the purity of Christian marriage, the union of one man to one woman until death do them part. The great foe to this Christian ideal has always been selfishness, the unbridled desire to have joy without duty, joy without sorrow, while there could be no better rebuke to this attitude than the self-abnegation of our single women; for whether they live celibate lives in the world, or whether they choose the security of the cloister, they are living witnesses to the whole world that a life of duty can also be a life of joy and thanksgiving.

The human race is very apt to judge itself and its circumstances in accordance with the verdict passed by public opinion, and if our single women of the twentieth century have among us the respect and the distinction that has been accorded to definite and professed virginity from the time of the Vestal Virgins, their power to influence aright the sexual life of the nation will be greatly enhanced. The influence of professional virginity

has been great in all ages and among many nations, but the importance of the opinion earned by them has been amply rewarded by the ungrudging respect and love the excellent influence of the Christian maidens have earned, so far in advance of all that could be attained before in pagan civilizations.

With a very little thought and reflection we can well understand how to secure this "two in the morning" courage: it is necessary for its exponents to feel that some great and even overwhelming ideal is at stake. They have to realize that the persistent power of the call is in proportion to the greatness of the idea and the insistence with which it is realized. This overmastering appeal for resolution and for courage depends on the greatness of the ideal manifesting itself in various ways, for instance in the greatness of the cause that is served. Why in the Great War did the "Whelps of the Lion" so gladly answer him? Why did the lumber-men from Canada, the sheep-ranchers and fruit-growers of Australia, why did the diamond and gold diggers of South Africa rush homewards? Why did our friends from India, from remotest Africa, and from so many parts of the globe, plunge themselves into the fog, the cold, and the unending mud of Flanders, if it were not that love of country, jealousy for her good name, and a

sense that the oath of the Fatherland bound its big children to see to its redemption. We had sworn to our own hurt, but as God our Father changes not, so we, our children, and our friends, made it possible for us to redeem our word and to save Europe.

Again, another foundation of the heroism and courage of the nation lay in the greatness of the sacrifice. It was the blood of the boys, it was the tears, the moans, and the sighs of mothers and lovers, that enhanced the value of their sacrifice. And in all this there was fellowship. What the one could do was possible for the rest, and so in flocks the children of the Empire, black and white, brown or tawny, were moved alike by passions of faith and pride, feeling the sacrifice of fortune and limb—yes, even of life itself—not only possible but joyful. Against this set the men and women who have no such ideal, no uplifting passion; they are indeed but dumb driven cattle who have no compensation. Such folk suffer without any recognized object, and are unsustained by the one common ambition to make good and to save their race. So they may love, but their love is not potent; they may fulfil their duty, but it is as duty only; they are unconscious of their glorious heritage, and heedless of a still more glorious future; but these are not the men and women of whom I write.

Chapter V

WOMEN WHO HAVE RENOUNCED WIFEHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD TO SPECIALIZE IN PRAYER

THE third class of unmarried women are those who have voluntarily renounced the joys and duties of the married state for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake.

There are plenty of people who say that such women are ill-advised and unwise; that the service of God as wife and mother is the highest, completest, and best service of which a woman is capable; that there is no form of worship to be rendered and no crown of love that cannot be secured by a good woman in the holy estate of matrimony. Without entering on a discussion as to which condition is the higher and the more blessed, a little reflection would lead us to recognize that we need not try to settle the question of good and better, high and higher, but that we must acknowledge that the joys and the duties of the two conditions, the married and the unmarried, are different from each other.

As St. Paul tells us: "There is a difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried

woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (1 Cor. vii. 34).

There is no doubt of the truth and common sense of these words. Many of us know their cogency by personal experience. As dictated by the marriage vow and as constrained by public opinion, the married woman who wishes to lead her married life in the best and most useful way must necessarily care for the things of the world so that she may please her husband. The type of home in which they are to live, their daily routine of life, their work, and their holidays, must be based on a well-considered scheme suggested probably by the one partner and approved by the other. From time to time one or other of the two may perhaps think that the arrangement could be improved on, but unless there be some serious reason to alter the scheme it is probably wiser for it to be maintained at any rate in its general trend. Of course, the wife is not the slave of the husband. Love, chivalry, and common sense would lead a good husband to a kindly consideration, not only of the wife's feelings and sentiments, but also of her less well-pronounced choices in life. All the same, the fact remains that if the *ménage* is to be happy, there must be but

one dominant will in its control; and yet in the course of years, and owing to the development both of husband and wife, and to the inevitable minor alterations in their characters, opinions, and aims, there must come times when the plans that suited them admirably as young people undergo change, and when what were supporting bands run the risk of becoming constraining fetters.

Still, it is true that on the whole a well-matched and loving couple will mature mainly upon the same lines as each other, and that they may hope for an ever deepening and increasing mutual understanding.

Single women, on the other hand, who have voluntarily renounced wifehood and motherhood, have not to make even minor adjustments. In their case necessary changes and the desirable discipline will come from other quarters.

We have to face the facts that many women are unsuited for marriage, that many women fail to find a mate, and that more than half of the marriageable women between the ages of fifteen and forty-five are not married. It is quite true that a considerable proportion of these women remain unmarried as it were by accident: they have no special intention of celibacy, and, indeed, a certain proportion of them are willing enough to marry should a right and suitable opportunity occur;

at the same time there are many others who remain unmarried because they wish to do so, some of them simply because in the unmarried state they have more freedom and are more or less the arbiters of their own fate. Some appear to have a certain repugnance to the bonds of matrimony, silken though those fetters be, and there are other classes of women, classes which are rapidly increasing at the present time, who quite definitely and intentionally avoid marriage because it interferes with their scheme of life and usefulness. There are many great women who, like Madame Curie and Madame Flammarion, worked with their husbands, and with them achieved wonderful usefulness which they themselves continued after their husbands' death. There are other women in the worlds of letters, science, law, physic, and divinity, who quite intentionally, guided by personal ambition, or more nobly by a desire to serve their day and generation, renounce the joys of wifehood and motherhood, and devote themselves to their profession. This is, of course, altogether different in intention from those who live the life of virginity with the intention of watching unto prayer. In all these cases the individuals desire time, opportunity, and a single aim to attain the object of their devotion. That object may be the healing of the sick, the instruction of the ignorant,

whether by ordinary education or as guides to the queen of sciences, Theology; but, after all, the aim was either selfish or altruistic. None of these groups of women, admirable as they are, offer their lives and their intellects for the service of God only, nor did they, as such, endeavour to lead the life of prayer. All these many aims and objects are lawful in themselves, they are desirable as tending to the perfection of character, they are useful—nay, they are invaluable to the race, and, like all other human deeds, they may be consecrated *ad majorem gloriam Dei*. Still, these are not members of that third class of unmarried women who have renounced the joys and the duties of the married state for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven.

As to them, there are the two well-known classes of Religious Communities, the Active and the Passive, the Open and the Enclosed Orders. This classification still leaves out of account a large body of women who, owing to some unsuitability in themselves, or to some failure to obtain admission to the cloister, are still responding to a definite call to serve God in virginity or widowhood in the life of Prayer. For instance, St. Catherine of Siena, who failed to obtain permission to enter a Community in Siena, remained intentionally virgin, and made, as she said, a consecrated cell in her own heart where she could

meet with God and serve Him in devout prayer. St. Catherine lived relatively near our own time, but we know that in the very early days of Christianity there existed in Rome armies of consecrated virgins and widows working and worshipping side by side with apostles and martyrs. They and the women like St. Catherine, and some even nowadays, lived a life within a life, and obeyed a vocation unknown to the world or even to intimate friends, some in their own homes, some in Settlements, and some among Deaconesses. These celibate lives are also a Divine vocation, and the dedication may be for a term of years or lifelong. In some cases such a life is dedicated by a religious ceremonial, but whether this be so or not, there is a solemn resolution that no earthly claims of husband, of children, or of the world, shall be permitted to interfere with the renunciation.

Very little reflection is sufficient to show how far more completely, and with how relatively little strain, such service can be rendered when, as in the case of Catherine Benin Casa, it is well known to family and friends that matrimony and suitors are not acceptable.

Putting aside for the moment further consideration of the relative influence upon character and happiness of the married and unmarried states, it is necessary to consider in what ways these

different classes of women are able to serve the State and the Race. Looked at in the most superficial way, it is probable that most people will unhesitatingly decide in favour of the wife and mother. They will appeal to the wife's well-known influence over her husband, to her sympathy, to her unselfish desire to promote the welfare and the happiness of her man, and above all to the beauty and the value of her motherly preoccupations; and although the years have gone by in which unmarried women were looked upon with half-pitying depreciation, it unfortunately remains true that apart from their recognized value in some of the ordinary employments, appointments, and positions of life, their value as dedicated women is not so readily appreciated.

There are two great Orders of Communities in the Church, the Marthas and the Marys, the Active and the Contemplative. Among the dedicated women whose lives are specially vowed to the service of God and man, by far the greater number are busy with much the same sort of duties as fall to the share of unmarried women who are not under vows. Such are the members of those Communities who nurse the sick, teach the ignorant, recover the fallen, care for the children, the aged, and the defective in mind or body. These women are bound by the threefold

vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, and they bear the same relation to other women not under vows as the soldier bears to those men who serve King and Country, but who are not under discipline, and who are bound to their self-imposed duties by nothing but their own conscience. Just as the non-professional soldier is of great importance to the community, so too are those women we have mentioned who work each according to her own light, not bound nor sustained by the threefold vows.

There is much to be said for the value both of the professional and the volunteer, but undoubtedly where strenuous, difficult, and possibly distasteful work has to be done regularly for long years, the person responsible for its performance would be thankful to be able to rely on a body of fellow-workers who would bring not only enthusiasm and good will to the task, but also the unhesitating obedience and the strenuous endeavour which is never tired, because it knows that the task appointed has to be accomplished; the spirit that led the subaltern to exclaim, "Yes! certainly the thing can be done! I have the order in my pocket."

These Marthas, then, are indeed bound by their threefold vow, Poverty, Obedience, and Chastity, and under the heading of Obedience they render a cheerful submission to their Superior

and to the officers appointed by her. They live under discipline; having a common table, definite hours of rest, work, and sleep, they keep the Daily Hours of the Church, and are present at such other services as may be prescribed in their Rule. The great point is that they live under Discipline, that they are not free to choose *when* they will work, *what* they will wear, and what they will eat—in brief, the groundwork of their lives resembles that of the men in the fighting services.

The Reverend Mother and her representatives hold much the position of the Colonel in the regiment, the Captain on the ship, and every member of the Community, like every man in the Regiment, every sailor on the ship, has a definite status, definite duties, and must under all circumstances discharge these duties with the accuracy of every cog, no matter how small, in a machine. Indeed, the discipline is in some respects stronger than is that of the fighting services, for the Sister in a Community has no personal possessions: her books of devotion, the tools necessary to her work, and even so minor an affair as a pocket-handkerchief, does not belong to her as an individual, it is the property of the Community, and is set apart for her use for the time being.

At the same time members of a Community

are in a sense remarkably free and without care. Everything is provided for them, shelter, warmth, food, clothes, necessary implements, and books; if they are sick, both doctor and nurse are available for their restoration to health; when they grow old they do not know care, nor are they dependent on any outside charity. From the time of Profession until the end of earthly life all that is necessary is provided for the Sister, and in addition there is, in the Communities, owing to a gracious Providence, a wonderful amount of love and a singular absence of envy, malice, and other human frailties. Not that becoming a Sister confers immunity from sin and from temptation, but the conditions of a Sister's life are such as to shelter her very substantially from both sin and temptation, and to set her free, as St. Paul says, "to please the Lord."

But are there no misfits, no instances of women who have miscalculated their strength or misunderstood their yearnings? Are there not some who have taken the habit and the vows from a misinterpretation of the artistic part of the convent life? Some to whom the lovely music, the stately ritual, the incense, the flowers, and the whole sensuous side of worship has appeared to be the predominant note? Do some young enthusiasts dedicate their lives and their gifts, hoping that the heavenly Bridegroom will always

smile on them, and who expect the early gift of the crown when they have not as yet borne the cross? Such mistakes must occasionally occur; nothing earthly is perfect; any of us may make a blunder, as, indeed, occurs in all the vocations of life; but with regard to religious Communities the safeguards are strong and numerous. The aspirant, whether young, beautiful and gifted, or middle-aged and dull, has first to make it right with her own family; she then has to pass through the Postulancy, and during those months she is very much the servant of the Community, dressed in plain and often very unbecoming clothes; her work will probably embrace cooking and cleaning, her strength will be tested by hard manual work, and unless her desire to enter the Sisterhood be founded on genuine humility and a strong but quiet determination to serve God, she will find herself not only hard-worked and so tired that she does not feel disposed for prayer, but she will have abundant occasion to realize that the religious life is not founded on happy feelings, nor on the delights of the senses, clothing, and postures like Saints depicted in stained-glass windows. She will find that it is not based on such considerations, but on obedience to orders which she often does not understand and probably deprecates, and on that uncommon but necessary attitude of mind which says, "I am

nothing, I have nothing, I want nothing, I love nothing but Thee, my God."

The next safeguard comes at the end of Postulancy, during the Novitiate. The clothing is now more like what a young enthusiast would think was suitable for an embryonic saint. There is distinct comfort in the wearing of the beautiful white veil. The work, too, is somewhat less menial, but it is quite as hard, and to the material work is now added much more instruction both in the theory and practice of the religious life. The Novice is instructed in her "manners" towards the Reverend Mother and the other officers of the Community, more especially towards the Novice Mistress, her own immediate Superior. If in accordance with the customs of young people of the present day the Novice has been in the habit of using unparliamentary language, she is neither scolded nor slapped, but the expletive always draws forth the mild remonstrance "We do not use those words here."

In addition to the intellectual and the social training of the Novice, she soon finds she is not expected to have visions, trances, or spiritual joys. Such occurrences are rare in any Convent and in any rank of Religious. Nor are they welcomed by the Authorities. What is expected is the spirit of obedience to superiors, of kindness and camaraderie to equals, and a habit of seeing

our Blessed Lord in all who claim our help and our charity.

The third test comes with Profession, when the white veil must disappear, and the Sister must make full proof of her ministry, and so conduct herself as to make sure of election by the Community if she still desires adoption into the family.

In ordinary natural families children are born of the father and mother, and the elder children and more distant relations must take them as they are. They may be healthy, beautiful, clever, and desirable, or they may be as unwelcome and as detrimental to the family as it is possible to imagine; however, there they are, and must be put up with. It is not so in a Sisterhood. The Postulant, of course, might be looked on as a young bear or unlicked cub, but by the time that the Postulancy has ended and the training and education of the Novice are complete, the Reverend Mother and the Community have a right to say whether or no the would-be Sister shall be born into their circle. Sometimes she is rejected for her own sake, it being evident that there is something incompatible between her and the environment she thinks she desires. Sometimes the Community defends itself against the admission of an aspirant who would certainly be unhappy, and the cause of unhappiness to it.

And so, fit or unfit, the aspirant, once elected, becomes a member of the family.

Yet once again, after the lapse of years, the Sister is called upon to seek, or not to seek, "solemn vows" which would bind her to the Community for life. Is it wonderful that there are so few misfits after so many precautions?

So far the Marthas, and probably there is comparatively little doubt in the practical English mind that these members of active Orders are really efficient servants of the State, and that their devotion to God and man leads them to a life useful and honourable, which deservedly secures them a certain recognition and a respect which is more than tolerance. The roughest of street urchins suspends his buffoonery whilst "Sister" is present, and bad deeds as well as bad language are rare in her presence. She is well known to be the friend of all and to tolerate no evil, while the ill-doer who is prepared to fight the police yields peacefully to her good influence. The Active Sisters have therefore gradually secured for themselves an assured position in our streets and slums, but the Contemplative Orders are still scarcely understood. They are supposed to be idle, soft, and self-seeking, Romanizing, and absolutely without use or purposes in the national life. Even educated men and women fail

to see that the Marys have any duties or that their work has any value. Selfishness and slothfulness are attributed to them by some people, while another class holds them to be sentimental and self-indulgent individuals, self-deluded, and deluders of their neighbours too. Even among people who consider themselves "religious," and who would not intentionally hold an uncharitable or an untrue opinion about "holy Sisters," they are supposed to lead a perfectly impossible life, one of unattainable perfection, raised above all sin and even all temptation to sin—a life in which obedience to superiors, overflowing charity to comrades, and of devotion to prayer for sick and sinful humanity, comes as naturally and as easily as do flight and song to birds.

All these opinions are mistaken and are founded on an entire ignorance of the Sisters' aims and objects. As a matter of fact the Contemplative Orders have to work very hard. There is probably no work undertaken by body or mind that is at once so difficult and so exhausting as is Prayer, and there is no profession which needs so much courage, fortitude, and resource as does that of the men and women who have dedicated themselves to lifelong conflict with spiritual evil.

There was approximately superhuman wisdom in the Rule of Life promulgated by the founders

of the Enclosed or Contemplative Orders. Life in them was subdivided into hours of work and sleep, as, indeed, all human life must be; but the subdivision of the time allotted to work was into hours devoted to Prayer and hours devoted to manual labour. The Benedictine of old, having fulfilled his directly spiritual task, turned with a sense of relief and joy, not to conversation or to any of the small idlenesses with which we are wont to relieve our weariness, but to a faithful and vigorous use of the spade and hoe, the axe, the chisel, and the hammer.

In this way muscles and digestive organs were maintained in health and vigour, and the individual who might have been communing with angels and archangels and all the company of Heaven found relaxation and joy in the cultivation of the ground and in the kindly care of ox and horse, of kine and sheep.

With the lapse of time and with the development of learning came some alteration in the employments of Enclosed Brothers and Sisters, and while the men took more readily to study and to authorship, the women perfected themselves in artistry, and more especially in the exquisite embroideries and fabrication of sacred vestments.

It is easy to recognize the beauty of lives thus spent in prayer and in service, but still the

question comes, *Cui bono?* It may be well for a Sister to live in a charming, peaceful, well-ordered life of prayer and praise, of meditation and of artistic work, but what has she done, and what can she do that could not be done as well, or indeed better, by a woman not under vows, a woman who was free to take on herself at any time the more natural and fruitful life of wife and mother, or who at any rate would feel that the life of doctor or nurse, of schoolmistress or welfare-worker, would satisfy her highest ambitions. Why, O why, this waste of Life's ointment, why this cramping, narrowing, and, yes, let us say it, this selfish determination to lead a secluded life far from the madding crowd?

The women who enter the Enclosed Orders are usually young, gently born, well bred, well educated, and more or less admirably fitted to take an honourable and honoured part in the life that is natural to their family and race. Why then embrace the cloister?

The answer to these questions comes readily enough to those of us who have tried to lead the life which is at once religious and without enclosure. The very fact that we are still in the world, and that the world makes constant, varied, and very natural claims on our time and strength, would certainly justify some individuals in each

generation in seeking the protection of the cloister.

It is as clear as day that if any individual is to become an expert in any art, any profession, or industry, he or she must have a sufficient time for acquiring the necessary knowledge and dexterity. Teachers must be provided, and during the time of training the pupil's maintenance must be assured. It is true that the first and most important preparation for the painter, the poet, the sculptor, or any other artist, must be the inspiration and call to the exercise of the gift; all the same, the heaven-born genius is badly handicapped when he is called upon to exercise his gift without the necessary training. Just so a young man or woman called may be, as was Isaiah or Jeremiah, in early youth to be a chosen servant of the Lord must be much hindered in the execution of the Divine mission by deficiency of preparation. Our faculties work best when one and all have been trained so as to elicit their best development and to ensure their integrity.

It is fair to suppose that in the case of the Active Orders, gifts whereby they are to serve as doctor or nurse, or educationalist or social worker, may be trained in the world, and that their acquirement of obedience, recollection, and other cloistral virtues may come subsequently; but in the case of the Contemplative Orders, where the

gifts to be perfected are those of renunciation and mental prayer, that training must precede all others, and it is well that the character of mind and the point of view essential to their success in life shall be acquired during the formative years. If it be true that prayer is the "simplest form of speech that infant lips can try," it is equally true that "prayer is the sublimest strain to reach the Majesty on high," and the gradual acquirement of the power of prayer, the slow, difficult training of body, soul, and spirit, can seldom be carried out except in some "great cloister's stillness."

The world knows very little of its own greatest needs. It entirely fails to realize that as a general rule the acquisition of the power to pray, the ability to live in the spirit of prayer, comes with more difficulty than the acquisition of a proportional amount of mathematical ripeness or the real intimate knowledge of a language which alone makes one the freeman of that speech. The power to talk to God, the ability to hear and to comprehend His speech to us, does not come by intuition. Although a gifted musician must have a natural ear for music, the possession of the natural ear does not enable him to interpret on the one hand or to originate heavenly melodies on the other; just so the ability to catch the accents of that "still small voice," and to under-

stand the infallible guidance it gives, needs an extraordinary and intensive training by him who will take of the "things of Christ and will show them unto us."

Even when the capacity for prayer has been acquired, the individual who is to represent the needs and wants of other souls, who is to intercede for conditions perhaps only dimly realized by the intercessor, must need very special grace and a peculiar aloofness from earthly calls, cares, and duties. How often the cry goes up from the men and women overburdened with family, environmental, and national cares, "Brethren, pray for us": and what is to happen if the person appealed to has neither the ability, the strength, nor the leisure to bestow the requested charity?

These contemplative men and women are the experts of prayer, and as we turn to our lawyer or our physician, so may we turn to one of them when we are sore distressed because of the way.

Let no one think that the life of the Counsels, as they are called, is an easy and selfish life. Although frequently abounding in joy and peace, and although practically always sustained by the knowledge of the infinite goodness and patience of God, it is a life which abounds in difficulties. There are frequent seasons of spiritual dryness

and darkness, times when it is realized that obedience and self-renunciation are no more *naturally* welcome in the cloister than in the world; times when the necessary subordination to the officer-in-charge is bitter; when perfect love and charity to comrades are difficult; times when, although the whole direction of the life is heavenward, and although the aim is high, although there are many helps and happy glimpses of future glory, it is impossible not to recognize how great is the need for repentance, how disheartening is the struggle, and how hard is the whole life to our frail humanity. Anyone who thinks that these views are mistaken should read St. Teresa's autobiography; they would there learn with how much difficulty she renounced the recollection of her aristocratic birth, and of the personal charm which was her dower in proud Castilian society. They would learn with what joy she responded to a call to the parlour, with what peculiar avidity she listened to the flattering conversation of family and friends, and all this although she knew that she was bartering her heavenly joy and was playing her Divine Lover false. Even after she had conquered her love of worldly society, and, indeed, had accomplished much of her wonderful task in securing the regeneration of the Carmelite Communities, she yet, like Saints in all ages, was occasionally the

victim of wandering thoughts on holy occasions, as, for instance, at a certain time of which she writes to her Confessor. St. Teresa was walking to the early Eucharist in the Chapel, and was greatly annoyed by chips and rubbish left by the workmen in its near precincts. However, having entered the Chapel and kneeling in the choir, she recollected herself, and strove to offer an undivided devotion. As Satan or ill-luck would have it, she saw the Sister kneeling in front of her was suffering from a sandal, the sole of which was coming away from the upper. Her indignation against such failure of seemliness and order strove victoriously against a suitable direction of her intention. She winds up the story with her accustomed humour, saying, "And so, dear Father, you now know what sort of a daughter you have."

What then is the life in the Enclosed Orders? Naturally the main business is Prayer. The members of such Communities are specialists in this service to the State; they are the Lord's Remembrancers, offering continuous prayer and praise, intercession and supplication, on behalf of a heedless, self-neglectful world. They have the knowledge and they have the leisure that no one else has, the knowledge of what is wanted, and of how the unruly wills and affections of sinful men may be brought into conformity with the Divine

will. They have the leisure for an intensive study of Scripture, and for much ascetic and mystical duty. In a sense one may say that they are the essential links between squalor and sin on the one hand, and purity and peace on the other.

Sancta Sophia, Section IV, Chapter II, has these words: "Those who are inexperienced may, and often do, call this a state of idleness and unprofitable cessation, as Martha complained against her sister Mary; but those who have attained to a taste of it know it to be the *business of all businesses*, as St. Bernard calls it. True it is they do not, without a special and certain inspiration from God, interest themselves in external businesses, nor perhaps employ much of their time and devotions in expressed prayers for common necessities; yet those inexpressible devotions which they exercise, and in which they tacitly involve the needs of the whole Church, are far more prevalent with God than the busy endeavours and prayers of ten thousand others. A few such secret and unknown servants of God are the chariots and horsemen, the strength and bulwarks of the kingdoms and churches where they live."

From this we see that the view of mediæval mystics coincided with those of the present day, and while the active orders are most conspicuously useful in the external works of charity, in teaching,

and by all means setting forth the glory of God and the welfare of those among whom they live, yet we should fare badly if there were not Communities sheltered from outside work, from worldly cares, and from casual annoyances, who are able to devote their whole lives without let or hindrance to the secret service of that Kingdom of God which is within us, the reign of which cometh not with observation.

Chapter VI

MYSTICISM AS A REMEDIAL FORCE

THIS chapter is not written because bachelor women are supposed to be specially inclined to Mysticism, nor because it is viewed as being a consolation in life, even if such were needed. As a matter of fact, it is much confused with Asceticism on the one hand, and with a curious condition of mind, deficient in the affections and sadly lacking in common sense, on the other. Both these views are entirely mistaken; it is quite possible for anyone to be an ascetic, and from motives of penance or in obedience to deny themselves joy and friends, food and warmth, and yet never catch a passing glimpse of the meaning of Mysticism. One sees quite readily how from the earliest days men and women have denied themselves even the very necessaries of life, but that has not made them mystics. Their intention, that is, the motive-power of their self-denial, was not the one that was necessary for the production of such grace and happiness. The person who perhaps put the matter most clearly was St. Paul, as, for instance, when he says, "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give

my body to be burned, and have not charity [that is to say love], it profiteth me nothing," and so, whether we strip ourselves bare in order to help our fellow-men, or whether we impoverish ourselves in body, mind, and spirit, hoping thereby to please our Heavenly Father, we do not necessarily succeed in obtaining the grace and comfort of mysticism. This, it appears to me, is the result partly of a joyful and a complete renunciation of the individual's own intention, way, or desire, the whole being shot through with love to and of God, so that whether everything be pleasant or unpleasant, happy and glorious, or entirely contrary to our own desires, all shall be irradiated by the light of His countenance. The only illustration that occurs to me of this condition of things is the extraordinary change wrought by sunshine on a landscape, or by a loving and understanding smile on the face of a friend. The component parts of a landscape, the mountains, the rivers, the trees, the grass, and the flowers, all existed before the rays touched them; but the colour, form, and glory of the whole required the touch of the sun to awaken its beauty, and in the same way the human face divine is lighted up by the magic of a smile. The path of the most earnest Christian, without human renunciation on the one side and the Divine acceptance on the other, remains the

path of duty only, but with it, it is to be realized how truly blessed are those sufficiently pure in heart that they may see God. All other love is poor, thin, and cold in comparison with this love. All earthly love must be taken as its faintest representation only: the love of the bridegroom for the bride, the mother for her infant, and of one friend for another, are as it were the faintest intimations of the passion of love which may exist between the creature and the Creator.

Surely mysticism thus understood can warm, nourish, and beatify the dullest and slowest of mortals, married or unmarried.

Let us see what some remarkable mystics achieved under the influence of this force. For instance, St. Catherine of Siena. She was amongst the best lovers in the world, and amongst the greatest of the mystics. St. Catherine was no nun, she belonged to no religious Order, her remarkable prayers and equally remarkable works were all achieved in the full light of open day. Her father, good man, could not understand why Catherine rejected so many suitors, and why she had no appreciation of the satisfactory future that seemed to be opening out before her. In extreme youth she wanted to do something to show her devotion to God's service and her separation from everyday life. Such, however, was not the manner of life to which she was called. She was

warned of God that by His will she should remain in the world, live in the old town of Siena with her very ordinary father and mother, among the friends and neighbours with whom she had grown up. All her preparation for His service was to be within, a hallowed cell in her heart to which she could retire, not from her *work*, but from the *demands of her social world*. Her influence and power of work strengthened with her strength and ripened as life advanced. Her power to help and her influence over her disciples continually increased, until among them was numbered the Pope himself, who was recalled to a sense of his duty, and returned at Catherine's advice from Avignon to Rome.

Again, one might take as another instance of one who in weakness was made strong, whose judgment ripened and developed amid the difficulties and contradictions of life, St. Catherine of Genoa. A lady of gentle birth, married in youth to a particularly difficult husband, she became the wise and sympathetic matron of a great hospital, in those distant days when the function of the nurse was scarcely separated from that of the doctor, and when there was comparatively little to guide or to help in her difficult and strenuous task. St. Catherine of Genoa had a further handicap in long-drawn-out illness and difficult circumstances. Baron von Hügel traces for us the

stages of St. Catherine's life, and shows us how the love of God was to her the support and inspiration of her splendid career.

And lastly, lest you should be wearied, a few words only about St. Teresa, the great Spanish mystic. She was a girl of noble family, who very early professed that she had renounced the world, and sought spiritual rank among the barefooted Carmelites. She was full of the joy of life, impetuous, devoted to gaiety, and, as she tells us, much disposed to worldly conversation. Little by little her Divine Lover obtained entire possession of her heart, the submission of her will, and indeed of her whole body, soul, and spirit. In obedience to her confessors St. Teresa has left to the world a full and most interesting history of her life. She tells us with what difficulty, internal and external, she reformed her Order, how she went from town to town laying the foundation of new Houses of Prayer, fresh Communities of holy women, and she lets us see how the flood of her river of life gradually purified itself, how it steadied down into a calm, peaceful flow, until in the crystal clear depths of her soul God could see His own likeness and be satisfied with it. St. Teresa was rich in the gift of humour, so rich that although her recital has been translated from Spanish into most modern European languages and into Latin, we still read

in good idiomatic English the direct and clear record of the fruit borne of love and renunciation in her life.

The joys of mysticism were, however, not confined to women of the Latin race, for here in England itself, both in everyday life in the shelter of the cloister and in isolation as anchoresses, we have plenty of women who chose the sunshine of heaven to all the glamour and charm of the present world. Such a woman was Mother Julian of Norwich, a very remarkable person. She has left most interesting writings, especially one called *The Revelations of Divine Love*. The language is quaint, and, perhaps like other books of olden days, those who would enjoy it deeply must have some little knowledge of the English of those bygone years. Still, whether of yesterday or to-day, we can all understand the robust faith, love, and hope which inspired the saintly woman to leave on record her conviction: "All will be well, all must be well—nay, all is well."

Nearer to our own days, and so modern that the records of her might have been written yesterday, we have the life and the letters of Dame Gertrude More, the granddaughter of Sir Thomas. She and some other ladies who were spiritual children of Father Baker were carefully trained by him, and have left to the world a

legacy of sweetness and good sense that St. Teresa herself would not be ashamed to own.

Many people, not understanding the essence of mysticism, look upon it as a matter of visions, raptures, trances, and such adventitious circumstances. Such occurrences may be found in the records of some of the mystics, but they are neither essential nor universal, and where they exist they are to a great extent dependent on race and climate, and perhaps to a certain extent on sex and temperament. It may be noticed that while there is little of the non-essential to be found in the stories of great mystics as recorded by themselves, and even in those instances where such things are reported they are treated in the most sober and matter-of-fact way, St. Paul, in recording his own experience, says quite calmly that he was "rapt to the third heaven," and there heard words that were not lawful, or rather possible, to utter. Indeed, so natural is St. Paul's story, so simple are his records of the many graces conferred on him, that one can read his letters year after year, and only recognize the supernaturality of his experiences when we look for them. Always reverent, usually clear cut and sharp, but simplicity itself, are his many experiences, as, for instance, when his first great vision on the Damascus road accomplished his wonderful conversion; when he was called to Macedonia;

when he was ordered to devote himself to the Gentiles; or in the moment of shipwreck—there is always apparent the same absolute faith, the same honesty of conviction, and, as he says himself, the same obedience to the heavenly vision.

As one reflects on the nature and on the definitions of mysticism, the more assured does one become that the definition ought to be a condition of absolute obedience to the will of God, dictated, sustained, and irradiated by a love which is as far beyond all earthly love as God is above man and heaven above earth. The two forms of love, or the two occasions of love, human and divine, never come into competition with each other; they differ as widely in quantity and intensity as they do in quality and in nature. Love as between human beings may be parental and filial: the love of the mother for the child, the love of the infant for its mother; so too may there be the love of man for woman, and of bride for bridegroom; the passion of patriotism, and the tender love of David for Jonathan, which was, we are told, as the knitting together of two souls. Each one and all of these may be used as types and shadows of the love which exists between God and man, the Creator and the created; but this latter love, human and divine, the extraordinary passion of the Infinitely Great for the infinitesimally small, is the motive-power

of the whole universe; it is something which cannot be argued about, and which cannot be described, but it is the *primum mobile* of earth, the justification of Paradise, and the great reward of the Hereafter. Many of our sisters and brothers have felt it, but no one can either explain or describe this love.

> But what to those who find?
> Ah this, nor tongue nor pen can show,
> The love of Jesus! what it is
> None but His loved ones know.

Or as St. Francis Xavier says of our love to God:—

> Not with the hope of gaining aught,
> Not seeking a reward;
> But as Thyself hast lovèd me,
> O ever loving Lord.

Mysticism, then, is something infinitely more sublime and infinitely more simple than the attitude of mind that has frequently been called mystic. It is evident that amongst all those ranks of people playing their part in the drama of life, the single woman has unequalled opportunities for the practice of mysticism. By the postulates of her state, owning no special allegiance to parents or to husband, free and unfettered in her beliefs and in her actions, she enjoys an inner freedom infinitely rare and beautiful. She is held only with the silken cords

of love, and provided she is true to the diagram of her own life and to the ideal which she must serve, she is wonderfully free—free alike from family and friends, from community rules and from those necessary obligations which dictate certain lines within which all who are banded together in a common object must serve. It is of course true that her will and intention must be really surrendered, but not necessarily to those who would claim obedience and discipline to human laws and regulations.

In order to secure harmony, and also to save lamentable waste of time in the obtaining of experience both as to renunciation and to prayer, such books as Father Augustine Baker's *Sancta Sophia* should be read. There is an old-world fragrance about them reminiscent of lavender and of the delicate courtesy of olden days. Here we shall find perfectly straight and simple advice as to conquest over self, and as to the gradual discernment of both the highways and the by-ways of prayer.

So that in addition to the consideration of mortification or self-renunciation we have to consider, as the other indispensable condition of obtaining mystic light, the human soul must practise always and everywhere the various forms of prayer. Father Baker teaches us that prayer is the business of all businesses, our means of

communication with God, and the chief bone of contention between ourselves and the devil. This little book is not a treatise on prayer, but perhaps here a few words may be permitted as to the meaning of that much misunderstood word. Prayer is not petition or supplication only—that is mere selfishness asking for what we want; and even if to our petition and supplication for ourselves we add intercession for others, still the prayer is not complete. Whatever else it lacks, it must include worship, the praise and thanksgiving we owe to God partly for all that He is, and partly for all that He has done for us. Thanksgiving and praise are, therefore, integral parts of prayer. The mystics tell us that one reason why our prayers are so maimed and so lamed is because we are nearly always in a hurry about them. "No time," say we, and yet there was a fine old saying some hundreds of years ago, "That Mass and meat hinder no man," and we shall assuredly find that if we rigidly set apart even ten minutes night and morning to be spent on prayer we shall have redeemed more than twenty minutes for our bounden duty and service in other ways.

The mystics also tell us that one great error committed by nearly all men is that we rush into God's presence, and with little perception of the awe and reverence due to Him, we immediately begin to make our requests. This is not what we

should do at Buckingham Palace. We should approach our King with the submission and deference that is due to his position, and we should not venture to begin to ask for favours without giving him a chance of speaking to us first. So in prayer we must observe the decencies of the occasion. A person going up for knighthood in recognition of his services kneels before the King and accounts the light stroke of the King's sword on his shoulder as one of the privileges of his life. It is true that he does not dawdle, but equally true that he listens for a moment to see whether the King has any gracious commendation to bestow or any order to make; and the person who approaches the King of heaven and earth in prayer should equally make a pause to see whether a happy sense of acceptability may come to him, or whether in the depths of his own heart "the still small voice" gives some order, some direction, or some solution of one's many problems. Indeed, we are told that if you have but one quarter of a hour to give to prayer, five minutes, at any rate, should be used in this reverent waiting for praise or blame, forgiveness and acceptance. To all this would most naturally follow the examination of our life, and if we have been thinking, we probably know what we have done wrong; if we do not recognize our own troubles, the 13th Chapter of

the First Corinthians affords us an admirable model. When the soul is convinced of her sinfulness, the next step is to tell God all about it, and so we come to confession, and a very good form is to be found in the 51st Psalm, and another in the 143rd.

Having made our confession, the next thing that fills our hearts is thanksgiving and joy. You would think that we would necessarily have plenty to say about this, but if we are awkward and tongue-tied, we can surely thank God in the words of the Psalmist as provided in the 103rd Psalm, "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise His holy name." Now comes the time when we can cheerfully accept the ruling of our lives suggested by God's providence. It is true that we want many things, but sometimes, as is the case with little children in their relations to their father, we may want what is not really good for us, and so if we be well brought up children we shall be cheerfully willing to accomplish all that God has in His mind for us, and we shall remember that our cheerfulness is not to be diminished because the person interpreting God's will is someone that we do not like or do not understand.

As to petitions, I suppose we must remember that in prayer there is nothing selfish. We are quite right to ask for what we want, but let us

redeem that inevitable self-centredness by an equally fervent desire that our brethren shall have all that is good and necessary for them, even those things that they do not know they need. And when the time has run out and we have to translate prayer into action, let us remember where and Who our Father is, conclude the prayer as He has suggested we should do, and let us go our way strengthened by those relatively few minutes with which we propose to begin and to end our day.

By the teachers of mysticism in all ages, Christian life is considered as being divided into three stages, of which the first is *Purification*, whereby we renounce error, the second *Illumination*, whereby we acquire a knowledge of truth, and the way of *Union*, whereby we hope to see God. This consideration derives a part of its authority and value from one of the Beatitudes as recorded by St. Matthew, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"; and one of the mystics, Father Baker, in his great book, *Sancta Sophia*, quotes from the well-known *Scala Perfectionis* of Walter Hilton, which runs as follows:

> "There was a man who had a great desire to go to Jerusalem: and because he knew not the right way, he addressed himself for advice to one that he hoped was not un-

skilful in it, and asked him whether there was any way passable thither. The other answered, that the way thither was both long and full of very great difficulties: yea, that there were many ways that seemed and promised to lead thither, but the dangers of them were too great. Nevertheless, one way he knew which if he would diligently pursue according to the directions and marks that he would give him—though, said he, I cannot promise thee a security from many frights, beatings, and other ill-usage, and temptations of all kinds; but if thou canst have courage and patience enough to suffer them without quarrelling, or resisting, or troubling thyself, and so pass them having this only in thy mind, and sometimes on thy tongue, I have naught, I am naught, I desire naught but to be at Jerusalem—my life for thine thou wilt escape safe with thy life, and in a competent time arrive thither.

"The pilgrim, overjoyed with this news, answered, So I may have my life safe, and may at last come to the place I above all things only desire, I care not what miseries I suffer in the way. Therefore let me know only what course I am to take, and God willing I will not fail to observe carefully your directions. The guide replied: Since

thou hast so good a will, though I myself never was so happy as to be in Jerusalem, notwithstanding be confident that by the instructions that I shall give thee if thou wilt follow them thou wilt come safe to thy journey's end. Now the advice that I am to give thee in brief is this, before thou set the first step into the highway that leads thither, thou must be firmly grounded in the true Catholic faith; moreover, whatsoever sins thou findest in thy conscience, thou must seek to purge them away by hearty penance and absolution, according to the laws of the Church. This being done, begin thy journey in God's name, but be sure to go furnished with two necessary instruments, humility and charity, both which are contained in the afore-mentioned speech which must always be ready in thy mind: *I am naught, I have naught, I desire but only one thing, and that is our Lord Jesus, and to be with Him at peace at Jerusalem.*"

Undoubtedly Hilton went to the root of the matter: the two absolutely essential qualifications for the vision of God are the conviction of our own nothingness and little value on the one hand, and on the other the earnestness of our desire to be with Jesus. This is the foundation of all

mysticism, and on the understanding of these necessities is based the threefold divisions of the mystic life. No one would be surprised to hear that it begins with the life of Purgation. We need to be divested of all our previous ideas about our own value, we have to recognize that we are nothing and have nothing. Of course, it looks like nonsense to say that we *are nothing* when the place conceded to us in the world shows that our fellow-creatures agree with us in thinking that we are something of value, and how can we say "I have not" when our bankbooks assure us that we have? All the same, what we require for the commerce of Heaven are gifts and graces entirely unlike those that have won for us our position in the world, while our pounds, shillings, and pence in that great mart are of no more value than cowrie shells would be in some London emporium. Therefore "I am naught, I have naught," are spiritually true. But again, not only we are and have nothing, but the minus side of our account is hugely large, and as we find out from time to time we abound in all those things which must go to the debit side. We are not pure in heart, nor pure in spirit, we do not seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and our desire to see the King of Heaven is small indeed. Looked at from this point of view, it is quite easy to understand that the first portion of

our way to the Kingdom must necessarily be the so-called Purgative way of self-renunciation, of giving up our own ways, our own views, and our own desires.

According to the old mystics, the second stage of the journey was called the *Illuminative way.* Having purged out the bad things, we now require the light of God to enable us to realize and to obtain those things which are lovely and of good report. We want God's light upon our road, otherwise we cannot see or follow it. This is the light by which we have during the Purgative state realized our own destitution and nothingness, and by which we now learn not only to value and to love our fellow-creatures, but also to gain some small perception of the infinite glory and magnificence of God Himself and of His great love to us, His children. And so we are led to the third and closing stage of the journey, the *Life of Union.* This is the goal, the highest attainable state on earth, and the fitting preparation for the life of the hereafter. Although the union of the human soul with God may be imaged by the union of a raindrop with the ocean, even so it is a true union, and one for which the mystic love and mystic devotion to God is our earthly preparation.

INDEX