

INTO THEIR COMPANY'

A BOOK FOR A MODERN GIRL
ON LOVE AND MARRIAGE

by
A Medical Woman, A Girl and A Wife
with an Introduction by
The Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J.

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UNTO ourselves too, who are sinners, but yet thy servants, and who put their trust in the multitude of thy tender mercies, vouchsafe to bestow some part and fellowship with . . . Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecily, Anastasia and with all thy Saints. *Into Their Company*, do thou, we beseech thee, admit us, not weighing our merits but freely pardoning us our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(From the Canon of the Mass.)

THE writers wish to acknowledge much valuable help and criticism that they have received from several friends whilst this little book was in preparation.

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INTRODUCTION

BY REV. C. C. MARTINDALE, S J.

ASKED to write this book, I refused, recognising that I lacked precisely the qualities which are possessed by the lady whom I begged to undertake it, and who has in fact written a great part of it.

I felt it ought not to be written by a man at all, least of any perhaps a priest, though several priests were among those who kindly suggested my attempting it. I dare say that not even a George Meredith or a Balzac understood women so well as a woman does ! I have no theories and few enough surmises about the difference between the psychology of men and that of women ; but I think it is enormously doubtful that a man will properly understand at any rate a growing girl. Boys are hard enough to understand, with their moods and sudden impulses and mysticisms and animalities ; but after all, a man has been a boy, completely as he may forget the fact and deny he was ever ' like that '—though never is he so un-youthful as when he is apeing youth after once he has grown old. But I should think that

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only the wisest and kindest and most generous-minded and unaffected of women is likely really to remember what it meant to be a girl. And this book is meant for girls who have not yet done growing, just as on the whole *The Difficult Commandment*¹ was intended for young men not yet 'set,' though in point of fact older men seem to have liked and used it too.

Again, I definitely thought that while possibly it *need* not be written by a doctor, it ought to be. Hence I approached a lady who is a very well-known doctor, and she has consulted much, before undertaking the task, with another lady-doctor whose judgement and sympathy I whole-heartedly trust and admire. It was, I confess, a disappointment when she first explained to me her wish to remain anonymous. Had her wish been due to that sort of sheepishness which was responsible for my own anonymity when the first edition of *The Difficult Commandment* appeared, I would have begged her to revise her decision, as I was forced to revise my own. But I understand that there are certain reasonable conventions or estimates in the medical profession which do make it better that she should not sign her name.

If it be asked why I should have suggested doctors at all, I confess that I think that

¹ *The Difficult Commandment*, by Father Martindale, S.J. (Notes on Self-Control, especially for Young Men), published by the Manresa Press, Roehampton, S.W. 16. Price 6d

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physiological developments must play a greater part in a girl's life than in a boy's. Abrupt as are the changes in a boy, due to adolescence, nervous as boys are beyond what we are given to suppose, profound as are their anxieties and self-questionings in consequence, yet I should not be surprised to be told that they count for less than the experiences of a growing girl do. For one thing, self-conscious as a boy may be, and as vain as many peacocks, yet he is not *expected* to be very preoccupied with his personal appearance nor to have it commented on nor to be admired for it, as the convention still holds in the case of girls, delighted as modern girls may be to look and talk and behave as like their brothers as they can.

However, lest the 'medical' should acquire exclusive rights over the book, this lady-doctor very open-mindedly associated herself to two others, one an unmarried lady, a novelist, one married, able to take complementary points of view, and both, as I can vouch, really open-minded women as well as experienced and possessed of that delicacy of feeling with regard to life, without which it would be hopeless to try and treat of this topic at all successfully. They may think that I err against good taste in thus describing them: I am sorry: but I insisted that if they were to remain anonymous, and if I had to write a preface, as they on their side insisted, I must make it quite clear that the book was not written by dilettantes, nor by

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people unsuited on any imaginable ground to deal with the subject

There will still be critics who will say that it ought not to have been written at all. There is room here for divergent opinions. Personally, I would not have ventured to form one. I could not tell whether a *book* were the best way of coping with an actual and urgent problem. If it be denied that there is any new problem confronting us, that at any rate I will resist with all the energy I possess.

I am not saying that the modern girl is less innocent than those of, say, 1900. She is far less ignorant. But, may I suggest, her information is as a rule 'patchy,' most inaccurate, leading her into a thousand risks of disastrous experience, and into 'danger-zones' where she is easily coarsened in imagination, where much of her life is liable to be cheapened, and where she will hear stated various principles which seem plausible and flatter new ambitions, and are doubly delusive because those who state them would very often not dream of acting on them, and quite often enough only partly realise what they are talking about. I simply cannot imagine anything more undesirable than this semi-sophistication. I ought perhaps to explain this paragraph a little.

It must be obvious that the modern break-up of conventions has affected girls much more abruptly than it has young men or boys. There was far less reticence about a boy's life, and

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very little about a young man's, while girls were still quite recently hedged round with a quantity of silences. It was not only the war that shattered these : already before it a change in girls' lives was proceeding with enormous accelerations. Moreover, there is now little enough privacy left about anything. Ten years ago, even, no one would have dreamed of staging half a dozen plays that I have either read or been asked about. The word 'sex' is enjoying a fashion that has become quite wearisome and will, I suppose, soon change. None the less, it has involved an insistence on the physical basis of love which has done away with a great deal of (perhaps foolish) romanticism. I think I could accuse of hypocrisy very many of those who argue that this is all for the good : whether it is or isn't, the fact remains that there has been a vast change, and it is hopeless to try to behave, in education, in the way in which for good or ill we did, before it came. I would respectfully submit that convents themselves are likely to 'sense' the change, even when they are not quite sure what it is, and are still less sure what to do next. . I am afraid that a much deeper gulf is likely to exist, to-day, between nuns and their girls, than used to ; and in all too many cases it not only is not, but perhaps cannot be, bridged. I know for certain that questions asked in consequence of cases in the courts—asked by convent-girls from nuns—have

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astounded the latter because of the familiarity of their girls with subjects which those pure-minded and loving-hearted teachers never dreamed were on the horizon of even the well-living adult. 'What,' nuns have again and again asked, 'ought we to say?' And I for one have frankly answered: 'I don't know.'

The one thing I have permitted myself to suggest is, that it is not much use raising an outcry about fashions of dress. The only thing you can say about fashions is that they change. Of course there are exaggerated, silly, vulgar, or impertinent *versions* of—I dare say—*any* fashion. A girl who is vulgar in grain can make any sort of dress repulsive. Presumably it is these vulgar versions of modern dress which are periodically rebuked by authority; even in our more reasonable country, I find that dresses I don't like strike me as vulgar before they strike me as wicked. Let us agree that modern dress is on the whole much more sensible than the old sort: that girls have a perfect right to look pretty; and that it is ridiculous to expect them not to attend at all to fashions. This topic therefore I would like to disregard.

However, no one can fail to notice, welcome and delight in the vitality of the modern girl. I am convinced that I am the only person left in this country, of either sex, who cannot drive a motor-car. Anyway, girls do, and no longer strike panic into one when they whirl one

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forth. They do it very well. There are few things left that they don't do well, if they choose. They play (games, I mean : muscular affairs, and not the piano merely . . .) ; they earn ; they are mayors, or soon will be. This means the certainty of free discussion, of free visiting, of desire to be on just the same footing as their brothers or as the young men they work alongside of. Who can be surprised ? But as I have said, this situation has formed itself not quite all of a sudden, but very abruptly. Hence its delight can easily go to unaccustomed heads. And arguments heard by unaccustomed ears do not yield up their fallacies, and often are such as only experience can disprove. So once more, the old unexplained, unsanctioned vetos are not much good. A girl announces : ' It seems to me far worse to live with your husband if you don't love him, than with a man who is not your husband, whom you do,' and she *thinks*, at any rate, that she means it. I would like to insist that it is no good shutting our eyes to this sort of fact, and saying : ' It isn't true.' It is.

Is not, however, the confessional the proper place for treating such topics and difficulties ? Opinions are freely various. It is certain that the confessional is a place for *confession* and only incidentally for ' instruction.' Even if a penitent applies not only for absolution but for instruction in the confessional, I doubt whether (save on quite definite, circumscribed points)

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adequate instruction can be given there. It would take far too long and create comment and, often, inconvenience. In the confessional, principles can be enunciated, obligations defined, and encouragement supplied. But to reach the back of the mind, the roots of difficulties, to provide that 'preparation of the will' which (as S Augustine said) our Lord was careful to ensure before actually preaching his doctrine, is surely difficult save by means of some rather long and probably informal conversation. Priests or even men generally can scarcely (and perhaps ought not to) provide this: hence this friendly and conversational book, written by women. It is a *book*, because how rarely can a girl find exactly the 'right' women to *talk* to. The world is full of shy and lonely little souls. Without, then, dogmatising about the use of the confessional for such instruction, and indeed, admiring very highly those priests who find they can do what is necessary within it, I can but say that in the case of men I have had very often cause to say: 'Would you like to discuss the topic that's worrying you outside the confessional, over a cigarette?' How often has the answer been: 'I'd give anything to; but I wouldn't have dared to ask' You can tell in a moment whether curiosity, let alone prurience, has dictated that reply, and you can govern your talk accordingly.

It may safely be said that we would like girls

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to be : (1) well-living and decent in fibre of mind ; (2) intelligent, and able to explain to their own minds and to others the why and wherefore of the Catholic ideal ; and (3) as spiritual and as expressive of our Lady as ever they were. No one wants a girl to be a nervous little prude, or exposed to the frightful dangers which beset ignorance in the midst of the instructed, let alone the sophisticated. Sophisticated people are not chivalrous : they take a mean pleasure in cheapening the unsullied. No one wants a girl to be in a state of panic or in one of petty curiosity. You like a girl who respects herself and can take care of herself. But you like more than that : you admire a girl who can lend a helping hand. She cannot do this if she is at the mercy of clichés. Modern sex-talk is a mass of clichés. Of two plays recently produced I have heard it said that they discuss 'sex' with unexampled 'frankness.' And this has been applauded : one dramatic critic announced that it would be a bad day for the stage when a topic could not be discussed there. As if people went to those plays for the sake of recondite discussions ! Another play has been described as destined to cause schoolmasters to 'alter much of their philosophy !' . . . Yet in none of these is there a single sentence of the slightest value 'philosophically,' or that contributes a single new idea to any subject whatsoever. We want girls who can support this sort of talk not only

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unflustered personally, but correctively. There already *are* women-mayors, women on juries, women in Parliament. Good luck to them. But please God they won't be fools when they get there. And please God Catholic girls won't shirk the duty of being there. And being there with instructed heads on their shoulders.

But most, far most, of all we want Catholic girls who have every bit of the beauty of soul that may at any time have been seen in women. Courage, for example, is a beautiful thing, and I am sorry if it is *fear of pain* that dictates a woman's attitude towards childbirth. Frankness and simplicity are beautiful things, and they involve the complete absence of the giggle. It is the nervous and *hint-ful* girls who giggle . . . And a *deep* appreciation of Life is a most beautiful thing, and it implies, for example, a true understanding of motherhood, and an intimacy with Mary who was the perfect Mother, and incomparably pure. Our Lady's whiteness is such that it cannot be sullied by contact with anything whatsoever. Mary is not ignorant, and not frightened. Mary's purity has been the most creative of anything. Purity always is creative—life-giving. Its opposite is always the destructive. May this book bring girls into an ever closer contact with Christ's Mother and their own!

C. C. M.

EXPLANATORY

IT is not easy to discuss the subject of sex, because it is an essentially personal and intimate subject, and the right-minded girl realises this. Yet, there it is : sex is a department of life, and we are Catholics, and we know that Christ is Lord of All, and that we owe loyalty to his laws in all departments of life.

It is vitally important that Catholic girls should have a perfectly clear-cut knowledge of the Church's teaching in sex-matters—a knowledge not merely of outlined principles, but that is definite and practical. Our book is written in the hope of providing this. It is because girls are seldom taught how to apply principles to the commonest problems, that difficulties arise which perplex them seriously, and yet which they find it hard to bring themselves to discuss with anybody who could help them.

In the process of mating and reproduction amongst animals, there are none of the difficulties which come into the lives of those 'rational animals' (as S. Thomas Aquinas calls them)—men and women. Everything would be quite easy if all we had to do was to be guided by our instincts. Everything would also be

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quite easy if we were merely creatures of intellect and will, like the angels. All the difficulties arise from our being human beings with natural instincts and a supernatural destiny. God made us like that, and he wants us like that. He has made us lords of creation, and the immediate portion of the lesser creation over which we have to rule is our body. The purpose of this book is to help to clear your mind, so that, knowing both the normal instincts of the human body in sex-matters, and the wisdom of the Church's moral law, you may govern yourself according to the dignity of your position as a spiritual and immortal personality.

Most of you will marry ; and as the mother is the centre of the family, and the family is the unit of civilisation, the future of civilisation depends on *you*. You will form the minds of the coming generation to think, either in terms of the fashionable opinions of their day, or as having 'the mind of Christ' concerning progressive civilisation. Men of mere opinions make no progress, because continual change and decay is never development. It is in Christendom that there is a progressive civilisation never destroying the work of yesterday, but consistently going ahead, gathering human wisdom to use with divine revelation for the common good of humanity.

Don't read this book primarily for your own sake, therefore. Read it with a sense of

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responsibility towards the future. You have probably heard about the negative side of the question—what the Church *forbids* and will have none of—divorce, the artificial limiting, or trying to limit, the number of children to be born, and so on. But the negative side of anything is always its shadow, dark and intangible. If you only know the negative side of a subject, you know nothing about it, for what is negative is literally nothing. You owe it to God, to yourself, the man you marry, to your children and grandchildren and the whole future of Christendom, to know soundly and definitely the positive and sunlit side of the subject.

The truth about sex—that is, God's idea of sex—is not something to be told you in an emotional whisper. It is something to be written down in black and white, and for you to take into your own particular domain, into a church or the garden, or wherever you do your hard thinking, and there to be seen and put clearly into your own head. You may be a schoolgirl, but in the eyes of God you are a woman, and he expects you to be wise and steadfast in your mind. You may be older—and think you probably know it all, but it is your responsibility to other people to make sure that you do. If you are a schoolgirl, you may find things in these pages which you did not know before, but, however sensitive you may be, you will not find anything to startle or disgust you. Sex is neither startling nor

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disgusting ; it is perfectly simple because God made it. It only becomes complicated and repellent when men and women take it out of its setting in God's plan. Whether you go about the world, and encounter all kinds of possible sources of temptation, or live a quiet sheltered life, whether you become a nun, or live for some profession, or marry—you are a woman and a Catholic, and it is necessary for you to be quite clear about the answer to the question : 'What does the Catholic Faith teach about God's purpose when he made Woman?' Humbly facing the task, we hope this book will be able to give you the answer.

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CHAPTER I

THE SEX-INSTINCT

GOD has created us, immortal beings, with souls and bodies. And he has implanted in both man and woman the sex-instinct, so that other immortal beings may be brought into the world by their union. Surely it is rather a wonderful destiny for them both. The whole everyday process of mating and reproduction seems lifted up on to a higher plane when one considers that every time a child is born, another human soul has come into the world, destined to live with God for all eternity in a state of perfect happiness.

What is an instinct? It is no good talking of something of which we *think* we know the meaning, but which we couldn't describe in our own words. An instinct is an inherited disposition of body and mind, natural to the kind of creature we are, which makes us inclined to have certain strong feelings about certain things, and consequently to have an impulse to act upon our feelings. For instance, the instinct to

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preserve life in ourselves makes us seek to get nourishment, and, as a child, to cry for it, and when one is full-grown, to arrange one's life so that one can 'earn one's living' The sex-instinct, on the other hand, makes us inclined, consciously or unconsciously, to wish for a mate, and to be singled out, in the case of a woman, for the purposes of mating and home-making. It is implanted in us to impel us towards this task. Without it we should have neither the impulse nor the courage ever to undertake the task ; we should never taste the mysterious joys, the strange sweet sanctities of marriage, and—more important still—God's world would never have been peopled. The sex-instinct begins to awaken when the body is developed sufficiently to be capable of marriage. The normal girl, at this point of her life, is not always aware that she possesses it until she falls in love or marries. Usually, however, she is conscious of vague unsatisfied longings and a growing restlessness—often causeless depressions or elations. There are other girls in whom this instinct is strongly developed, long before marriage, and they are fully conscious that they possess it.

The first point to remember about the sex-instinct is that it is just as normal and natural as is the instinct to get food. But whereas human beings have always acknowledged their hunger, because that was the best way to get something to satisfy it, they realised very early that, for a

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woman at least, to say : ' I do want a home and a husband ! ' was not the best way to get one. It is for a man to choose his mate, and it is human nature to set your heart on something that is hard to obtain. A man has always wanted to think that *he* has won a very rare woman, and that it is *only* by a miracle that she loved him and consented to marry him. Nobody wants what anybody can have. And women especially have tended to hide away the fact that they want to be married, and have tried never to show or admit it. The finer the woman, the more self-respect she has, the greater care she will take not to be the one to make the first advances. If she has her own dreams of an ideal marriage she never makes them cheap by talking about them. But every normal person has this instinct, and where the great mistake is made, is in thinking that, because a girl does not admit to herself that she would like to be married, or even definitely feels she does not want to be, therefore she has no sex-instinct. The instinct is there. How you express or repress it depends on your personality and character. But you have got to count it in when you are taking stock of yourself, if you want to prevent yourself from having muddled motives for your actions.

One of the wisest things a girl can learn is to be prepared for what her body, her character, and her spiritual nature are, each in their own

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way, likely to tend to seek. Mind and body, we are made in such a complicated way, that some of the worst troubles of life are those caused by mistaking natural longings for spiritual aspirations or for some peculiarity of character. For example, a feverish sort of wish to be a nun which no Reverend Mother would recognise as being a true vocation, may be the result in a girl's mind of longing to be engaged, doubting that she ever will be, and wanting to escape from the wanting it! Another girl, blamed justly as very ‘difficult’ at home, and calling herself ‘misunderstood,’ may be unconsciously wanting the home to be one that is her own, all the time. The trouble would practically disappear if they could see the truth about it. And yet such girls would be simply furious if their friends explained it to them—quite rightly too. Nobody wants even their most intimate friend to walk into their innermost self uninvited and strip the veils from the soul. But a book can talk to people without seeing them and without knowing them, and therefore without trespassing, and so a book can sometimes put things straight and no outside person knows that there has been anything wrong.

If life were always perfect and normal, there would be no need to consider the sex-instinct at all. The perfect way of becoming aware that one possesses it is to have the instinct open like a flower, without doubts or conscious thoughts

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concerning it, as it *does* when a girl falls in love quite early with the right man and marries him straight away without hindrance. Unfortunately, the lives of most girls are much less easy than that, and when the natural result of the sex-instinct is prevented or delayed—baffled in any way, the energy and emotion aroused are apt to try and find all sorts of tortuous ways out of the difficulty. In case anything like that should happen through ignorance, it is a good thing to look the facts in the face, think them right out, and decide how to deal with the situation.

There are four different types of girl who will probably read this book, each with her own attractions and her own difficulties. Each is fitted by her particular character for her special work which no one else can do. But it is necessary for her to discover to which type she most nearly corresponds, so that she can make the best of its good qualities and learn to avoid its worst.

The first type of girl is primarily a good comrade, and she wants a husband because a husband seems to be the most permanent type of good comrade. Such a girl does not trouble herself very much about children. She vaguely hopes, when engaged, that if they come they will interfere as little as possible between her and her husband. When they do come she loves them each in turn, but especially because they are his children. Her chief delight, when

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first engaged, is to plan how she can give her Bill a delightful home where he can be more comfortable than he was in his bachelor quarters. *At her best* this girl is the perfect home maker, cheerful, considerate, tasteful in all her household appointments and in her dress, and she adores Bill. *At her second best* she is inclined to be jealous of his men friends and hates even to see him absorbed in his business concerns. She is apt to criticise other people's children, and is often terrified of illness. Her maternal instinct does not develop fully after marriage and she makes an indifferent sort of a mother.

A second type of girl also wants to be married, but for a different reason. She secretly longs for babies of her own to love and care for. Perhaps what first attracted her, before she got engaged to her Jim, was the feeling that he loved children as much as she did. She is tender and protective, humours Jim, feeling that he is one of her older children, and mothers him to the end. This type of girl is, *at her best*, the ideal mother, serene and even-tempered; sympathetic towards small aches and pains; selfless in times of illness, and as careful of her children's minds as she is of their bodies. *At her second best*, she fusses over the children, thwarts their activities from over-anxiety and neglects her husband for her nursery.

The third type of girl develops usually much

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earlier than either of the two we have described. She is interested in the question of husbands almost before she leaves the nursery. If her awkward questions are not satisfied by her parents or teachers she may have recourse to books or servants. This sort of girl is often deeply, even violently affectionate ; she makes herself miserable if the affection which she craves for is withheld. She is early attracted by men and will sometimes go to great lengths to be noticed by them in return. She loves the rather electric atmosphere of a flirtation. *At her best*, this girl will make a devoted wife, capable of heroic devotion and boundless effort in her husband's cause. She is vivid, idealistic, generous. *At her worst*, she is unattractive to man or woman. Her cravings for the attentions of men cheapen her in their eyes. She becomes loud in manner and in dress, and in her anxiety to get a husband at any cost, she may pay a heavy price.

A fourth type is sometimes met with too. This girl is often a very capable and efficient worker ; earns a good salary ; has her own tiny flat. She looks down in rather a pitying way on the young married women of her acquaintance, who shepherd their babies and strive to humour their husbands. *At her best*, this girl grows up into the kindly reformer. She has fewer anxieties and more time to spare than her married friends, so she tries to make the world a better place. *At her worst* she is

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hard and unloving ; selfish, critical, unwomanly in dress and bearing.

All these four types of girls exist, and we have to remember that there is nothing unusual or wrong in wanting a husband, even in wanting one very much. God meant marriage to be the way of life for most of the people that he created. Neither is there anything wrong in longing for children of one's own or even in not wanting them very much ; in loving our own independence and valuing the career we have selected for ourselves. We have to learn, however, to control our longings, to remember our dignity in seeking to satisfy them, and above all to wait patiently and cheerfully, if the satisfaction is delayed or even withheld.

The second thing to remember about the sex-instinct is that it doesn't make half so much trouble directly as it does indirectly That is why it is so important to think very clearly about it, and to call things by their right names, even when they are hard names. It is easy enough to do this about other girls' problems, but it is much more difficult to do it in our own.

Let us look at the different ways in which the sex-instinct is likely to show itself and to want to be satisfied. Consider first, the ordinary physical structure of the body. At your age it is, to all intents and purposes, a woman's body. It isn't in the least surprising, therefore, that this instinct should already stir the blood and the nerves sometimes, talking to itself, as it were,

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incoherently enough, about the joyful and difficult experiences of mating and reproduction which may be awaiting you. That's all natural enough—the vague longings and the intense emotions that rise up in the mind, and which sometimes even have an echo in odd sorts of sensations in the body. There is one absolute rule about all this : just leave it alone. If you plant seeds in a tray of earth, you will see, when they are beginning to grow, a sort of disturbed look on the top of the earth. If you want those seeds to come to perfection, you will leave them alone. If you try and investigate to see what's going on, you'll harm them, perhaps irrevocably. And it is just the same with the stir of a nerve that seems to be talking about the sex-instinct, or the many odd bodily impulses that may arise. Just leave them absolutely alone. When the body is changing from girlhood into womanhood, it often becomes much more sensitive. Allow for that. Decent people have a sound respect for a young girl, and do not caress her as though she were a child any longer. A man very much respects a girl when he sees her gently discouraging any attempt at bodily contact. An older man may sometimes think that his age permits him to take all sorts of liberties, to pat and kiss a young girl and to pull her on to his knee. But a glance from her, and a quiet ' Let me sit beside you,' will remind him that she is not a child. If he needs to be told twice, pull him up more

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strongly. You may think that, being who he is, that he can't mean any harm ; and possibly he doesn't. But no man with fine feelings does that sort of thing. It you do marry, think how glad you will be, for your lover's sake, that nobody has brushed the bloom off you, by any kind of caressing. And if you don't marry, you won't want to remember that you were the kind of girl who took anybody's kiss and caress. It is a great thing to feel you are untouched and your own, in this world of cheap flirtations and unsensitive manners. So, if you have great dreams of a real love-affair, be very definitely particular about this.

In the *third place*, the *sex-instinct* is, if unsatisfied, likely to try and get *satisfaction* from certain kinds of *thoughts*. The mind is a place where one can do anything without showing any sign of it outside. And if one girl hasn't found the comrade sort of husband she wants, and another is longing for babies, and yet another wants to be fought for by several desperate suitors, each generally has a world of her own in her own mind where these dreams come true. Of course, those worlds of our own are as old as the hills, and there is no harm in such imaginings as long as they are not indulged in so much as to be our main interest.

Only, of course, there must not be any imaginations that cause sensual or bodily pleasure. That is a cowardly sort of cheating when it is deliberate—doing in the mind what

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you would not do in real life, or only if you were married. But generally a girl who does so has drifted into it, perhaps through loneliness, without realising that it was wrong. She may even have discovered quite accidentally, perhaps, that touching certain parts of the body is apt to give rise to sensuous feelings and imaginations. This must never be done deliberately to produce such sensations. But when it is necessary for purposes of health or cleanliness, such feelings can be quietly ignored.

The mind is even more sensitive than the body and mental experiences can brush the bloom off it, just as much as actual ones. So, if you have not realised that such things were wrong, make a perfectly clean sweep of all doubtful thoughts or touches, and God who loves and rewards purity, will give you a fresh joy in exchange.

Then, in the fourth place, remember that the sex-instinct expresses itself in one's behaviour in ordinary everyday life among other men and women.

The conditions of social life have been so greatly altered in the last fifteen years or so, that a whole set of new problems has arisen as regards the everyday relationship between the ordinary man and girl, both at work and at play.

In the closely guarded surroundings of the girl of last century the ordinary social intercourse between her and mankind at large, was fenced round by all sorts of conventions—and if she worked for her living, it was usually in

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contact with members of her own sex only. But nowadays, men and girls work together habitually, side by side, in offices and shops, as doctors and even at the Bar. They go to dances together, the chaperon having been almost dispensed with, as a relic of the Victorian age. At tennis and on the river and on holidays, the social intercourse between them is almost entirely free and unrestricted, and yet in spite of all these great social changes, human nature in all cases remains very much the same. So the new situation has its own difficulties, and chief among these is the problem of how a normal, attractive, charming girl can live as a Catholic the ordinary life of work and play, side by side with men, without letting her natural instincts get the upper hand and lead her into dubious or even sinful paths.

If a country girl is of an age to be married, she spends her time with the other girls in the village who are of the same age, and the young men meet them when work is done, and choose their sweetheart and do their courting. If such a girl knows that the man she would like is already married, she either puts him right out of the picture, or else she deliberately chooses to break God's law and commit mortal sin by tempting him away from his wife. But in the more artificial life of the town, we find subtler ways of doing things, good and bad. The desires are the same, but amidst the more complicated manners of social life, it is easier to

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dally with wrong-doing without losing one's reputation or even severely upsetting one's conscience ; and while a flirtatious word or two, an expedition in a two-seater or a *tête-à-tête* dinner in Soho, may be perfectly blameless if the man in question is unattached, the case is different if he is already married. But no girl is so mentally deficient as not to know in which direction such things are tending. When she plays about thus with a married man, the situation between them is full of peril and both may be suddenly tempted to commit mortal sin together. Especially is this the case when the man in question is one whose passions are easily aroused.

And even if hole-and-corner ways of expressing this instinct were not sin, and if they were not harmful to the health of the mind and the nervous system, they might *express* it, but they would not *satisfy* it. And again, to read books and take part in conversations that feed the imagination and feelings with the stories of other people's sex-experiences, is to take small and continued doses of poison—poison which can even make your eyes dull and ugly, and steal the attractiveness from your looks, as well as affecting your mind.

All the best things in the world can be misused, and the better the thing, the more dire the results of misusing it. The sex-instinct has either to express itself in the ordinary way of marriage, or to find some

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other way of using up its energy. When one does not marry, if life is normal, the instinct should quite naturally *lift itself above* its ordinary method of action, and express itself in a more general way in sympathy with all kinds of people, in protecting children who have no parents, or old people who have no home, and in taking an interest in some movement or some people who need help. In this way, it has inspired some of the finest work, and art, and some of the greatest deeds in the world's history.

The last thing about the sex-instinct might have been spoken of first, except that one keeps the best for the last. It is this. Never forget that it was God himself who planted this instinct in us. If it had not been good, or if it had even been second-best, it could not possibly have been God's choice as the means to propagate the human race. One sometimes hears people speaking of sex as something tiresome or nasty, and that, if you realise it, is presumptuous criticism of God's plan.

When the sex-instinct is allowed to lead us into all kinds of exciting pleasures, it can break up and ruin lives. If it rules you, it will ruin your life ; while, if you rule it, it will be one of the glorious things in your personality. The sea can drown a man and bring sorrow and ruin into his family, but there is a pride and romance about a tall sailing ship riding over the waves in windy weather.

CHAPTER II

SELF-CONTROL. THOUGHTS AND WORDS

'She walks—the lady of my delight—
A shepherdess of sheep.
Her flocks are thoughts. She keeps them white ;
She guards them from the steep ;
She feeds them on the fragrant height,
And folds them in for sleep.'

ALICE MEYNELL.

WE want in this chapter to speak in some detail about the importance of learning to control the thoughts. For this is a fundamental necessity if a girl is trying to live as a Catholic should.

We have occasionally heard people—quite good ones—say, 'Oh well, my thoughts are beyond me. I'm content if I manage to keep my acts in order.' But this is a mistaken statement. It is just by the help of our thoughts that we can manage to control our ordinary natural instincts to do certain things. For instance, if you happen to be walking through the provision department of a big stores and are very hungry, your instinct to get food makes you want to seize upon a tempting cake

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and eat it. If you were an animal you would certainly do so. But just because you are a human being and not an animal, a thought comes into play in your mind at once and you say to yourself, ‘ No, if I take that cake I shall be taken up for stealing and bring disgrace upon myself and my family.’ So you leave the cake alone. Not outside force has restrained you, but your hidden intangible thought has prevented you from doing what was wrong and taking what does not belong to you.

The Church in her teaching has much to say about the importance of controlling the thoughts. She wants her daughters to be beautiful in mind as well as body. When she begins our education, she begins in the core of us—in our spirits—and educates us right through. She knows that is the only way to make us *real* in our goodness, our beauty, our cleverness, and whatever graces God has given us. For a pretty smile will not hide an ugly mind for long, but a beautiful mind shines through and absolutely transfigures plain features.

So there is a key which opens the whole storehouse of the ‘ Things we want to have,’ one key for all the riches of happiness, holiness, beauty and health. This key is ‘ Keep your mind in order.’ That is what the Church has always taught and most modern doctors and psychologists agree with her.

The mind is a store-cupboard into which

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anything is received but nothing ever goes out again—realise that. Nothing you see, hear, read or touch, is ever forgotten.

‘ May’s warm, slow, yellow, moonlit nights,
Gone are they, but I have them in my soul.’

Let us give a practical illustration of how to keep the mind in order. Read it now and then think over it when you have a quiet hour. Don’t attempt it in bed at night, because one’s night mind is apt to be dreamy and whimsical, very different from one’s day mind. Sit in a quiet place, best of all the quietest corner of a big church, and take with you a slip of paper and a pencil.

What’s most wrong with your thoughts? Conscience will point that out quickly enough. You are harbouring resentful ones perhaps. Such thoughts are often the result of a feeling of inferiority. Somebody may have treated you badly or you may have been worsted in a contest. It will help you to get rid of these broodings if you dwell instead on the wonderful fact that you belong to God’s own royal Family. He has made you for his own particular purpose and you are very precious and beloved in his sight. How then can you be inferior?

Thoughts against purity? No, not those nasty jokes or foul words you overheard or were told when you didn’t quite understand that it was wrong, and that ever since *will* crop up the very moment when you feel they are

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most out of place. You hate them. Don't let them trouble you. Simply say to God: 'These aren't *me*, I hate them. It's just the devil.' No, but perhaps in your private dreams of having a husband and children, you don't realise that it isn't lawful to dwell on and take pleasure in the thought of such things as will, if you are married, be quite right and lawful between your husband and yourself. Taking pleasure in that kind of imagining is tearing something out of its setting—stealing, in fact. Don't spoil something that God may give you as a perfect whole, one day. Besides, thoughts of that kind, the instant that they are torn out of the possible future to taste in the present, go bad. They become sin.

The Catholic Church, through her approved teachers, speaks very urgently about the danger of this. For in actual practice, the pleasure of such thoughts cannot be confined to the mind only, but is apt in some cases to excite feelings and sensations which are sinful when indulged in solitarily and for one's own pleasure.¹

Now one probably cannot help having a certain number of thoughts about sexual things. Do not go and say at once that they are bad thoughts. Thinking about the subject of sex, can be *quite* legitimate. You are doing so now. It depends on what you *do* with your

¹ The following four paragraphs are adapted from *The Difficult Commandment*, by kind permission of Father Martindale, S.J.

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thoughts, and why. But to start with, as I said, you practically cannot help having such thoughts, even when you do not want to. Your mind is a fluid and floating thing, like the sea. Left to itself, the sea remains calm. But if a wind blows upon it, it ripples; and if an earthquake occurs at the bottom of it, again the surface heaves. Similarly, unless you keep your eyes and ears tightly shut, which you cannot, sights and sounds of all sorts will strike them, including those that suggest to your mind, sensual subjects. You see pictures, posters, people; you hear and cannot help hearing sexual talk. That is like the wind plunging on the sea. And the thoughts thus arising may, through the reflex action of the nerves of the body, give rise to definite pleasurable sensations.

What ought one to do when such things occur? You have always been taught that you must not accept such a thought even for a moment, so as to draw pleasure from it. Sometimes, of course, a girl knows that she has deliberately allowed such thoughts to enter. But often, especially when she is trying to live as she should, her fluid tremulous mind responds to the suggested thought so quickly that she is not really sure whether she 'yielded' to it, that is, dwelt unnecessarily on it because she was drawing pleasure from it, or in order to draw pleasure. Well, when you go next to confession, don't spend any time

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wondering whether you *did* linger over this thought or not. That simply revives the thought and would excite the imagination all over again. Simply say that you have had bad thoughts and accuse yourself of any guilt that there may have been in God's eyes. If you think you deliberately took pleasure in them, say so, but don't spend time over the actual thoughts, either when you are preparing for confession, or at any other time.

But a girl will perhaps say : ‘ What am I to do when such thoughts simply haunt me ? ’ Now it is of no use saying ‘ resist those thoughts, fight against them. ’ That advice is practically useless and generally harmful and most unscientific. The more I tell myself not to think about a thing, the more, obviously, I am keeping my mind upon it. The more I *struggle* against it, the more my imagination gets excited. Do not think about your ‘ bad thoughts. ’ Say quickly ‘ Jesus save me— Mary help me, ’ and then think of something else. If you are a domestic sort of girl, picture to yourself the little house that you and your future husband are going to live in, and decide upon the colour schemes for the various rooms. By the time you have solved the knotty problem as to which pattern of chintz or cretonne on the chairs will look best with your drawing-room walls, the bad thoughts will have flown leagues away !

Or, if you are the athletic type of girl,

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pretend to yourself that an uncle has given you £150 to buy a little two-seater car with. By the time you have decided between the relative merits of a Baby Austin or a Morris Minor the bad thoughts will be forgotten. In this way one can go out into life, very much the mistress of one's thoughts, not intending to be affected by what one sees or hears and not expecting that it will affect one, and it just doesn't. Of course, it may be some time before full success is achieved—but that is the direction in which you must be going. The root of the whole matter is the mind. As your thoughts are, so (almost invariably) will be your behaviour.

Some girls may say frankly that they are not in the least tempted along these lines. Others will own to themselves that they had not realised it was wrong. They may not have been *unclean* in their thoughts, but rather too naturally animal, which does not fit in with a life that is otherwise supernatural because it is the life of a member of the Catholic Church. And still other girls may realise that in the hidden places of their minds there have been, perhaps for a long time, hoarded mental pleasures that the searchlight of Conscience shows up to be definitely unclean.

We can see now why it is that the Catholic Church condemns what is popularly known in modern parlance as 'sex talk' because it is apt to excite bad thoughts. Don't we all know the

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liting obscene rhyme, overheard by chance, or the abominable joke told us by someone, which will crop up in the memory at the most unexpected moments? It is so easy to do harm to oneself or to other girls by talking about sex matters.

Again, we do not always realise the extent to which the reading of bad books, or even doubtful ones, can soil us in the innermost recesses of our minds. One picks them up curiously perhaps, not realising what their effect is going to be.

The temptation to read books that will harm one, does not come to everybody in the same guise. One girl will be frankly tempted by the sensational type of novel, full of what is known as sex appeal, and it requires a very real effort of self-control on her part, to refuse to read it. Another who appreciates good literature and fine writing is often faced by an even subtler temptation along rather different lines. Let us suppose that a book is published, written by a well-known writer, in the first rank of living novelists. All the literary critics praise it for its fine writing, but even the less squeamish amongst them are agreed that the subject with which the book deals is a revolting one and is treated in a depraved manner. Now it requires real courage for a Catholic girl, in a literary circle, to refuse to read that book! All the intellectual snobbery latent in her, rises to the surface and she rebels involuntarily at the idea

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of not being able to discuss its literary merits with her friends ! She may even argue with herself that she *must* read it as part of her literary education and that the bad ideas in it will not harm her. But afterwards, if she has done so, she will own, if she is frank with herself, that her mind *has* been harmed by contact with such ideas. Which of us has not known the feeling, after hearing or reading something very horrible, that one wants to go and have a bath, metaphorically speaking ! And a book such as we describe gives one that sensation. So, if this process of setting your mind in order has revealed quite clearly what is wrong with your thoughts or your words, it is important to go to confession as soon as possible and say 'I confess' to a sin of word, thought, touch, sight, hearing, reading a bad book or going to see a bad play, joining in a wrong discussion or whatever it was 'against purity.' Say straightforwardly, how many times, whether you gave scandal to younger girls or anybody else and without going into personal or unnecessary details you can make quite clear all that the priest needs to know. If you find it very difficult, tell him so, and he, who has many people to help, will make it quite easy for you. Then one valiant prayer to our Lady, a real act of contrition to God, as the priest absolves you, and you will come out from your plunge into the confessional feeling as though a sea wind were blowing through your soul.

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‘ But the sea winds do not always blow,’ you will say, ‘ and perhaps by and by the mists of the wrong thoughts and feelings will rise again—what am I to do then?’ It is perfectly true, they will come again. The longer we have had a habit, good or bad, the harder it is to rid ourselves of it. But it can be done with patience and courage. There is our Lady of Perpetual Succour close by us, praying for our success in the long struggle; in the last resort of failure, or even apparent failure, there is the confessional again. We can tell our story, receive God’s forgiveness, and start afresh once more, with the added grace that sacramental absolution brings. There are many saints in Heaven now who only got there through holding on in failure. *They* know all about humility and courage and fresh starts.

We want to end this chapter on a very practical note. There is a close connection between the health of the body and the health of the mind. It is important, therefore, for anyone who is trying to ‘keep her mind in order’ to follow certain rules of hygiene. For it is the flabby, anæmic type of girl rather than the healthy, fresh-air girl, who is sometimes tempted to unhealthy brooding on sex-subjects.

Open windows and plenty of exercise, preferably in the fresh air, are of supreme importance, especially to girls who work in offices and have to sit a great deal at work. Then, too, most doctors are agreed now that a great deal of

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bodily flabbiness and anæmia is due to faulty diet. Plenty of fresh fruit and green vegetables and brown bread should be taken daily, and it is surprising how the health improves when a change in the diet is made along these lines. Lastly, a daily warm bath, followed by a cold sponge, is a great help in promoting a healthy action of the skin and general bracing of the muscles.

CHAPTER III

SELF-CONTROL. DEEDS

‘ For in that quarter to which the face of my soul was turned, and whither I yet trembled to advance, the chaste dignity of Contineny discovered herself. Cheerful she was, not dissolutely enticing, but sweetly inducing me to advance and to fear nothing ; yea, stretching forth to receive and to embrace me those dear hands of hers, that were full of good examples.—Many they were, both young men and maidens, yea and of all ages, grave widows and aged virgins, and Contineny herself in every one of them, not barren, but “ a fruitful mother of children,” of joys begotten by thee, O Lord, her husband—and she smiled upon me with a mirthful encouragement, as if she said “ Canst thou not do what all of these have done ? Or can these men and maidens perform so much by their own strength, and not rather by that of the Lord, their God ; that Lord and God who gave them unto me ? Thou standest upon thyself, and therefore it is that thou standest not. Cast thyself upon him and fear not ; he will not withdraw himself and let thee fall. Cast thyself upon him securely ; he will receive thee and will heal thee ”.’

Confessions of S. Augustine, Book VIII, Chap. XI.

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WE have headed this chapter with a vivid pen-picture. We see S. Augustine himself, before his conversion, a Pagan, with all the evil instincts of one, looking at a little crowd of the early Christians of all ages and conditions. They stand out with a white radiance against the dark background of the Pagan world—so controlled—so pure in life. We notice next that the crowd is composed not only of elderly people whose lives (as the saying is) are more or less ended, but of numbers of young men and girls full of life and energy. They appear to be anything but a dull crowd too, for they are full of joy which beams out into the gloomy world around. Then we see his Guide, Contineny, coming up to Augustine and explaining that they are quite ordinary men and women but that our Lord has enabled them by his own supernatural grace and strength to control the ordinary natural instincts and thus to live by a different standard from that of the heathen masses around them—his own standard of holiness. Finally, we see Augustine plucking up courage at the sight and preparing to follow their examples.

We need now as Catholics, in the midst of a world which in places seems rapidly becoming Pagan again, to look carefully at our Lord's standard, which is the Church's standard, to see if we are living by it as we should. The free and easy conditions of modern life are apt

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to make self-control a very difficult matter sometimes, both for men and girls as regards their conduct towards one another, especially when they are both trying to live as Catholics. A girl, for instance, does not always realise that what may seem to be only a harmless endearment on her part may be the means of exciting a man's passions and breaking down his self-control. If, on the other hand, she restrains herself in this respect, without being foolishly prudish, a man is very apt to like her and respect her all the more.

Again, so free and unrestricted is the everyday social intercourse between the sexes that it is fatally easy for a girl to allow herself to be frequently kissed and fondled by a man to whom she is not engaged. The Church, with her ancient and yet very human wisdom, has set her face against all such acts in such circumstances because they are so liable to lead both people over the precipice, into serious evil.

We want especially to consider in this chapter, the demand for freedom to live and love as one pleases, that is being continually urged upon us by some of the novelists and playwrights of the present moment, and to see how far this way of life falls short of the standard which the Church has set up for us. ‘ Why should not a girl have sex experience outside marriage ? ’ these writers say in effect ; ‘ Such an experience will enrich her both physically and mentally.’

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To a girl in whom the stirring of the blood is strong, this suggestion may come with a strong appeal. 'Youth passes so quickly—old age and death comes so soon—why not enjoy life whilst one can?' she says to herself as she yields, and takes the plunge.

To another, a musician or painter perhaps, the suggestion comes in a more subtle form just because of her artistic temperament. The longing to 'live greatly' and to touch life at all points for the sake of her art may lead her to succumb to the call of a great passion. But when all is said and done, what do we really find is the effect on her personality? Has it enriched her both physically and mentally? We answer most emphatically 'No.' For when a girl has had such an experience she is profoundly stirred in her deepest emotions as well as physically affected, and one cannot but notice the complete dislocation of her whole nature that has resulted from it. She becomes, for the time being, nervously upset, emotional and unreliable both in her behaviour and her statements, and this effect lasts for a long time. In the case of the man the experience is less felt by him at the time, usually, than by her, and to him it often seems only an incident. But the girl never escapes the disturbing effect; it leaves a deep mark upon her which may only be ultimately removed by a happy marriage or a profound religious experience.

To turn for a moment to the risk she is

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running of falling a victim to actual ill-health—one can only touch lightly upon such a subject here, but it is sufficient to say that this may lead on to a life of semi-invalidism or suffering, occasionally to an early death. Even the best medical treatment cannot always avert such disaster.

One cannot help contrasting such a picture as we have painted with that of a girl who has remained faithful to the standards of her religion—even though to outsiders they may seem exacting ones. We can see her with her beauty and attractiveness, unimpaired by the sad experience that the other girl has been through. She has retained her serenity, poise, and wellbeing amidst all the evil around her because she has kept herself untarnished by it through our Lord’s supernatural grace and strength. If one could look into the future, one would see her, perhaps, as a mother of sons who look up to her as their standard of what a woman should be and to whom she has handed down the priceless inheritance of sound nerves and a healthy mind and body.

There are few sorrows so great as that of the mother who fears lest any act of hers in the past may have spoilt that wonderful inheritance that her son should have or who dreads lest one day he may come to regard her lightly.

Let us get down to bedrock principles, however, and to what the Catholic Church

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has to say about an irregular union between an unmarried man and woman! She utterly condemns them. She teaches that they are intrinsically wrong, contrary to the law of Nature, which is the law of God. One reason is this. Children may be born as the result of these irregular unions and these poor little illegitimate beings are thus bereft of the care of a father and perhaps a mother too, through all the years when they are growing up and need his care as well as hers.

Doctors know from practical experience how absolutely right the Church is, in her teaching on this point. For they have often much to do with unmarried girls, who are expecting shortly to become mothers or who have just had a child—and they know the utter hopelessness of persuading the man in the case to do anything towards its support. Now and then he will give a pound or two towards the expenses of the girl's confinement, but beyond that, nothing as a rule—and the poor girl has to do her best to support the little unwanted child out of her scanty earnings as a clerk or domestic servant.

Finally, and beyond all the dangers to a girl's body and mind, involved in 'free love,' there is the danger to her soul. For when all is said and done, the consenting to such a thing puts her into a state of mortal sin. To the Catholic girl who has known something of our Lord's presence in her soul, in Holy Communion and

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in daily life, the banishment of him by mortal sin leaves her in a state of darkness and wretchedness unimaginable by those who have never known the happiness of the life of a practising Catholic. And what of the danger for the future? To be deprived possibly of heaven and its perfect happiness for ever, let alone real happiness on earth, just for an hour's excitement! Is it worth it? ‘What shall it profit a man (or a woman either) if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?’

Sometimes it is loneliness, rather than a definite desire to do wrong, that makes a girl yield to a man's advances—a married man for instance—and go out with him, or even away with him sometimes, unknown to his wife at home. Many a girl, working as a clerk or shop-assistant in a big town, away from home and family, is often desperately lonely. Perhaps the man in question has made her believe that he is unhappily married and that she herself, and she alone, matters enormously to him. And this gives her a sense of power, and of being of great importance to another human being, if only for a single evening. She may even try to justify her action afterwards, saying, ‘But I did it to help him in his desperate sadness and loneliness, and so it was no sin.’ This may have been her motive, but none the less, she has helped him to commit a mortal sin. Whether we are Catholics or not we know instinctively that such affairs with married

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men are wrong, for there is always a third person who is being injured, the man's own lawful wife whom he has promised to love and cherish.

It is not an uncommon occurrence nowadays for a married man to fall in love with a girl and to persuade his wife to divorce him, so as to marry her. To a Catholic, such a marriage is of course only a legal arrangement and not a marriage at all. It would be idle, however, to pretend that such cases never occur amongst Catholics. A girl falls deeply in love, perhaps, with a married man and he with her, and divorce presents itself as the only way out of the impasse. What can we say to such a one, who may perhaps read this book? Christ our Lord is calling her on the one hand to say 'No' to the very real and deep human love and companionship that is being offered her. But to accept it she has to close her ears to the voice of Christ, and to turn her eyes from the sight of her lover's deserted wife and little children who are bereft of a father, and to live in mortal sin. These are terrible alternatives, but they must be faced. Sometimes when every other appeal fails the sight of the deserted children may help her to choose rightly.

A modern novelist has lately described such a girl,¹ Patricia, passionately in love with a married man, John, who is imploring her to

¹ *The Battle of the Horizons*, page 301, by Sylvia Thompson. (Quoted by permission)

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take the plunge and go away with him. Before doing so, Patricia goes to see his wife and tell her what she intends to do. Whilst waiting for her in the drawing-room, the following scene takes place :

‘ A little boy in a mauve linen suit stood in the doorway, staring at her with odd greenish eyes.

‘ Are you the lady Mummie is expecting ? ’
The emphasis came on the last word.

‘ Yes I think so.’

He approached her gradually, never taking his odd dark-fringed eyes off her face. ‘ I see.’ He sat down with polite deliberation on a ‘ pouf ’ and scratched the back of his knee

‘ I’m afraid Mummie’s had to take Malcolm to the doctor because he fell down when we were getting off the tool-shed by the wall at the back, and hurt his knee. I expect Vickers told you.’ (It was apparent that he had come to entertain her)

‘ Yes. She said something about it.’

‘ I expect Mummie will be back by four. I don’t know what it is now, because I can’t tell the time yet, but when I can Daddie promised me a watch—or, as a matter of fact, he said he expected anyway I would get a watch when I’m six—that’s in September. Is it a long time to September ? ’

His face was sun-flushed, eager. His grubby hand pushed back his brown hair.

‘ It’s over three and a half months,’ she said.

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His likeness to John was so exact, so poignant that she felt it as a kind of menace. John, with an untarnished eagerness, with a smooth brow and sweet delighted mouth; John with the whole of life before him——.

‘Is three and half months a long time?’

‘It depends——’ (In three and a half months, John and herself?)

‘Please, what d’you mean, it depends?’

‘I was talking nonsense. It’s a longish time I suppose——’

He seemed to reflect upon this, his eyes holding the light, his nostrils curved.

‘Is a week a long time?’

‘No.’

‘Daddie went away, and when I asked him he said probably he would be back in a week, and it seems as if he’d been away a pretty long time now.’

She couldn’t answer.

He persisted. ‘Should you think to-morrow would be the end of a week?’

She shook her head.

‘I don’t know—darling—— Perhaps . . .’

‘Oh dear,’ he exclaimed with a sudden awe, gazing at her face. ‘Oh dear. What is the matter?’

His tone was half frightened, yet shaken with sympathy. ‘Oh dear. Have you hurt yourself?’

Through her tears she was aware of him getting up off the ‘pouf,’ and coming to her. He stuffed his handkerchief into her clenched

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hand, and stood close to her, his awe giving way to a bewildered solicitousness : ‘ Have you hurt yourself? Oh dear. What is the matter?’

Suddenly she said : ‘ I’ve got to go—I—don’t think I can wait, after all.’

With a kind of agony, she caught him in her arms and kissed him.

Then she found herself going across the hall and out of the front door. His voice piped something after her, but she couldn’t look back.

.

That night she wrote to John.

. . . ‘ Perhaps you’ll never understand what really made me decide it like this, when, as you know, I went meaning to see her to-day, and carry it through. Something to do with “ It’s ” being without you on the sixth birthday. I should never, never forget him, even if you could ; even if we had ever had some of our own. They would somehow be taking “ his ” heritage. I think that we haven’t any right to sacrifice younger things to our stale blunders. If I didn’t love you so much “ he ” couldn’t have made me decide. You are lucky, I think.’ . . .

Someone will perhaps say, ‘ This is just a novelist’s tale and need not be taken too seriously.’ But in actual fact, a woman we know was reading this little story the other day to an old friend of hers. When it ended, her listener said, with tears in her eyes, ‘ That is

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just what happened to me when I was a girl—I never told you, but I was once on the point of going off with a married man and it was the sight of his little children that stopped me.¹

But when all is said and done, how is such a girl, with her strong natural instincts and her heart torn in two by desire for her lover, to remain faithful to Christ her Lord? Only by rising courageously towards the doctrines and ideals of her Faith, just as S. Augustine and those early Christians did—These are, that God made me, preserves and calls me to a definite end, in-dwells in me because of his presence everywhere, and especially because of the grace of my baptism and confirmation, which makes the Holy Spirit to live within me in a special way, and to seek to inspire my thoughts and control my impulses. I have the *right* to ask for his sufficient and more than sufficient help. And finally, our Lord is united to me not only by the fleeting moments of Sacramental Communion, but by Grace *all the time*, unless I choose to expel him: no marriage bond is so close; no love so tender, strong and pure. My physical and mental purity has to be all the time the reflection and symbol of this Union. So in hours of extreme stress, do not argue, but just pray, 'God helping me, I will not do wrong, but I *will* try to please him.'¹

¹ From *The Difficult Commandment*, by Father Martindale, S J.

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Someone who reads this chapter may perhaps have recognised herself in the picture we have drawn at the beginning, of a girl, profoundly disturbed both physically and emotionally by one of these sad sex experiences. We want to try and tell her for her comfort just how this mental and spiritual upset can be put right again and she herself restored to sanity and poise and well-being. There is only one way really and that is through our Lord and his Grace, given so freely in the Sacraments. We can best illustrate this by a story.

A few years ago an unmarried woman who had been through such an experience came to see a woman doctor, as she was expecting a child. She was facing her ordeal alone, as the man in the case had deserted her after refusing to marry her. Her girlhood was over and her whole personality was drab and unattractive. To an onlooker, her future appeared very dark and hopeless, for she seemed so weak-willed and altogether 'down-and-out.' Indeed it seemed only too likely that she would eventually sink into the ranks of the unfortunate women of the streets. The doctor, knowing that the old age of such women is often very ugly and lonely, was filled with pity for her, especially as she was a fellow-Catholic, although a lapsed one. There was, however, just one bright spot on the horizon—only one—she was going to be cared for in a convent by some kind nuns until the time of her trial was over.

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Three years went by and the doctor had a visit one afternoon from a happy, smiling, pleasing-looking woman carrying a month-old baby in her arms, apparently a stranger. Picture the doctor's surprise when she found that her pleasant visitor was no other than the drab, unattractive creature who had come to her in her trouble three years ago ! The visitor then told her tale. She had gone to the convent and stayed with the nuns for a few months and had come back to our Lord and the practice of her religion. During this time the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord had become a very real and living thing to her in her sorrow. Some little time after her child was born she returned to her former occupation so as to find the means to support it. And then a great happiness came to her. She met a good Catholic man who wanted to marry her, and she consented. He made a delightful husband and now that their first baby had arrived she had brought it for the doctor to see and admire. The latter felt reproached for her lack of faith and hope on a former occasion, as she saw how wonderfully our Lord himself had taken this broken woman in hand, had received her and healed her.

' O the success of His redeeming !
O child, it is a rescued sin ! '

ALICE MEYNELL.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

WE saw in the first chapter that at the bottom of the heart of nearly every normal girl is the fundamental longing for a husband and a home of her own, and also, in many cases, for babies of her own to love and care for. For a time this longing may be covered up, as it were, and suppressed by the rush of life, its hard work, and its strenuous enjoyments. But in the midst of it all, when she stops to think, she begins to realise that her present manner of life, absorbing though it is, does not satisfy her deepest instincts and that what she is really craving for amidst all her restlessness and many friendships and fleeting love affairs, is something *stable* and *peaceful* and *happy*. And if she is wise, she will realise that what she is needing is what the Catholic Church sets forth in her teaching as the normal happy arrangement for the lives of most of her children, namely Christian Marriage.

There is so much loose thinking about this subject nowadays, that we need as Catholics to consider very carefully what the Church says about it. For nearly two thousand years

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the Catholic Church has been a fortified sanctuary for the defence of man and wife, against all who threatened to attack their state of life. Outside the walls of this stronghold there have always been the children of the age who have tried to break it down by battering it with their opinions.

To say that the Church never allows divorce or a man and woman to live together as lovers, without marriage, is quite right as far as these statements go, but to describe the Christian doctrine concerning marriage by a series of Dont's is no more true to life than is a child's drawing of a house with a few wobbly strokes of his pencil. Let us try to form a true picture of what the Church actually teaches. Her teaching is that marriage was ordained by God with the primary object of founding Christian families. All the current talk about Birth Control and Divorce has obscured this fact. But he has ordained marriage with a second end in view also—that the lives of two persons might grow into one complete life, their love for one another becoming stronger and more vital and glorious, as the years go on, until looking back at the days of their honeymoon, they can say to each other, 'We thought we knew what love was then, didn't we? But it seems to us now that we had hardly begun to love.' God wants us to have *more*, not less.

Christian Marriage is a sacrament. By means of it, God gives supernatural grace to the

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married couple to enable them to live together happily, to love one another, and to bring up children. What do we understand by Grace? It is the gift which we receive from God, in the Sacraments, to enable us to live the supernatural life, that life which is above our natural one and which lifts us up to be true children of the family of God. If this life given to us in baptism develops strongly as we grow from baby to child and from child to grown-up person, it will give us power over all our passions, which otherwise would tend to make us merely like animals, self-seeking. Instead of wanting ‘ our own way,’ it makes us want to make God’s way ours. It makes us *big*. It enlightens our mind to think God’s thoughts after him. It expands our heart to love everything he loves. It tends to give us a faith, a patience, and selflessness that men call ‘ heroic.’

Life is difficult nowadays and human nature so complicated, that it needs real supernatural grace to enable a man and woman, however much they are in love with one another, to live together happily, when perhaps money is scarce and housing conditions are bad, and the care of little children presses heavily. But the hardest of ‘ hard cases,’ as the advocates of divorce and birth control call them, becomes less so, if the married couple are Catholics. God does not give us laws, even though they are for our good, without giving us supernatural help in the keeping of them. ‘ I can

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do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me,' says S. Paul. And Catholics enter the marriage state after having been to confession and communion, with a solemn sense of the responsibilities which they have undertaken and to which God has given his blessing. They kneel at God's altar and receive the grace which makes them 'ministers to each other of a great sacrament.' They know well enough that life is difficult and complicated, but they know that the very abiding by the laws of God is going to make their life simpler and easier. When he asks of them the virtues of fidelity, patience, unselfishness, he gives them at the same time grace to live up to those ideals.

We have seen in the lives of practising Catholics intimately known to us how wonderfully life's difficulties become surmounted when they have the whole inexhaustible stores of God's grace to fall back upon, which were given to them in the sacrament of their marriage. The tender love and affection that has insensibly grown up between them, enables them to halve their sorrows and double their joys, and thus the relationship between them becomes stable and permanent, in a way that it cannot become between those who have associated together without marriage. Then in later life, when the wife begins to lose her physical attractiveness and the husband shows signs of the dullness of middle age, there is little risk of either leaving the other. In spite of her

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grey hairs, he sees in her still the beauty of the days of courtship, with the added radiance that the happy married life of years has engendered. The gallant woman, who battles through difficulties like a ship through a storm, has the beauty which never fades and which others never cease to admire—the beauty of courage. And she, in turn, looks upon him as the one who has given her the best years of his life.

But there is another very powerful tie that binds a man to his wife and makes for permanence in their marriage, and that is, the possession of little children. In the lives of the most happily married people there may arise ‘ bad patches ’ occasionally, as one of such people expressed it once. And it is the shared possession of the little helpless things that will often tide their parents over these ‘ bad patches.’

It is a significant fact that a large proportion of divorced couples have had no children.

This brings us to the subject of Divorce and the reason that the Law of God forbids it. Here again we are brought back to the Church’s teaching, that God ordained marriage with the primary object of founding Christian families. Little children are not like birds who need the care of the parent birds for a few weeks only and can then be thrust out of the nest to fend for themselves—they need for many years the care and attention of both father and mother, so that they may grow up strong and healthy in both mind and body. Nature, then, as well

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as the Law of God, demands urgently that children should only be born to those who are joined together in lawful and permanent wedlock, so that they may be cared for by both parents.

If once the Church were to teach that the Law of God allowed Divorce (for example, in 'hard cases') the institution of the family would be fatally threatened. We can see, therefore, that the Divine Law, though apparently so hard and uncompromising, is in reality designed for the protection of the weak and helpless—the children.

There are certain hard cases, of course, where it becomes really impossible for a woman to live with her husband any longer, and in such cases the Law of God allows of separation between husband and wife, but not remarriage. Let us look at one of the worst of these 'hard cases'—theory is all very well, but practice is very different—it is putting theories into practice that counts. S. Monica was a woman who had a very hard time during the greater part of her married life. She lived some sixteen centuries ago, but she and her son, S. Augustine, seem to belong to all time and to no age, and stand out from amongst their contemporaries as most remarkable people. She is a typical example of a woman who owns a regular Tartar for husband. Her life, in consequence, was anything but a bed of roses. African husbands, in those remote days, seem

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to have been very violent in their ways. It is true they were heathen and knew no better, but S Augustine tells us, startlingly, that most of his mother's friends bore marks on their faces of their husbands' ill-usage. These friends used to enquire plaintively of Monica how it was that her husband Patricius never seemed to strike her, although he was known to be so violent in temper. She used to reply quietly that when he seemed in an angry mood, she never 'answered back' or irritated him in any way, but used to wait to give any necessary explanations of her actions until he had calmed down. Her friends soon began to follow this advice, with the best results as far as conjugal happiness was concerned. However, to live with a human volcano, frequently in eruption, can't have been easy, and when we add the fact that Patricius followed his heathen customs whilst Monica steadfastly adhered to her Christian ones, one realises what an appalling strain her married life must have been! Nor was her son, Augustine, much comfort to her until his conversion in middle life, after a dissolute youth. There are some modern women who, if they had lived in Monica's days, would have urged her to leave Patricius and take Augustine with her and set up a separate establishment—even to take a lover or another husband. But she stuck by Patricius and her home, and what do we see in her later married life? During that period

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there was nothing but happiness for her, for Patricius became a fervent Christian, converted by his wife's lovely example, with an ever-growing devotion to her. And her son Augustine was converted by her prayers and became a saint ! When one reads his account of his mother's last hours on earth, and of how she *saw* the joys awaiting her in Heaven, one feels how utterly her life had been worth while.

There are many Monicas in our midst now, uncanonized saints, living with impossible husbands, bearing with them pluckily, and becoming more and more beautiful in character as they live, adored by their children, who try to do everything to please them. It is Grace that has made them what they are, just as in S. Monica's case. We are thinking of one specially, not a Catholic, yet who belongs most assuredly to the soul of the Church. She was telling a close friend one day a little of her home difficulties, although indeed not much telling was needed, for the friend knew that the particular husband in question was a confirmed neurasthenic, whose violent temper made the life of the home quite impossible at times. Presently the friend said, '*It seems too impossibly hard, don't you think you will really have to leave him and go off with the children somewhere ?*' And the wife turned round and said, '*But what would he do without me, there would be nobody else to look after him ?*']

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was quite true, nobody else would have taken on the job and the man would ‘ have gone to pieces ’ utterly. But it is a marvellous illustration of how God establishes a permanent relationship between a husband and wife through the sacrament of marriage

CHAPTER V

BABIES AND THE MIGHT-HAVE-BEENS

WE want in this chapter to say more about the desire for children that many unmarried girls are conscious of. As we said before, the maternal instinct in some cases is not always fully awakened until marriage has taken place, or even until the first baby arrives. But more usually the desire for children of her own to love and care for is present in a girl's heart and mind as a passionately-guarded secret, long before she marries. Such thoughts should not be thrust away out of consciousness, but should be dwelt on gladly, in secret, for it is the most natural thing in the world to want a child.

There may be some amongst you who possess strong maternal instincts, but who dread the idea of the process of childbirth, its pains and discomforts. This dread is sometimes very real and needs to be quietly faced, for if allowed to grow to monstrous proportions in the secret thoughts, it may give rise to real unhappiness later on, in married life. The pains of childbirth were undoubtedly great in former days before anæsthetics had been

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discovered or modern methods of medical care and nursing had been perfected. But it is a wonderful thing that in our over-civilised times, when our bodies have become more sensitive to pain, God has mercifully given men and women the knowledge of how to alleviate the pains of childbirth and greatly to lessen its risks. So that nowadays no young wife (however sensitive she is to pain) need anticipate, with dread, the arrival of her baby—provided always that she has arranged for proper medical care at the time of its birth, a good nurse and a suitable anæsthetic

In former days, too, an expectant mother often suffered much discomfort, if not actual illness, during the months she was waiting for her baby. But in the last few years, specialists in women's diseases have carefully studied the treatment of such cases, and they have now acquired the knowledge of how to prevent or cure such discomforts and illnesses, to a great extent. It is most important, therefore, that a young wife who is expecting a baby should have the best medical care and attention that she can procure, not only at the time of its birth, but also during the waiting months beforehand.

There is nothing worth having without paying its price! And the price of Motherhood, even nowadays under the best circumstances, may involve a certain amount of discomfort during the waiting time and certainly *will* involve some bearable pain when

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the baby is born. You remember those words of our Lord in S. John's Gospel, 'A woman when she is in labour hath sorrow because her hour is come ; but when she hath brought forth the child she remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is brought into the world.' It is because of the joy awaiting the mother who is longing for her unborn child that she can bear the cross of some discomfort and pain—even though in no case can the word 'anguish' be applied, where anæsthetics are given. There is a danger nowadays, amidst the softness of our civilisation, that we may lose sight of the fact that the following of our Lord always involves some hardness and suffering. Both the married and the unmarried (whether from choice or necessity) have their different crosses to bear. But to each and all of them our Lord spoke, when he said : 'He that taketh not up his cross daily and followeth after me, he cannot be my disciple.'

Now an engaged girl who is reading our book may perhaps say to herself at this point, 'I want to have babies, but I cannot face the fear of not being able to bring them up properly, when my man and I will have so little money between us. We shall never be able to dress or educate them as I should like'

This is not necessarily a selfish thought, but it needs to be quietly faced. Have you ever seen Sir James Barrie's play called *Dear Brutus*? If not, be sure to do so when you get a chance.

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Amongst the characters that appear in the first act are an artist and his wife. He has always longed passionately for a child, but she has not. Perhaps she too felt she could not give it all the advantages in its upbringing that she would like.

The second act takes place in Dreamland, and one sees the artist wandering in an enchanted wood. Presently, he meets his dream-child, the Little Might-have-been, whom he had always longed for in real life. They greet each other joyfully and play together. After a time, the wife appears on the scene and sees the lovely fair-haired dream-child darting in and out amongst the trees, in her green frock, playing hide-and-seek with her husband, and she suddenly realises what she has missed ! Then as the act draws to a close, the child loses her father and mother in the wood, and one hears her calling out piteously to them, from the distance, in vain.

In the last act, when the characters are all awake again, one sees how the wife has altered through her experience in Dreamland, and that she wants her husband's dream to come true, now, if possible, so that Might-have-been may one day be a real child.

Now let us imagine that before *you* came into the world you were a Might-have-been and were given the choice of two alternatives : either to remain amongst the unborn, or else to be born into the world and have ‘ Life with

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all it yields of joy and woe and hope and fear " and then at the end of it—Heaven with its unimaginable bliss for all eternity. But at the same time it was made quite clear that if you chose the latter alternative, you must expect to live in a simpler way than those around you. Is there one of us, except a very cynical and blasé person, who would not make the second choice?

Only the other day, a son who was working hard for his living in a distant colony cabled to his mother on his twenty-fifth birthday, 'Life is good, I thank *you* for it!' He would certainly have made the second choice.

People nowadays do not always regard such problems from the point of view of the unborn children as they should.

Then, again, has it ever occurred to you that a mother who is bringing up a young family is storing up such permanent happiness for herself in middle age, when those early difficult years of her married life are over and her children are beginning to grow up to be a help and a joy to her? To an onlooker the faces of such women, at that time, often appear so vital and attractive and charming and contrast favourably with those of the nervous, highly-strung self-centred married women of the same age who have refused to have children.

We have a friend who has struggled bravely with unexpected poverty during most of her

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married life, whilst she and her husband have been bringing up a family of several children. Some of them are grown up now and they look on their mother, who is still so pretty and young-looking, as a companion. They have not been to such expensive schools as some of their friends who are 'only sons,' nor can they afford to spend as much on clothes and amusements. But there is something so fine and unspoilt about them, and the necessary 'give and take' in a family of several children has made them unselfish and always ready to 'lend a hand' in any domestic difficulty. One thinks sometimes what splendid husbands and fathers they will make, when they are such good sons. Their mother, in a moment of intimacy, said once, when speaking of two of her younger children, 'I feel sometimes as if I ought to apologise to them because I did not want them before they came, for they are so dear to me now.'

We whose work brings us into frequent contact with young married women are often filled with admiration at seeing so many girls of all sorts and conditions, settling down pluckily after marriage to live on small incomes, doing their own work in tiny flats and looking after their babies themselves—even though before marriage some had been accustomed to live in comfort and have everything done for them.

There are many Catholic couples nowadays who are finding out by actual experience, how

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God's supernatural grace can help in these hard times. Because they receive it often in the sacraments, they are enabled to endure things bravely when money is scarce and the cares of a young family press heavily on them.

It is wonderful how our Lord comes to the help of such people, when difficulties get to a point beyond bearing. We know a husband and wife, daily communicants, who were 'carrying on' bravely, whilst living in an overcrowded part of London, with their three little children, in an old-fashioned house of the worst type, dark and sunless. All the water had to be carried upstairs from a tap in the basement, and the mother's health was suffering, as she could not afford even the help of a charwoman. Many people did their best to get them a better home—friends and health visitors—but without avail. Then, after all human effort had failed, the husband and wife took the three children on a pilgrimage to a well-known shrine of our Lady of Lourdes, in the Catholic Church in Harrow Road. On reaching the shrine they all prayed there and asked her who was so often homeless on earth, to intercede for them with her Son, in Heaven. Before a week was over they had heard of a lovely little house in a London suburb, with a garden, and rent within their means. They are living there now very happily.

It is not possible in this book to go into the reasons why the Law of God condemns the

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practice popularly known as Birth Control. Two little pamphlets have been published recently by different authors in which the teaching of the Catholic Church on the subject is set forth.¹

In the next chapter we want to say something about the incomparable work for God that a mother does, when she brings a child into the world who can live to give him glory and to serve and work for him. 'Any good and Christian deed is a wonderful thing to have done : but what is her privilege who has contributed of her very flesh and blood to give existence to a child, who can become the living source of innumerable good deeds, throughout its life ! The thing that is likest God is Life : and she has contributed to bring a new living creature into the world, and if she earnestly invokes God's blessing and protection, there never need be any end to the widening and spreading of the good that her child may do, the life that it may give.'

(From *Baptism and Churching*, by Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J)

¹ *Christian Marriage and the Limitations of the Family*, by A J Anderson Published by Sands & Co, 15 King Street, London, W C 2 Price 3d

A Talk to Catholic Wives, by a Medical Woman. Published by the Catholic Truth Society, Eccleston Square, London, S W. Price 2d.

CHAPTER VI

VOCATIONS

CATHOLIC girls are apt to think that this word means a call from God to become a nun. But that is only part of its meaning, for in most cases it signifies a call from him to live a life in the world either married or unmarried. From all eternity God has, as it were, counted on the co-operation of each soul in the particular work which he has created it to do. He planned every smallest detail of your character and personality, your circumstances and environment, your gifts and graces, to fit you exactly for this special vocation of yours, whatever it is. If you follow it you will be at your best, your happiest, your strongest, your serenest.

The vocation to be a nun comes as a special call from God to an individual soul, to the highest life of all, where it lives only for him and gives up all earthly loves for the life of a pure spirit as far as it is possible for a human being. God, in his turn, gives most royally the special graces for such a life. But it is useless to set out on such a path unless he calls, as the special graces would then be wanting. There are

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some people who have a way sometimes of speaking to a Catholic girl as if she should become a nun unless God has shown her definitely to the contrary. This is a mistaken way of talking and is apt to make a girl scrupulous. It is not God's way either, for when he gives a call to a soul to leave all and follow him along the path of poverty, chastity and obedience, he makes the call quite clear, and at the same time gives that soul a strong desire to obey.

We know a delightful woman who told us that when she was a child she became obsessed with the notion that she ought to be a nun. She used to waylay all her little friends before making their first communions and beg them to pray for her private intention, such prayers being supposed to be especially efficacious ! This secret intention invariably was that she should not have to be a nun ! When she grew up, she realised that God had *not* called her to the religious life, and she followed the path he had ordained for her in the world. We can testify that her vocation has unmistakably been that of a wife and mother, of the most ideal sort, as well as of an ardent worker in many Catholic causes.

If that girl had followed what she had mistakenly believed in childhood to be a Divine call, she would not have fulfilled her vocation, which was to live a married life in the world. The more one realises the problems of

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the present age, the more one sees what an extraordinarily high vocation (or calling from God) this is, next only to that of the religious life. So many girls nowadays, in the first flush of excitement at earning their own living or carving out careers for themselves, are a little bit apt to look down on what they consider to be the rather humdrum lives of some of their married friends who have abandoned their careers and are drudging away in little flats, looking after their babies, wheeling them out in perambulators, even cooking their husbands' dinners in the evening ! Perhaps they can only occasionally go out after dinner to a dance or theatre with their husbands !

That is only a superficial point of view, however. When you look below the surface, you see that the girl who has given up her independence or profession to become a wife and mother, is following just as big and interesting a career as the unmarried girl, who is so keen on her work as artist or teacher or writer or doctor. Many modern girls, after they marry, are, we think, gradually coming to realise this for themselves, as their instincts of home-making develop. Some we have known, teachers, doctors and others, have begun their married lives in rather straitened circumstances and have continued in their professions after marriage, so as to help the household expenses, and in some cases this is really necessary. Each one is the normal type of

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girl with feminine and maternal instincts. One after another of them tells us that she is gradually finding out how hateful it is to be away from home all day and that she is always longing secretly when at work, to get home to her babies, not only because she is not always sure of their being looked after properly in her absence by the nurse or maid, but also because she wants to be with them more and enjoy them. ‘ I am always so glad,’ said one of these, a doctor, ‘ when I am finished early at my Welfare Centre, because I can get home in time to bath my babies ! ’

These young married women are also realising that their home also suffers, when they are away all day at work. It is too apt to resemble a bachelor establishment when left entirely to the care of servants, with dust in unexpected places and no flowers about the rooms. Meals, also, are apt to be of the badly served type that are usually thrust upon bachelors. A great many of these girls are frankly longing for the day when financial circumstances will make it possible for them to give up their professions and stay at home to follow only the high career of being a wife and a mother. We met a courageous soul the other day who had decided, together with her husband, that she should give up her teaching, in spite of the financial loss involved. She could then stay at home and look after their baby, as it was not being cared for properly in

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her absence. It was her last day at school, and she told us how impossible her life had been lately, rushing off in the morning to catch a train, working hard at her exacting profession all day, and then getting home at night too tired to make her home life what she would like it to be. She said with such a ring of triumph in her voice, 'Yes, I am going to enjoy being all day with my baby, making our home nice for my husband—we have been married five years and we are lovers still.' She had found her vocation and was following it whole-heartedly, even at some financial loss. We read in *Bleak House*, with some horror, of Mrs. Jellaby and her entire preoccupation with the needs of the African natives, regardless of her unkempt, unloved children and neglected husband. But isn't there a danger nowadays lest some girls, with all their longings for careers and independence after marriage, may not be following in that Mid-Victorian lady's footsteps? For Mrs. Jellaby, the African natives and their needs was her preoccupation—for them, careers and independence. But their unfortunate husbands and children (if they have any) are apt to be in just the same sad plight as Mr. Jellaby and Caddy and Peepy and the others. We are not denouncing feminism. We are advocating a Christian feminism that regards marriage and having children as a great career in itself—a vocation from God.

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This sense of vocation will make a girl realise when she marries, that God wants her to make a home that is a real home ; to watch over the needs of her husband’s personality, as well as his food and his clothes ; to build up her physical health and his, so that they may pass on to their children a sound physique and steady nerves ; to bring up those children with a sense of responsibility, self-discipline, honour, courtesy, and all the true characteristics of civilisation and culture ; above all, to make a home that is a fortress of loyalty to God and to the Faith of the Apostles and Martyrs—this is the vocation to which falling-in-love draws Catholic man and woman together, and for which the sacrament of matrimony sanctifies them. And ever before the eyes of the Catholic man and wife, is the Holy House of Nazareth, where Mary kept the beauty of order and made everyone peaceful and welcome—where S. Joseph kept out all disturbing elements, and where Jesus could grow in grace !

Now we can see that if a girl with ordinary homing, mothering instincts, becomes a nun because of a real call from God, *her* vocation also is a very positive one and not in the least a negative affair. To such a one, God promises to take care of her as a husband takes care of his wife, and he wants her to share his interests as a wife shares the interests of her husband. God wants such a one to help him

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to give souls birth in eternal life and rear them for sanctity, instead of bearing children and bringing up a family. Dedicating oneself to God doesn't mean killing-off the mother instinct and the home-making instinct and starving one's heart. It means looking at human beings through God's eyes, and having a heart at leisure for the most difficult, having a motherly way of protecting everybody from their worst selves, from sadness and doubt. It means making everyone at home with God. And as for your own heart, this intimate sharing of God's most private interests simply fills it with that serene sense of knowing God and being known by him with that only true knowledge which is absolute love. 'Thy Maker is thine husband'

No wonder no one can be a nun without a vocation. No wonder that to refuse such a vocation means a starved unhappy life in the world.

Lastly, there is the vocation to an unmarried life in the world. God calls some to this, as he calls others to a married life or to be nuns. To those whom he calls to this vocation, he gives all the graces necessary for their state of life and especial work for him, just as in the case of the others.

If you are not sure which of these three vocations God is calling you to, the best and happiest thing is to continue living your life in the world with its work and play and family

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relationships, but living it so as to please our Lord always and confiding all your wants to him. If God wants you to become a nun, he will make his call quite clear, and will at the same time give you the desire to be one. If, however, he calls you to be a wife and mother, he will send the one who is the right husband for you, at his own time.

In this way, you will be living in the world as you would like the man to do who may one day be your husband—and you will grow up into the delightful sort of woman of whom your son may one day be proud.

Surrounded as you are, by married and unmarried men, one of whom may be trying, perhaps, to lead you into evil, are you to live like a hermit, dress dowdily and never have any pleasure because you are trying to please our Lord? No—for it is natural and right that a girl should want to wear pretty clothes and be attractive and charming and should enjoy such opportunities of associating harmlessly and happily with men, as dances and tennis.

One comes across, occasionally, a rather rigid type of Catholic (happily exceptional) who is apt to frown on pretty clothes and innocent gaieties. Such an attitude is opposed to the real spirit of Catholicism. Our Lord in his parable of the Lilies of the Field was preaching to selfish people who were perpetually planning how to get enough money to spend on rich clothes and luxurious living.

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But when one has had the delight of seeing a field in the East, in spring-time, with its gay carpet of red anemones and purple iris, one realises that there was a lovely second meaning in his parable. Just as he made that field so beautiful with its flowers, so did he create human beings, that their minds and bodies should display something of beauty too. It is Sin and Disease that have spoilt his original plan. It is quite natural and right therefore to bestow attention on making our appearances attractive and to design our clothes so that they are graceful in form and harmonious in colouring—as long as we do not spend too much time or money selfishly, on such efforts.

Again as regards ordinary amusements—we see in the life of our Lord how he and his Mother attended the wedding at Cana, and each did their part to make the festivity a happy one. He turned the water into wine, at her request, so that the feast might not come to a premature end. There was no rigid Puritanism about him or her, either.

Our readers will not of course misunderstand us. There are certain vulgar dances, bad plays and films, which every girl who is a loyal Catholic, will avoid.

When a girl is living in the world, so as to please our Lord, she is apt to be a more natural selfless person, and therefore more attractive to everybody, than the self-centred type of girl. Some of these latter tend to

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become unattractive by their desperate efforts to attract attention to themselves—others lose their natural charm just because their introspectiveness leads to shyness when noticed. Unreasoning terror at the slightest show of interest from any man, however good, is not virtue, or dignity, it is hysteria. Those who fly panic-stricken at any sign of interest or love on the part of an unmarried man, may lose all chance of the highest earthly love and happiness. But, on the other hand, it is not dignified to rush blindly into dangerous companionship, to allow risky liberties, to boldly seek out the attentions of men friends or acquaintances. Besides being undignified, it is useless as a rule. No man worth his salt really admires the girl with the beckoning finger.

Avoid both these extremes: be natural. Travel, as the sailors say, 'on an even keel,' and take the joys that God sends with both hands, and a grateful heart.

CHAPTER VII

REPRESSED INSTINCTS AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

MOST of us are familiar with the expression 'repressed instincts' for it is used so frequently now, in novels and plays. But perhaps you have never seriously considered its meaning. It is well to do so, for it is quite possible to suffer from these without knowing it—and the deep and fundamental instincts we are referring to can be very harmful when repressed.

Let us take a concrete example of what it means. Suppose, for instance, that a girl has met several men who have wanted to marry her. But she has said No to each, because in her heart of hearts, she knows that there is only one man in the world she wants, and he, apparently, does not care for her as she cares for him. As a modern writer has described it, 'The attainable is not desirable and the desirable is not attainable.' The girl, being the normal delightful type and not the husband-hunting sort, hides the secret in her heart. She broods over it perhaps, without telling anyone, for her natural pride and dignity forbids this.

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How is she to deal with it, this great passion of love and longing? Is she to repress it—drive it down into the depths of her consciousness by trying to forget? No, for such desires when repressed entirely may become dangerous alike, to body and mind. One has known cases where such repressions, as they are called, have led to bodily illness and nervous disorders.

Some rather matter-of-fact people are apt to suggest instead that she should throw all her energies and thoughts into work or sport. The girl we have described, however, knows instinctively in her heart of hearts that this is not going to help her very much. To one really in love, who cannot possess the object of her desires, it seems too much like trying to put out a fire with a trickle of water when some well-meaning person suggests a career or hobby as the only way of dealing with her sadness and longings, helpful as these may be incidentally.

All Catholic philosophers and many modern psychologists are agreed on this, that the only thing to be done with such very natural human instincts is, not to repress them or divert them, but to *lift them up*, as it were, and transfer them to objects other than the object of desire. This process is called ‘sublimation.’ The word is taken from the Latin verb ‘sublimare,’ to lift up high. It is a beautiful term for a very unselfish process. In the case of the girl we have described, it means lifting up all that energy of loving and longing that has been

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concentrated entirely on one object, the man whom she cares for, and giving it out to the people around her—parents, friends, and little children. This in itself, after a time, brings her ~~peace and real happiness~~—though of a somewhat different and more unselfish sort than that which she had originally pictured for herself

In these circumstances, it seems safest and most natural for a girl to turn to her own family in the first place, if possible, and give out her love and sympathy to them—to a tired father—an overworked mother—a little nephew or niece who needs special affection and care which she, and she alone perhaps, can give.

Please do not think that we wish to imply, for one moment, that girls should not follow careers, pursue hobbies or go in for motoring and sport. These are all helpful in their different ways, and it is most important that everyone should have some interests and occupations outside her home. But there is a real danger, though perhaps not a very common one, that a girl may become rather hard and masculine after such an experience as we have described, if she diverts all the energy of her longings into such channels as sport or motoring, or work, to the entire exclusion of human and family ties. Little by little, she loses her gentleness and attractiveness, and becomes mannish in ways and dress. All this hardness of mind and body may prevent her marrying happily

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later on ; and, in middle age, she tends to become the severe and brusque type of spinster to whom no one would dream of turning for sympathy or tenderness.

If, on the other hand, she lives amongst her own people whenever possible, lifting up her love and affection to them, and to all around her, and trying to make them happy—then the career or hobby she follows with zest will only help and not harm her because it is not the only or chief object of her life. Nor does she run the same danger of losing her feminine characteristics of charm and attractiveness. We believe that the reaction against the Victorian type of woman has gone too far nowadays, and although none of us would wish to be like the feeble, ineffective, helpless type who was sometimes found in that remote age, yet we think that what was best in Victorian women, their courage, gentleness, unselfishness and charm, are not things to be scorned, but to be admired and emulated by their modern descendants.

And one day perhaps, such a girl as we have pictured above meets another man who wants to marry her and for whom she gradually gets to feel a very real and deep affection, even though it may not have the glamour of her one great passion. But she makes all the better wife and mother if she has lived in the manner described, for her natural instincts of sympathy and home-making will not have been stunted by living alone in a flat and brooding in secret

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over her sorrow when her day's work is done, but will have been developed all the more by her human contacts.

Let us look at some of the ways in which sympathy and affection can be given to those outside the family circle. To make real friends with other girls and be sensible and loyal in such attachments is not only a help to them, but is also apt to defeat that sense of isolation which descends at times upon the best of us.¹ Then again, a healthy friendship between an unmarried man and girl can be a great help to both. Many a young fellow living in a big city, away from home and family, is often very lonely. Indeed, he may sometimes fall into bad habits and company just because of his loneliness. If he has an attractive right-living Catholic girl to go out with sometimes, he finds it all the easier to keep cheery and sane and straight.

There are many openings too, in social service, especially for girls of leisure which demand much sympathy and kindness of an active sort—not just idle spasmodic efforts to help poor people, but really diligent, regular work. Take the Girl Guide movement, for instance. Here is a splendid chance for older girls to give up some of their spare time to help the younger ones who are Guides, by becoming officers. These children are often in great need of active help and sympathy, and respond to

¹ See note on excessive friendships, page 87.

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them amazingly on the part of the officers—many more of whom are needed by the Catholic Companies.

Then again, the work of the Care Committees in elementary schools is largely carried on by people who give generously of their free time to visiting the parents of the school children and persuading them to carry out the treatment advised by the school doctors. This demands great tact on the part of the visitors, and a real understanding of the difficulties of a working-class mother. All this team work carried out by school doctors and nurses and visitors has made a marvellous improvement in the health of the school children of this country, during the last twenty years. The Catholic schools are in great need of more helpers in this work.¹

When the repressed instincts are sublimated in these various ways, a girl's whole personality becomes correspondingly enriched. If she is a musician, her art will have a more rare quality than it had before she knew what real love meant. If she is a teacher, her work will be finer and more human than it was before. If she is a social worker, she does not regard each poor mother or child whom she is dealing with, just as a case to be labelled and put on a card-index, but as a human being to be

¹ The Catholic Bureau of Social Service, Pioneer Institute, 70 Victoria Street, gives advice to girls who are seeking openings for social service

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sympathised with and helped, in the most individual manner possible. When she grows up into womanhood, she becomes the type of person to whom others instinctively turn in time of trouble.

CHAPTER VIII
THE LOVER OF SOULS

'Thou art the Way—
Hadst thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If thou hadst ever met my soul.'

Alice MEYNELL.

THIS chapter comes late in the book, but it is of fundamental importance. For each one of us who is living apart from God, however much she may be enjoying life, is conscious at times in her inmost soul of a feeling of emptiness and unreality about everything, even at those times when Fortune seems to smile on her most brightly. This is because the soul is immortal and demands something permanent and unchanging for its satisfaction—the Love of Christ our Lord.

'Thou hast made us, O Lord, for thyself, and our hearts cannot rest until they rest in thee.'

Perhaps one of you will say, 'Yes, it is all very well to talk like that, but I find religion so dull and meaningless. I had too much of it at school, and our Lord seems so far away, now.' Probably what has happened is, that when you left your Convent School, you somehow let things slide a bit, as regards religion,

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until you have come to believe that you have fulfilled your duty as a Catholic when you attend Sunday Mass. In this way, Heaven has become more remote and our Lord and his Mother unreal, and this present jolly world around you, with all its pleasures, seems the only thing worth while.

All goes merrily with you, however, until one day, perhaps, sorrow comes. Death takes your friend or lover—a great happiness that you had hoped for, is withheld—love is offered you that as a Catholic you must reject—and you feel utterly stranded and alone in your inmost soul, however much you may keep up appearances and turn a smiling face to the world.

What will help you now, is to begin quite simply to practise your religion again, not as a routine affair of so many church-goings or prayers, but as a living vital reality. Try to go into a Catholic Church every day, for a few minutes only, and you will soon begin to realise that you are not alone in the empty church, but that the Presence of our Lord on the Altar is all around you, helping and comforting and strengthening—until at last you find yourself beginning to pray to him quite simply, even without words, telling him of the big sorrow, perhaps, or sin or loneliness as you would tell no one else in the world. If you want a few words to help you speak to him, read the page in the Simple Prayer Book (on sale in the Catholic Truth Society's book-rack

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in most churches) about a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and the words will come. Soon you will find yourself wanting to go to Confession and Holy Communion again, regularly and perhaps fairly often—and as you do so, real peace and happiness will come into your soul.

Try, too, saying one decade of the Rosary every day (not more than one!) and *think* about the Mystery it represents, whilst you repeat the Hail Marys. If you are thinking, for instance, about the Sorrowful Mystery of our Lord carrying the Cross and bearing its heavy burden for you, ask his Mother, in each Hail Mary, to pray for you that you may bear with patience any Cross of sorrow or difficulty or loneliness that he sends you.

In these ways, our Lord and his Mother will again become real persons to you. Indeed, he will steal so gradually into your heart and life, that at last you begin to realise that it is quite unthinkable to have any human loves apart from him—that even the most ideal of these, apart from his approval, would never really satisfy your soul—but that with him in the centre of your heart, every lawful human love becomes deepened and enriched.

‘ All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home :
Rise, clasp My hand and come.

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Halts by me that footfall :
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand outstretched caressingly ?
Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest !
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest
Me.'¹

This book has done its best to show you your real self, as a woman. You are bound to try and get the best for that real self because God loves it and values it. Don't be hard on it when it falls into small faults. As long as it is driving ahead with its face set towards the Will of God, take its faults of frailty with a sense of humour! Anyone who pokes good-natured, patient fun at herself is a cheery healthy-minded person. And don't take the mistakes of any other human being too seriously either. Our Lord means us to be loyal to our loves—very, very loyal, but not to expect them to be so marvellous that they will never make mistakes. Only God is always just right. Friendship with him is a wonderful thing, for he is as tender as a woman and as comradely as a man. He, the Maker of all loves and friendships, is the only completely satisfying Being. We shall find it easy to keep our heads, and to steer a straight course through the tangle of influences and events in this world, exactly in proportion as we dare to accept the offer God makes us to share thoughts with him. The only real friendship

¹ Francis Thompson.

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is based on a like-mindedness about the things that matter. And *that*, you and Almighty God already have in common, for you and he both want to be chosen, known and loved.

An absolutely natural, perpetual friendship with God, is like sunshine coming into a dark place. He is vitally interested in your dreams and desires. He cares far more about your happiness than you do yourself. An old and saintly Jesuit Father, not many years dead, was never tired of preaching from the text ‘ Delight in the Lord and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart.’

Here is a true story to illustrate this. A girl who used to confide all her wishes to God, even about little matters, had about a dozen wants. A friend used to tease her about these—which were quite naturally told her in confidence—because she demanded some rather childish and even worldly things. There came a day, when God unmistakably asked that girl to set out in a certain direction, on such-and-such a walk of life, where most of these wants would be, apparently, quite impossible of fulfilment, and the rest of them, to say the least, unlikely to be realised. Well, there was a royal battle between those desperately dear hopes and the Will of God, but God always had come first, and when it came to the point, he won. The girl started off on the path he had pointed out, and a stiff climb it proved. And then, believe it or believe it not, but it is true—God, for whom

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nothing is too small, gave her—absolutely out of the blue—all those desires, large and small, even the small childish ones.

So if you have a secret desire for some of the big joys of life—married love—the possession of little children ; or a desire for some of the toys of life—pretty frocks and harmless amusements—*trust God with it*—he will do something about it.

Meanwhile, do the next thing he shows you to do. Follow the golden thread of destiny, which is his Will in the common everyday happenings of life—and if you don't let go of it, you will find the kind of joy which will make you blossom out, succeed, shine and radiate happiness like an irrepressible Witness of Faith in the Goodness of God.

We do not think enough about the resurrection of the body and the joys that await us on that Easter morning. The Church teaches something about them, but the main thing she says is, that they are inexpressible. Broadly speaking, it amounts to this, that this body of ours will be made capable of the quintessence of exquisitely subtle joys. Just as you could not *explain* to a woman, blind from her birth, what blue is : so we are not yet capable of knowing what those pleasures of our purified and transfigured senses will be like. All that we think of when we read of the 'Easter morning' will happen to these bodies of ours—subject now, as they are, to pain and temptation. One

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moment's experience of these joys, will make those of earth look like paper flowers beside fresh daffodils.

'All thy old woes shall now smile on thee,
And thy pains sit bright upon thee,
All thy sorrows here shall shine,
And all thy suff'rings be divine ;
Tears shall take comfort and turn gems,
And wrongs repent to diadems.'¹

¹ Richard Crashaw (from 'A Hymn to S Theresa')

CHAPTER IX

A PORTRAIT GALLERY

IN some periods of history women have been treated as servants ; in others, there will be—as at present—a tendency to stress the absolute equality of the sexes, and insist on the right of women to enter any profession. The Catholic Church stands firm on the truth midway between both extremes ; woman was not made to be man's servant, but his ' equal ' and his mate.

When the fullness of time was come, and God sent his Son into the world to redeem us, he might have sent him as a full-grown man, or as a little child who could have been found by those shepherds at Bethlehem, with no clue as to how he came there. But ' God sent his Son, made of a woman.' The throne he chose for our Lord was the heart of a human family. God so approved of the family as his own institution, that he willed that our Lord should be ' subject ' to our Lady and to S. Joseph until after he had attained to full manhood.

Ever since, women have had in Mary Immaculate one clear pattern of God's ideal for them. There are hundreds of devotions to

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our Lady, none too many, none really adequate when we think that she was created to have a Divine Child ; but the best devotion of all is to try to be like her, loving, courageous, gentle, gracious.

It was ‘ with Mary the Mother of Jesus ’ that the first years of the Church were spent, and from her we inherit the traditions of dignity and tenderness, handed down through the centuries from ‘ the fairest among women ’ who stood by the Cross as quietly as she had watched by the Manger. Remembering what a woman can be, the Church expects much of women

We belong to the family of Christ. We are his heirs. From the walls of our ancestral home, the Church, the portraits of the daughters of the house look down on us—Lois, Eunice and Petronilla who ministered to the Apostles in spite of the ever-present danger of persecution by the Jews : Magdalen, the dauntless, who would not despair and whose contrition was so perfect that the Church counts her among the Choir of Virgins : Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes—that beautiful and heroic child—Cecilia who converted her husband and brother—all these steadfast martyrs who set the standard of courage for the future daughters of the Church. Later on we have Hildegarde of Germany, so learned that scholars came from all parts of the known world to discuss abstruse problems with her. The Church needs more learned women in this age—so long as their

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hearts are as wide and deep as their studies. Then we have Scholastica, Clare, Teresa, Catherine of Siena and Colette—women with the minds of statesmen. The Church hopes for such women again in these next centuries, but only absolute generosity and minds moulded on the contemplation of eternal things can produce such great characters. As for ideal wives and mothers, they are countless. Two saints, Elizabeth of Hungary, the perfect wife, mother and widow, and Francesca of Rome, can represent them. And then there is S. Catherine of Genoa, that incomparable matron of a hospital. 'Into their company, do thou, we beseech thee, admit us.'

No woman of to-day with brilliant gifts or artistic genius, no woman-explorer or woman-scientist can surpass even the temporal achievements of the elder daughters of the Church, although she may contribute to them something very new and wonderful.

The Church, then, would be showing scant courtesy to our generation if she expected less of us than of our spiritual ancestors. Even if she would, she cannot lower the standard, because it is not hers but God's. He is our Creator; he knows of what we are capable, morally, physically and spiritually.

His Church remembers from her experience of two thousand years what manner of women her laws have bred, and she has seen no greater women outside of the Kingdom. What-

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ever be the methods of those outside her walls, she will not change. And indeed, to her, with her memories of these noble and valiant women, there must be something repellent and undignified in the fretful demands of non-Christian, and nominally-Christian, women to-day for easier divorce, free love, birth-control and all the cheap excursions to and from marriage and motherhood.

The Catholic Church has always been, like our Lord, the refuge and defender of the poor, the weak and the simple ; but she teaches them noble manners, and reminds them that they must respect themselves and be respected, because they are immortal souls. She gives them, in her moral code, the education of aristocrats and kings ; telling them to give their word and keep it royally, to live and die for their loyalties, to eschew all meanness and to take up the cross of their responsibility towards their neighbour. In the great house of the Church there ever lingers the tradition of S. Joseph's patience, our Lady's graciousness and the obedience of the Holy Child.

These are the traditions inherited by every daughter of the Catholic Church. Perhaps you have never seen it in this light before—the background against which you, and we as Catholics, live our lives. You and we inherit a title in the name Christian which presupposes that we behave as belonging to a great family. There is no family in the world so noble. The

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daughters of princes or postmen, kings or dustmen, God expects this same standard of us—because we have been adopted by baptism into our Lord's own Divine Family.

So when you let your mind dwell on the portraits of the saints whose names and fame we have recalled, remember that your picture might hang beside them one day. What would you wish to be remembered for? You must decide that, for you must build your character on the answer. Whatever attracts you—marriage, nursing, learning, being a nun—have another look at them all, for they have one thing in common that God intended every woman to have: loveableness. God made every woman to be loved, to be confided in and needed. In the eyes of God, every creature of his has a unique beauty which entrances him at every moment of that soul's existence (so long as it is not disfigured by sin). What God intends to do, by the circumstances he permits and the graces and opportunities he sends, is, to bring out in each soul that single, irrevocable beauty of personality which he will never re-create, if you lose your soul and fling it away in broken, terrible ruin. But he also wants us to be loveable to human beings. A profound philosopher of the last generation wrote: 'Woman is the ultimate rest of all things.' God means women to be nice to come home to—he wants other people to feel safe with them, to go to them for protection and encburance-

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ment. Cranky, cast-iron, sour-faced, scandal-mongering women may imagine they are *religious*, but they will have to make a radical change if they want to be *good*. Nobody can please God by being unpleasant to human beings.

You will find, if you steadfastly take your stand on your Catholic principles, that this courage and loyalty will give your personality the very characteristics it needs to be attractive and loveable. You will begin to have a family likeness to those portraits in our ancestral home, the Church. As you go ahead with your own life, you will acquire for yourself too, other admirable characteristics to be handed down by you to the women of the future. You will be *living* that great prayer in the Canon of the Mass :

' On ourselves, too, who are sinners, but yet thy servants, and who put their trust in the multitude of thy tender mercies, vouchsafe to bestow some part and fellowship with . . . Felicity, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecily, Anastasia and with all thy Saints. *Into their company* do thou, we beseech thee, admit us, not weighing our merits but freely pardoning us our sins, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

NOTE ON EXCESSIVE FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN GIRLS

A HEALTHY friendship between two girls or women is a delightful thing. But we think there is need, at the present time, to say something about the great dangers that lurk in an excessive friendship. We sometimes see a budding tendency in this direction in a schoolgirl who develops a sentimental attachment to another child or mistress. The nuns and teachers at a convent school rightly discourage this. When the child grows up, she usually sheds such a tendency together with other childish things. But in some cases, this attitude to her own sex persists throughout girlhood and womanhood, and such a one tends to seek out another girl to attach herself to, sometimes to the exclusion of friends and relations. Such an attitude of mind often leads to great unhappiness and may prevent her developing the natural instinct of girlhood to be attracted by the opposite sex. If persisted in, it may prevent her marrying happily. The whole process is well described in Clemence Dane's book, *A Regiment of Women*, and we would advise any girl who is inclined to seek out others, in the manner described above, to read this book. It will give her a healthy distaste for the whole thing, as unnatural

Occasionally, too, when a girl has had an unhappy love affair she turns in a sort of reaction to form a desperate attachment to a member of

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her own sex, often an older one. There is a type of woman also (often unattractive to outward eyes) who in her turn may fasten on to such a girl and decoy her into one of these friendships in which friends and relations are utterly thrust aside. Moral disaster may even follow. For this reason, all right-thinking people, Catholic and non-Catholic, condemn such attachments.