

CHAPTER VI
THE HONEYMOON

1914

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California

DEAR MRS SANGER

Knowing open confession is good for the soul I will go into this as fully yet as briefly as possible During my two years of married life I detest and have a horror of natural sexual intercourse and have no desire or satisfaction even when I do cohabit with my husband Naturally I have many times disappointed my husband and it causes little upsets and friction I love him passionately and the present state of affairs cause me great mental suffering Have had medical advice and treatment with no results but have neglected owing to our doctor being a personal friend to tell him what I can tell you Years ago when at a boarding school in England (my home) I with many others girls abused myself in many ways This went on for many years as I was at that time very highly sexed Am regular in my menstrual periods, fairly good health, except for high strung nerves and slight hysterical attacks Can you give me any advice as to whether the early abuse could be the cause of my present condition and if it is an impossibility for me to return to normal? For my husbands sake wish to rectify this condition if it is possible and if you can give me any advice it would be more than appreciated.

MRS G A F

CHAPTER VI

THE HONEYMOON

THE importance of the first step into the conjugal life cannot be overemphasized. Initiation demands all the foresight, self-control and skill that the bridegroom can summon to his aid.

Before the advent of the single standard, this problem may not have been as complex as it is today. After the horrors of a bridal night, women have been known to leave inexperienced husbands forever.

For the bridegroom therefore, the first essential is to realize and to dominate the whole situation. He seeks to escape from friends and relatives at the proper moment. He never loses sight of the primary and central importance of his behavior and his mastery of himself, always present is the aim to bring his marriage to a happy consummation.

Through inexperience, ignorance, and a lack of self-control, due to excitement, many bridegrooms have recklessly thrown away all

86 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

possibilities of subsequent happiness To avoid this, the wise husband seeks to understand more and more of the inner nature of the woman he is marrying

The very young woman looks upon the wedding day in a very different light from the more mature woman Until the age of twenty-three the young woman is most apt to be much less sophisticated and calmly philosophical than a more mature woman To her the wedding day is all gaiety and romance She has derived her idea of the nuptial festivities from novels or the motion pictures Girls of this type are seldom satisfied with quiet weddings She craves for excitement and hopes for all the picturesque and romantic features of the traditional wedding

She knows only superficially the youth she is marrying She knows that greater intimacies are to occur She has heard older women friends, perhaps, discuss some aspects of marital relations Perhaps her mother or an older married sister have given her some intimate advice and information such information may be misinformation or misguiding No one, at any rate, can teach her concerning her own private experiences and their psychologi-

cal effect upon her. These things depend too much upon external conditions upon the successful adjustment of feeling and emotion established by bride and groom.

No matter how much self possession the girl may show outwardly the approach of the wedding day fills her with a vague unconscious anxiety. The thrill of anticipation of expected happiness is not without an element of fear. She is taking a step into the unknown venturing into an undiscovered country. *Misgivings*—Will her love be reciprocated after consummation?

Of small importance in the conquest of happiness in marriage are the outward festivities following the ceremony. Those are but accessories the external trimmings which concern only the social relationship. Of infinitely greater importance are those hours when the bride and groom have at last attained privacy when they find themselves alone at last.

The custom of the wedding journey offers both advantages and disadvantages. Too often decisions concerning the bridal night are determined by train schedules and such exigencies. It should be obvious to all sensible people that a Pullman car is hardly suitable for the

88 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

consummation of romance or a proper setting for the first conjugal embrace

Hurry bustle and anxiety should be avoided. The change from the familiar home environment is not conducive to that sense of seclusion without which mutual enjoyment is rendered practically impossible. Nevertheless the confusion of travel the embarrassment of finding oneself in the midst of strange faces the impossibilities of sanitary and hygienic conveniences the noise the excitement and incidents of travel all tend to increase the element of fear and morbid anxiety.

Such conditions are destructive to the proper consummation of marriage. Far more advisable is it to seek seclusion in a quiet hotel before undertaking any long rail road journey. In the event that this is impossible the first conjugal embrace should be postponed until an atmosphere of peace and quiet is attained. Avoid hurry and confusion. Try to remember that your lifetime is ahead of you. A false step is worse than no step. Seek to discover the hidden traits in each other's nature. Recover from the nervous strain and excitement of the wedding festivities. There are secrets to be exchanged, con-

fidences to be revealed innocent pleasures in the novelty and the surprises of this new adventure to be enjoyed preceding the initiation

The consummation of love cannot be brought as an incidental to the questionable pleasures of railroad travel or sight seeing and wandering about strange towns Such pleasures bring with them actual physical fatigue as well as mental exhaustion occasioned by the never ceasing flood of new sights and sounds

The burden of the engagement period has fallen upon the bride The period of the honeymoon is essentially the responsibility of the bridegroom Protective tenderness and delicacy and attention to his bride's emotional condition after her days and weeks of preparation and anticipation are imperative duties for him He must remember that this is the culmination of the first period of her life Long before she had even made his acquaintance the girl has for years looked forward to this adventurous moment No normal girl can be considered as not fearful of this novel and crucial experience This change in her whole way of living has made the deepest impression upon her mind To permit her to find

90 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

herself to be mistress of her own emotions during this paramount psychic and physical experience time quiet and rest are necessary

Mainly through lack of adequate knowledge of the emotional nature of women many impatient and selfish young husbands have plunged ahead to self gratification with such reckless rapidity that the conjugal relation is forever afterwards associated in the woman's mind with a positive feeling of repulsion

I realize that the mind of the young husband is also the battleground of conflicting ideas emotions and instincts For him also marriage is a new venture He may be embarrassed over excited a trifle oppressed by the sense of his great responsibility perhaps a bit fearsome of his victory in his final ultimate conquest of the woman's heart

Therefore he must make haste slowly He must not forget that haste and hurry can defeat him more than deliberation and control He cannot trust to blind instinct He should previously seek definite and concrete scientific knowledge concerning the nature of physical love knowledge not merely of the sexual function of the generative organs of the male but of the female as well and their relation to the

psychic constitution of both sexes By such enlightenment the young bride will also be spared an untold amount of unnecessary suffering Both bride and groom will understand that the perfect and desirable consummation of love is the outcome of mutual respect and consideration and that in many cases this adjustment is not attained immediately but sometimes after days and weeks Both must learn to look upon their bodies and the organs of sex as delicate instruments for the expression of love They must patiently learn the rudiments of the art of love before attaining perfection

The first approach by the bridegroom is a step of the utmost importance It makes the deepest and often a life long impression upon the memory of the woman

Too many men assume a matter of fact attitude and take everything for granted Aiming perhaps to exhibit complete mastery of the situation they proceed as if the whole matter were a casual act the perfunctory right of the marriage ceremony Others themselves embarrassed mistakenly try to make light of the situation or conceal their own lack of knowledge by assuming the mask of superiority the know-it all attitude

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92 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

Combined with a careless conduct painful to the young wife during the honeymoon such an attitude has been known to poison from its beginning the course of married life and has been the ultimate cause of separation. It is imperative that the husband confine his attentions to the bride and not exhibit interest in other women. Nothing can be more humiliating to a bride than to be forced to realize that she is not the center of her husband's attention supreme in his interest.

The memory of her husband's ill concealed admiration for other women their looks their clothes their various attractions—rankled in the heart of one bride throughout her married life of twenty years until divorce became the only solution. She told me of the undying memory of that unhappy honeymoon when bitter jealousy was born in her heart the maladjustment the petty quarreling and the growing bitterness became with the passing of the years bitterly intolerable. In this case the husband may have been technically innocent. But he was a clumsy wooer and began his marriage with a fatal mistake.

Another young husband found his life turned topsy turvy the day following his bride

liant and gorgeous wedding His bride was a cheerful radiantly happy girl who had looked forward to marriage with the man she loved as the culmination of happiness

This man took his bride to a hotel where a luxurious suite had been reserved for them As he had done everything possible to make his bride happy he was amazed in waking up the following morning to find his young wife sitting up in a chair She was sobbing as though her heart had been broken Try as he could he was unable to discover the source of her secret sorrow Weeks passed into months Outwardly the young wife appeared contented Nevertheless she gradually grew pale and nervous until finally her doctor prescribed a rest cure

A long time afterwards this wife confided to a friend that she had suffered a terrific shock of disappointment on her bridal night During courtship, her fiancé's advances had been sufficient to arouse her expectations to the highest point On the wedding night his approach and embraces had been in the order of a hurried meal over a lunch counter This duty perfunctorily performed the young husband quite oblivious to his bride's sharp dis-

94 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

appointment had promptly fallen into a deep slumber

Astounded at his lack of idealism and crushed by the total collapse of her romance this young bride lay awake throughout the long night thinking of all she had expected of the long weeks of preparation of her wedding garments unnoticed and her husband's bland indifference to all of her attractive preparations. Tears had finally been her only relief. And so the conviction took root in her mind a conviction that became ineradicable, that the whole meaning of marriage was to men to be found in the attitude of her husband. That all he wanted was perfunctory sex gratification. For her irretrievably, the beauty the poetry the exaltation of romance had been dragged in the dust and had come to an end.

The most successful bridegroom is he who approaches this act of communion and consummation in a spirit of reverence. The awe and the mystery of this remarkable gift so profoundly impresses the young man standing thus on the threshold of life that his approach is but the outward expression of his declaration of love of adoration of worship. Here is the time when as never before the young

husband should establish the confidence of his wife in the physical and spiritual unity of his love

He must never forget that this is the initiation of his beloved. The atmosphere the surroundings every detail is of the utmost importance. Unimportant as they may seem to the young man women often carry through life these things as indelible memories. Women have been known to cling to men through poverty sickness destitution even of cruelty to themselves and their children because of such treasured memories of promises made and consideration shown and the undying freshness of the recollection of the first embrace which consecrated her love.

Many of the mistakes and missteps made by young husbands are the outcome of inexperience and embarrassment. But ignorance is no longer a valid excuse. It is the duty of every young man entering matrimony to forewarn himself with authentic knowledge. While the family physician is adequate to consult in matters concerning his own male organization and even of the physical function he needs more knowledge than that. Nowadays it is possible to talk frankly with some women older and

96 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

more experienced in life The advice needed for a successful wedding journey and honeymoon would willingly be given by an older woman or man—preferably not a member of one's own family—and a thorough understanding obtained of the bridegroom's duties

INITIATION FOR THE BRIDE

The bride should likewise make adequate preparation for the first physical embrace Modesty and delicacy have their rightful place here as in all phases of life but modesty and purity do not mean prudishness and false reticence There is a time and place for all things Young brides in entering this most sacred of human relations should not hamper themselves by false notions of propriety

The girl who is too prudish to make preparations beforehand for the event which she knows is bound to take place is most likely to fail to establish a human and happy relationship with her young husband Often such brides become immediately pregnant Before they have experienced marital love they are on the way to premature motherhood. Moreover, her hampering inhibitions may erect a barrier

between her real desires and the possibility of realizing them Until she casts them aside liberates herself she cannot experience the deepest love for her mate

The sensible girl entering marriage will have forearmed herself with definite knowledge, both of her own nature and that of the man she has chosen as a life companion Especially will she seek to understand and to recognize the overpowering urgent passion of her beloved at the first consummation of their marriage

No precise rules and regulations can here be advised for conduct during the first fortnight At best the honeymoon is an abnormal period Emotions are heightened Each experience is a new adventure Often the effort of mutual adjustment is a slow process The bride must be lenient and sympathetic to the young husband She should try to understand and help him

Among some women the membrane known as the hymen, which partially closes the entrance to the vagina is very tough Among others it is scarcely perceptible or even totally absent Its presence or absence indicates nothing The virgin may be without this par-

98 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

ticular membrane may not have been born with one while many married women may still possess the hymen intact Therefore its absence should occasion no worry to the wife to be The old superstition that the intact hymen indicated virginity is no longer accepted by informed people

It may be found however that complete consummation cannot take place for several days because of the resistance of this membrane Or its rupture may cause severe pain In this case patience must be cheerfully used by both mates The pain will soon be overcome

Aside from the caresses and intimacies of her beloved it is not unusual for the bride to find at first no particular physical delight in the sexual embrace This lack of pleasure is also only temporary By considerate effort and proper guidance and understanding any normal woman may be enabled to share with her husband the fullest joy in sex communion

Among the essential preparations toward this end she should obtain advice concerning the hygienic accessories quite as necessary to her happiness as attractive clothing

Sane and frank discussion of sexual rela-

tions between the young husband and wife is emphatically recommended. Such discussion facilitates mutual understanding and adjustment and does a great deal toward the solution of intimate problems. If possible the young couple should equip themselves with a reliable book or two by dependable authorities in which such problems are elucidated. This will bring them both to the realization that their case is not exceptional but that all newly married couples have the same road to travel, the same problem of establishing sexual harmony, the same great adventure of initiation into life.

No less than her husband, the young woman who values her future and who realizes that married happiness cannot be won except through effort, mutual understanding and adjustment, will look at the central truths of human life squarely and resolutely. Intelligently will she weave this beautiful but difficult thread into the fabric of her life and create out of it the pattern of married happiness.

Ultimately, despite the difficulties of initiation, she must dominate the relation. This she knows vaguely even unconsciously; she must create the happiness of their life together. The future depends on the woman's attitude.

100 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

toward sex If that attitude be one of fear of shame of anxiety of ignorance masking itself in the guise of simpering innocence (an attitude popularized in the Victorian novels of the last century) then only the redoubled efforts of the husband may save that marriage from failure

If the bride brings to her marriage the antiquated attitude that sex expression is lustful bestial only a necessary concession to the animal impulse of the male while she herself is spiritually superior to sex impulse then in deed her marriage is foredoomed to failure

If on the other hand the bride brings intelligence as well as a warmly pulsating personality to this relation, if she realizes that sex and all its functions are a necessary and even the most beautiful part of life and of happiness in marriage—such a woman enters marriage with a certainty of winning joy and of developing all of its latent possibilities for a full and fruitful life She enters marriage knowing that it is in human experience the greatest of all adventures And in this adventure the woman will realize that she is the leader the commander She will realize that her weapons in crossing this unexplored undiscovered

country must be patience, tenderness understanding and knowledge and with these a challenging determination to wrest from marriage all of the happiness that rightfully belongs to her

Her successful initiation into the joys of sexual love will destroy old prejudices immature limitations false and superficial values The young wife will awaken to the direct and immediate application to herself of that profound truth of the poet who exclaimed

Be not ashamed, women, your
privilege encloses the rest and is the
exit of the rest

You are the gates of the body, and
you are the gates of the soul