

CHAPTER XV
THE HUSBAND AS LOVER

There exist a few specially chosen people who have been endowed with the power and ability of wishing a thing desiring a thing willing a thing so persistently and inexorably that, at last it has to happen

—HENRIK IBSEN

CHAPTER XV

THE HUSBAND AS LOVER

HAPPINESS in marriage must be endlessly recaptured and renewed. It cannot be gained once and held forever in the possession of the husband. Therefore to husbands of all ages—young, middle aged and even old—these directions are indispensable.

Keep on wooing.

Make the love you have found and which means so much to both of you *your religion*. For it can be the noblest of religions.

Keep your wife eternally youthful. This may seem an impossible task, but it is not and will more than repay you. Happiness is essential for the health and growth of love. Love must keep on growing. It cannot stand still. It grows or it dies. Love cannot thrive in silence. Therefore assure her, reassure her of your deep and growing affection. Good tidings invigorate the flagging energies of a band of explorers. A deep joy enables men and women to transcend the frailties of human

222 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

weakness Disappointment, sorrow depress and disturb the vital functions Therefore, husband and wife as well, *tell your love* at all times to each other

Some men do this only occasionally, or when desire is at high tide They make a grave mistake Acts may express this love more eloquently than words But do not, on this account, conclude that words are not necessary also They are Love needs constant reassurance Your wife is in all probability not a mind reader Unless you tell her, break through the reticence and embarrassment of expressing your thoughts, she may never know what you are thinking and feeling

This is a greater problem among men who are naturally taciturn and silent, among men who are born and brought up in a tradition which encourages a suppression of stirred emotions But do not make the mistake of supposing that women do not like to be told over and over again of the love she inspires This is a story women never tire of hearing This is a thought all husbands should keep constantly in mind This is the tonic that rejuvenates and keeps both young

But, as I have said, words of endearment are

THE HUSBAND AS LOVER 223

necessary but are not enough They should not be used to mask neglect in acts

Support these words of love by careful attention to all the small things concerning the well being of your beloved

Does she appear especially pretty to you today? Tell her so

Has she tried to do some out of the way thing to please you or to show that she has never forgotten your whims or wishes? Do not fail to let her know that you have noticed this act and that you appreciate the loving thought which has prompted her This may be something of the most trifling importance But your failure to recognize the love that has inspired it may cause her the deepest disappointment and subsequent indifference or unhappiness It may be merely the mending of your clothes the preparation of your favorite dish, or keeping the baby quiet while you are at rest, or some little economy to save you an added expense These may be trifles but they are tremendous trifles and upon them often depend a woman's happiness and the whole foundation of a happy marriage

These things may seem small in themselves But by letting your wife know of your appre-

224 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

ciation, you are often removing the burden and the monotony of uninteresting tasks from her mind. Duties that might otherwise be deadly dull are thus transformed by recognition into real pleasures and thus the husband may double the returns of his own love.

Remember that women tire more easily than men. Do everything in your power to spare her strength. Neglect in these matters arouses a natural resentment, and this is bound to rankle. Therefore, when you are about the house, you should indicate by your behavior that you are interested in saving the strength and energy of your wife.

Lifting, reaching, carrying, acts which may seem simple and unimportant to you may have become for your wife through continual routine a burden and a drudgery. In these matters as in all others, thoughtlessness and selfishness through neglect are more costly than the slight trouble prompted by generosity and love. In this respect I believe that the American husband is the finest in the world, particularly the younger generation of men. Companionship has been attained without any loss of chivalry.

In homes where there are no servants the household duties such as washing and clearing

away the dishes are often shared equally, and the slight burdens become an easily and pleasantly accomplished task

What were formerly considered exclusively feminine duties seem today to be voluntarily taken on by the husband. Surely there is no loss in manliness or dignity in sharing the heavier and more disagreeable household tasks. In my estimation this mutual acceptance of household duties by the husband as well as the wife does more than any other single thing toward the creation of that splendid comradeship and companionship which are the solidest foundations of permanent homes and happy marriages.

The husband who balks at such tasks and looks upon such duties as essentially feminine who considers himself henpecked when asked to help in them is indeed a pathetic creature. He is moreover exhibiting an ungenerous and thoughtless side of his nature which will be apprehensively watched by his wife. He cannot know the real joys of true companionship in his married life and he has himself only to blame when his own action brings out similar traits in his wife. This has been the traditional and unfortunate attitude of many for

226 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

own born men toward their wives. Women were not made merely to serve the physical and sexual needs of husbands with no obligation on the part of the latter except to provide a house and to pay the bills. Fortunately for all of us this type of husband is fast becoming a thing of the past. Small wonder that during the dominance of this type wives notoriously lost their youth and beauty at a comparatively early age while today women remain young much longer. This brings me to the point of how much depends upon the love of the husband in the wife's keeping young.

Keep in mind the fact that a woman's heart is ever younger than a man's. The desire to be young and to retain her youth is part of the feminine nature of a woman. There is, scientists tell us, a physiological reverberation in joyous love. To feel that she is loved, that her husband desires her and wants to make her happy will inevitably be reflected in the appearance of your wife.

Your skill as a lover and as a husband is reflected in your wife's appearance. The woman who appears radiant, youthful, glowing with vitality, contentment, and good nature reveals more of her husband's success.

THE HUSBAND AS LOVER 227

than the envious or unhappy wife who may be dressed in the latest fashion or laden with costly jewels, even though this may advertise his financial success. The wife's love life is reflected in her appearance, her whole attitude toward life. Worry, sleepless, unsatisfied nights, disappointment, all affect her glandular and nervous system, a full and satisfactory love life making for rejuvenation, a disappointed or thwarted emotional life cruelly writing in her figure and on her face the tragedy of the unhappy and unsatisfied wife. Worry, anxiety, fear, resignation, suspicion, disappointment and concealed hatred age women much more than the mere passing of years. Let all husbands think long over these facts and ponder well their responsibility for them.

Do not forget that your wife desires to be young for your sake. Her desire to be beautiful is to find favor in your eyes. It is but another expression of her love for you. Respond to this love. Help her to keep that attractive and charming quality if she has it. If by chance she has grown weary of the monotonous routine of petty household or family details and has allowed that quality of attrac-

228 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

tiveness to slumber make it your business to *arouse it again to life*

Even at the expense of sacrifice of other things planned for encourage her occasionally to buy new and pretty clothes Most people are too prone to underestimate the spiritual value of such things and yet they ever add a new zest and youth to a woman's life It is imperative always for a husband to make his wife feel that he is proud to be seen in her company proud of her looks of her charm her style her dancing of her cleverness her wit her ability of whatever outstanding quality she possesses and which rendered her so attractive during the days of courtship

This point cannot be too strongly emphasized Above all other things keep alive the *bride* in your wife Reawaken her ardor her desire her love of life This is the essential and unfailing duty of every husband who must remain first last and always the lover

In the courtship days you sought to find out what gifts what pleasures what activities would give the girl you loved most pleasure **Keep this up!** To your surprise you may discover that gifts which were pleasing during the

earlier period do not now bring the same spontaneous smile of joy Why?

A little investigation may reveal to you that due to self sacrifice or little hidden economies your wife may now be in actual need of some bit of feminine attire that you know nothing about The bunch of violets that brought the pink to her cheeks during the days of courtship may cause only faint or pretended delight now Why is this? It may be that before marriage those violets were a symbol to her of your love reassuring her of her power to please you while now they stab her consciousness into the realization that her whole wardrobe is shabby or that there is no special function at which to wear them Secretly she knows of better uses for the money spent and try as she may she cannot summon to her lips the same glad smile of courtship days though she may not wish to offend you by telling you of her actual needs

I know one charming young man with poetic and romantic longings but absolutely irresponsible toward the prosaic matters as rent bills grocery bills gas bills and such unpleasant obligations Constantly hoping to please his young wife he spent money on orchids

230 HAPPINESS IN MARRIAGE

violets, and trinkets of all kinds. These are gestures not to be condemned in themselves yet in this particular case they did not make the wife happy. Finally she told him that the children needed shoes and that the grocery bills must be paid regularly. The poetic husband sulked. He stopped buying flowers but did not begin to pay the household bills. He had failed to realize that to love fully a woman must be freed from petty worries. Gifts and luxuries are indeed lovely means of accentuating one's love. But the essential requirements of life are also imperative.

It is therefore essential

- 1 To establish a household account or budget so that the wife may know exactly what she can spend to avoid endless worry and anxiety over petty details which may nevertheless become an endless source of bickering and marital discord.

- 2 To establish an adequate allowance for the wife's personal needs (this in the case where she is not an actual wage earner).

The regularization of such financial details may be settled once for all time and will automatically remove what might otherwise become an endless source of quarrels and bick-

THE HUSBAND AS LOVER 231

erings and may cause profound unhappiness, even disaster

Large sums of money are often spent for doctors drugs, medicines or tonics to cure maladies and ailments to the bodies Marriage is likewise subject to petty ailments and illness which may be cured by the expenditure of trifling sums Often when the flame of love ebbs low, a temporary separation may be wisely prescribed Let the wife make a visit occasionally to a friend or family In other cases, where habit and routine and monotony seem to be on the point of mastering the situation and throttling love once and for all, it would be the safest economy to fling everything aside, to indulge together, lover and beloved, in what might to the unobservant outsider appear as wild extravagance Sometimes this might consist merely in 'stepping out' together, to disappear for a night or a week end in a spirit of adventure to a new city, attend the theatre, a concert, musical anything to serve as an antidote to too much tame domesticity A cure of this character indulged in before the marital discord develops into a storm, may often accomplish miracles in the recapture of marital happiness
