



JAPAN, CHINA, AND A SECRET MARRIAGE

Margaret's moods rose and fell dramatically, especially during the first few months of 1922. She was elated when she finished editing the February edition of the *Review*, celebrating Havelock's birthday. She wrote to Hugh about it on January 27: "Hugh dear—no *darling*—looking over the page proofs all evening in which is your splendid birthday tribute to Havelock. The King will die of joy over it."

Her joy was heightened by the success of her lectures in half a dozen cities (one of these cities even founded a new birth-control league as a result). But her mood changed abruptly when an Episcopal bishop reneged on a public endorsement of birth control he had promised to give.

A worse blow was the failure of a rally she had arranged for February 5 at the Lexington Opera House. Tickets were a dollar each or twenty-five dollars for a box of four, and she had advertised it heavily in the *Review* under the grandiose title of "Farewell Mass Meeting in Honor of Margaret Sanger who is Leaving for Japan and China Where She Will Take the Message of Birth Control." In her excitement she forgot to say there would be other speakers there too, and the advance sale was so disappointing the rally was called off with the excuse that she was "too busy and fatigued to attend."

This excuse was partially true, she was tired—tired of trying to make a decision about marriage to J. Noah. She jotted down one of

those revealing notes she was in the habit of putting into the files "I'm not sure I'm really fit for marriage or its responsibilities My only real interest is my cause" Nevertheless, she decided to let him accompany her on her trip as he had been begging to do She said she might even consider marrying him in Paris on their way back

But because J Noah was joining her, she would have to take a chaperon along for the sake of appearances, the chaperon she decided on was Grant She ran down to the Peddie School, where Grant was preparing for college, and told him to get ready at once to leave with her and a "friend" for Japan She also asked Grant to call her friend "Uncle Noah" Before Grant had a chance to explain why he'd rather not go, she dashed off Grant, who was a new boy at Peddie and was just beginning to make friends, did not want to miss a whole term at school But she didn't take the time to listen

Deciding to tell Hugh a little more about J Noah, she wrote on January 27

For some strange reason two very fine men have been thrust my way One a millionaire and sixty, a terribly American type of respectable business man, church-going, widower, generous, happy, thinks I'm *sensible*—likes me for that stupid quality He could with his wealth make life very comfortable & insure the financial success of my cause Shall I accept him?

The other a bachelor about 42—a eugenicist, good birth, fairly wealthy Not enough to make cause successful, but believes in woman's advancement He's very pressing for marriage I don't believe in that institution particularly—but I could have such a beautiful time if that cause were won I'd buy Wantley for you I want to live in London near Hill Road

In writing that J Noah was a widower she was less than honest But a widower would sound much better when her own divorce became public, as it eventually would have to As for the second suitor, if he existed at all, he must have disappeared quickly, because no one in her family ever heard of him

She then wrote Bill Sanger, asking whether, if she did marry again, she could keep the Sanger name Also, she asked him to keep their divorce a secret for a while

Bill replied from Truro

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I am visiting with your father and have told no one of our divorce as yet I've always left good enough alone, so to speak A public scream of our separation could not hurt me—we artists are out of the pale of Society anyway—but it could hurt you

As to keeping my name after a possible re-marriage, certainly you can In fact, I am proud to have been married to a woman who carried that name so high

Margaret, Grant, and J Noah took the train cross-country to San Francisco From there, they intended to sail to Japan on the *Taiyo Maru*, but complications arose In her haste, Margaret had forgotten to get a Japanese visa, without which the steamship line refused to sell her a ticket They also advised her that the Japanese Consul was unlikely to issue her one

As the ship was almost ready to leave, she rushed to the office of the Japanese Consul and demanded that he tell her why he would not give her a visa Was she an undesirable person who could not be admitted into his country? Or was it her subject that was taboo? He bowed politely and murmured, "both " His Imperial Majesty had heard something about a Town Hall arrest, she was therefore personally undesirable And her subject was not a proper one for his people to hear

When the Consul was through explaining, a Japanese official who happened to be standing nearby suggested to Margaret that, since their ship was also going to China, she try to get a Chinese visa instead In any event, other Japanese officials would be sailing on the *Taiyo Maru* as well, maybe she could talk to one of them during the voyage and convince him to intercede on her behalf She felt the exhilarating effect that the prospect of a battle always gave her, hurriedly got the Chinese visa, and trooped up the gangplank with Grant and J Noah just in time

Yet none of the Japanese officials on board could or would intercede for her When the ship arrived in Japan, she had to send a message to the American Consul to ask for help in getting a permit to land While she awaited his reply, a tender brought more Japanese officials on board, they questioned her endlessly What was the purpose of her visit? Who had invited her? If the American Consul did succeed in getting permission for her to land, would she sign a statement saying she would give no public lectures on birth control, but speak only to the

specific people who had invited her? She said she would sign such a statement, and did

In her diary, she noted

In two minutes after the door was closed upon the government officials, I was besieged with reporters. Every male reporter expressed his regrets that their government was acting this way & said the people of Japan desire to hear about birth control. Mrs Kohashi, the reporter for *Woman's Magazine*, came & also a delegation of six women representing the New Woman's Society of Japan. These doll-like New Women are the instruments to carry out the real dreams of an emancipated womanhood.

The delegation from the New Woman's Society explained

When leaders say women need vote, most women do not listen
When they say women need economic equality, most do not listen
But when they hear of birth control, then like lightning we understand

At last the good word came the Japanese Chief of Police would let her land. The U S Consul had refused to become involved, but because of her signed statement that she would not speak publicly she could come in.

But Margaret was not one to accept a finger when she could get the whole hand. After a good night's sleep in Tokyo, she was ready to fight again. She went personally to see the Chief of Police in order to wheedle. Couldn't she speak more freely than he had sent word she could? No, she couldn't. There was a new law called the "Dangerous Thoughts Law," passed by the Japanese Diet under pressure from the military clique who wished to exclude all thoughts that did not conform to ancient tradition. No specific thoughts were cited, but everyone at Police Headquarters had read Margaret's *Woman and the New Race* and was sure it contained dangerous thoughts.

Undaunted, she rickshawed to the Minister of Home Affairs. "Alas!" said the man at the door, "the minister is out." She hurried on to the office of the liberal Kaizo group who had asked her to come. They suggested she go directly to the Imperial Diet, which luckily was in session. There she argued the importance of her cause, citing figures on

Japan's exploding population How it had mounted from twenty-six million in 1846 to thirty-three million in 1872, then doubled to sixty million in 1922, and how these numbers of people were crowded into their tiny island at the rate of 2600 people to the square mile of arable land as compared to 466 in England It may have been her statistics, it may have been her charisma, the Diet gave her permission to speak publicly

Soon she was visiting hospitals and lunching with doctors, discussing current birth-control methods and suggesting new ones There are brief diary notes

Dr Koji told of the methods he found successful—plain soft Japanese paper folded & inserted against the cervix—then as this absorbs the sperm it is removed & a clean piece of paper wet in antiseptic solution wipes the vagina dry 1000 cases, no failures Count Kowarori and I spoke very frankly both of methods and the art of love

She couldn't pass up a visit to Tokyo's red-light district where she grieved over girls barely in their teens, who had been sold by their parents to the brothels, and were made to accept nine or ten visitors a night If they were caught trying to run away, she was told, the madam who ran the brothel broke the bones of their legs so they were truly trapped

Though Margaret was exhausted by now, she had to press on to Yokohama where she had other speaking dates From Tokyo and Yokohama her next stop was to have been Kyoto, but the Kaizo group canceled her Kyoto lectures because the police authorities had frightened them Two days later, however, the police relented and agreed to let her lecture on condition that she speak to professional groups only On March 30 she spoke to three hundred members of the Medical Association of Kyoto They were so enthusiastic that she followed up the three-hour lecture with a two-hour demonstration

She was able to rest and tour in Kyoto, going with Grant and J Noah to look at a collection of rare embroideries in a shop celebrated for its fine kimonos The owner bowed extremely low as he told her he was a faithful "Sangerite," and Margaret bought "two glorious kimonos, a red one and a blue one, plus an evening coat of rare, old purple " When the proprietor said he had sold the Metropolitan Museum in New York

forty-seven thousand dollars worth of similar kimonos at the same price, J Noah beamed, he was both getting a bargain and dressing up his beloved Also, the Kaizo group had paid her two thousand yen (\$1800) for four lectures, so his pocket hadn't been emptied by the trip as much as he had feared

As her Japanese visa was good only until April first, she had planned to go on to Korea on that date But for some reason she could not get a visa for Korea, she had to stay in Kyoto waiting to see if the authorities would change their mind Meanwhile she turned to her journal

One hears much of the "New Woman" here but one seldom sees her It seems only those women who have turned Christian are able to think independently or to do anything with their lives It also seems that to be a Christian means to be a rebel or a radical of some kind One tells it with great secret pride

Despite this, she got very angry at a dinner where some missionaries among the guests came up with the old argument that self-control was the only acceptable means of birth control She argued forcefully to the contrary, especially after a doctor sitting near her told of the tremendous number of abortions performed each year in Japan, and an Australian official told how Malay women sprinkled the acid juice of pineapple on tampons as contraceptives, or drank egg mixed with sake hoping to bring on a missed menstrual period Obviously in every country in the world women were desperately trying to find some means of birth control

Having finally gotten visas to Korea, Margaret, J Noah, and Grant sailed across the China Sea to Korea at the end of May Before they left, Margaret had finally received an eagerly awaited letter from Hugh She had written him and Havelock very short notes from Japan because of her hectic schedule, but instead of answering her they had written each other about her Ellis wrote Hugh a perceptive analysis "What you say of her is very true She is a combination of the shrewd, practical, hustling American with the elusively fascinating Irishwoman"

When she got her letter from Hugh, who called her "sweet as bell heather, sweet as a rose," she responded at once

What an enchanting letter writer you are, old goose So you had

a glorious day with the King and he told you that I was not wanted in Japan Well by this time you have heard how I went anyway just to see, and what a welcome I got! I gave fifteen lectures & then up & got sick I was *weak* I hated myself for not being a mule or a goat or something *hardy* But here I am all well again, having finished in Japan, organized a League in Tokyo, and another in Peking and Shanghai I'll be in London with Grant July 10th or perhaps earlier, with Grant in his first pair of long trousers making me feel old and lonely

She also said she had formed birth-control leagues in China, though this was as fanciful as some of her other stories because she hadn't yet left Japan But then, as she had once told Hugh, "Being Irish, I never tell a story the same way twice "

The Korean women impressed Margaret mainly by their costumes, she didn't think they had the strength to fight for their own emancipation "One man told me he wanted to have twenty children He said he already had two He was stunned when I suggested that perhaps his wife had had the two!"

She made only one speech in Korea, to the New Family Reform Association

The hall holds 800 people and was filled, though their rules are no smoking, no drinking, no gambling, so their membership is quite small I was surprised that men, women & children were there together The women seemed to attend for some reason but not for the birth control message As in Japan, the work will have to be done thru the men

A young woman interpreted the address, she had lately returned from America and was considered good But one had only to listen a few minutes to recognize she was not an expert When I asked the chairman if I was to give the theory or practice of B C he said "both " But when I came to speak on the practical side my translator's courage took flight She could not go on She turned to me & said "I will get a doctor to say that " But the only doctor available had been talking to someone & had not heard the practical side I suggested giving the Family Reformation Association a good supply of my pamphlets, and all were satisfied

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In Peking, Margaret spoke at the University, where twenty-five hundred men crowded into the hall but, again to her surprise, only a few women

For 2½ hours I held forth—crowd very enthusiastic—quick to get the point At dinner later, one of the Professors says he is going to do work on mules to see why they don't breed Maybe that will be a clue to B C "

In Hong Kong, where she went next, she was upset when she saw women coolies carrying coal on their backs to the steamers "I was shocked not only by their strained faces and emaciated bodies but by the fact that, unlike the men, they did not sing "

When her lecture tour ended in May, she and Grant and J Noah set off on a vacation trip by boat through the Mediterranean On May 31, when they landed at Aden, Egypt, she made a stark diary entry "Peggy's birthday Twelve years old today " As usual, she stayed in bed that day to mourn

After traveling through Italy and Switzerland, they finally arrived in Paris Grant begged to be sent home He insisted he had done plenty of sight-seeing and wanted to spend the rest of the summer with boys his own age, instead of with an "uncle" of sixty-two So off he sailed, and Slee, whom Margaret had decided to marry, set about the serious matter of getting a French divorce

He had prepared his way carefully When he had gone to Paris the year before, his "business" had been renting a small office, ostensibly as a branch of the Three-in-One Oil Company He had also registered at the Trade Registry of the Department of the Seine, paid his business-license tax, and declared he "intended to make Paris his home forever "

Now he petitioned the court for a divorce on impeccable legal grounds He declared that "his wife, Mary West Slee, had refused to accompany him to Paris and to cohabit with him in spite of the fact that he had informed her that he had taken up his abode in Paris definitely and permanently, and that, were she content to do so and resume the conjugal life, he would forgive and forget their years of misfortune, but that because of this obstinacy on the part of Mary West

Slee, and also because of her terrible temper, he was now deprived of the conjugal life ”

He soon received his divorce, having given Mary Slee a large settlement. He and Margaret celebrated the occasion, then set off on a shopping tour. J. Noah insisted she buy a trousseau of the finest clothes, complete from handmade lingerie to a floor-length ermine coat. With these stowed away in a handsome new trunk, they took the boat train to London where, still for appearance's sake, she went to the Hotel Russell and he to the Savoy.

In London Slee outfitted himself with expensive new clothes, while Margaret spoke at a neo-Malthusian and birth-control conference in London. Immediately afterward, she got in touch with Hugh. After telephoning him, she sent him a rather odd note, odd because it still did not mention Slee.

Hugh dear—Since my return there has been nothing I have wanted to do more than to see you. But your voice was so bored on the 'phone, dear Hugh, especially at first. Still it was good to hear you—oh what a darling voice it really is. I am feeling very blue & discouraged with Mrs. Sanger. She is unable to do the things she loves to do. She is unable to be with the friends she adores—while she finds all her time taken up talking to very horrid disagreeable people she does not like at all.

But Hugh, the Cause is moving. It will really come to pass. We will see it too. I spent a nice day with the King, but I feel someone has captured his heart. He was dear & lovely to me, oh so dear. Yet I feel a pang of separation I never felt before.

The (London) Conference was a success, (though) I am not emotional enough to stir a British audience. I am afraid of them, these Britishers who sit so silently & move not. But you are there in Wantley, lovely Wantley and I am here in this hotel-barn where wild & crazy people think they live. I shall marry for wealth someday soon & come to live near you—yes? When I am fit & strong I shall come leaping across the world to you.

Oddly, Margaret tried again to postpone her marriage to Slee, but he was too impatient to wait. Dressed in his new black lounge suit with white quilted vest, he placed a gardenia in his lapel and escorted

Margy (his pet name for Margaret), luminous in green silk and jade jewels, to the registry office of St Giles Parish where the marriage was quietly performed and recorded. Both gave their status as divorced, but while he gave his correct age of sixty-four, she lowered hers from forty-three to thirty-nine.

She had, however, drawn up another document that was not recorded. It was an agreement saying that, after marriage, she would be free to come and go with no questions asked. She would also have her own apartment and servants within her husband's home, where she could invite and entertain only those friends she chose, as the door to the apartment would be locked. He would have to telephone her from the other end of the house even to ask for a dinner date.

Slee was taken aback when this agreement was handed him just before the wedding. But Margaret was firm. Either he sign or the marriage was off. She clinched her argument by pointing out that Havelock and Edith Ellis had married under a similar agreement and, as far as Slee knew, the marriage had worked well. He signed, then took Margaret to the best silver shop in London and bought her a sterling silver dinner service as a wedding gift.

Margaret had told Hugh that marriage would make no difference in her life. She started at once to see that it did not.

She sent Slee sight-seeing alone all over London. When he got bored with museums, she suggested churches. When he had his fill of churches, she suggested Kew Gardens or Windsor Castle or outlined nice long walks. When he had had his fill of this, she suggested he go see Oxford, he finally lost his temper and began shouting at her, but she reminded him that he had signed an agreement. So he packed and got ready to go to Oxford, his consolation being that the nights he spent with her made up for the days alone.

They had undoubtedly become lovers on the trip to Japan and China, because, as Stuart bluntly put it, "Mother wouldn't marry anyone she wasn't sure could come across as a lover." But this was different. He had looked forward to an unbroken two weeks of what he expected to be a honeymoon, for their sexual life together was a constant surprise and delight. Though in his sixties, he was as eager and almost as innocent as an adolescent boy, and Margaret was an expert who enjoyed teaching him, she was as different as could be from Mary West Slee who, as the years went by, had become not only more frigid but men-

tally disturbed His new marriage, J Noah had to admit to himself, was infinitely better than the old, though there would be no honeymoon

Indeed, Margaret succeeded in getting him out of the way whenever she wanted to, leaving her free to visit Hugh and Havelock, neither of whom did she tell about her marriage

She even managed time alone with Wells She had dropped a note to him from Paris, telling him she would be in London soon, and received one of his characteristic short replies "Tell me exactly where you shall be and when a letter will find you Warmest desires to you " That was all she needed They spent an exciting evening together in his London flat, while Slee sat alone in his hotel lounge and waited for her as patiently as he could

Finally she grew worried about her long absence from the birth-control movement in New York, in late September they sailed for home Yet when they got there she continued to keep her marriage secret, as she was determined to keep hidden as long as possible the fact that the public Margaret Sanger had become the private Mrs J Noah Henry Slee