



## GREAT PLANS

The year 1926 started as badly for Margaret as 1925 had ended. Mary's death left Margaret feeling empty. Mary had raised her, when she needed Mary, she was always there. Margaret took her death particularly hard.

To ease her pain, Margaret plunged again into her diary, though the entries were desultory and vague. On January 3 she sent off a thoughtful note to Hugh about Juliet. "She is really a lovely person, Hugh, seeking her ideal love as all women seem to seek (except me) and I doubt she will ever find him or her because—Did you love Juliet or adore her? Which? She's worthy of both."

On January 5, 1926, she notes that she was at the Sixteenth Street clinic the entire day, on January 10 there was "Dr. Petty's Forum." But then comes the *non sequitur*: "Sister Mary died," followed by "Shop for clothes."

She had tried to dispel depression by sex, travel, Rosicrucianism, numerology, now she tried a new panacea, astrology. She subscribed to a personal daily horoscope by Evangeline Adams. On a day that her horoscope predicted would be bad, she wrote Hugh:

Today I bought the cutest little "dinky" Peter Pan hat that you ever saw. I went out on a real "bust" like I do whenever I want to break up the blues.

I was absolutely *sick sick*, way down, when I learned that Havelock did not get the (birthday) flowers I felt like choking, beating, pushing someone—somewhere

Havelock was perfectly dear about it, but I was *furious* I am so spoiled you see, Hugh, that I cannot tolerate existence when I ask a thing to be done & it is not done I need a few rebukes to cool me down perhaps

Hugh was distressed too

Life can be damned sad and inexplicable, Margaret I seem to have struck a specially bad patch with publishers at getting my stuff in print It shouldn't be so, I confess one should just go steadily on without minding about the unpublished work—but there it is, I am afraid I resent these difficulties and am furious at set-backs *Still I do plough on, somehow*

On February 3, there was also a sad letter from Harold Child, though expressed in his own newspaper "light leader" style He had been ill and overworked, and his father had recently died at ninety-two He wanted Margaret to come back so he could hear her laugh and see her eyes twinkle "Come soon, before I get too tired and old and stuck to be of any use to you I was 97 1/2 years old last birthday"

The news about Harold's father sent Margaret back to her diary, this time reminiscing about her own father "Father had stroke on Dec 20, but pulled through But Mary died after midnight that day She knew she was going to die" She went on to relate another queer dream In the dream she was walking the street with hundreds of people approaching her, including the eugenicist, Dr Little She smelt the strong smell of mice

*Dr Little works among mice It was queer Two nights later Mary died This is the second dream I have ever had when I smelled a smell and death resulted in a few days Mary was the stable sympathetic member of a large family Her passing looses up the foundation A dear and loving person A universal mother Peace to her!*

Soon Harold wrote that he was worried about a book Margaret was

in the process of writing, a sex-and-marriage manual to be called *Happiness in Marriage*

I think it ought not to be published yet, because it would rouse more opposition than it would do good I don't know whether you want a row just now, whether it would help or hinder B C These are questions no one can answer who doesn't know your country pretty well Can you trust Juliet's opinion on these things? Evidently she is dead set against the book being published just yet

Margaret wouldn't listen to either Harold or Juliet She knew that Hannah Stone was about to start a series of lectures on sex and marriage, and wanted to get her book out first So she hurried and finished it, though most of what she said was opposed to everything she believed

For instance, she upheld the double standard that gave men sexual freedom before marriage but denied it to women Chastity for women was a "must", even premarital kisses were forbidden She argued that "a girl is more attractive when modest and hard to conquer," and that "the one who is playfully elusive is bound to attract men of more sterling worth"

Her picture of the wedding night is particularly amusing

The ardent lover who helped his bride overcome her initial shyness by turning out the light, who gradually, step by step, removed each article of apparel, expressing his tender rapture at the revelation of each new loveliness found, who finally took her in his arms and carried her to a couch sheeted with rose petals, who then knelt beside her and told her of his abiding and undying love and adoration—of his prayer to hold his love for her above his passion—this man was sowing the seeds of undying devotion and life-long happiness

Published in 1926, the book was received with a chill Writing in *The Masses*, Floyd Dell criticized her sharply both for her duplicity and her gush, calling them qualities not to be expected of Margaret Sanger

Aside from *The Masses* and the *Call*, which gave it perfunctory notices, most papers ignored *Happiness in Marriage* The poor reception sent her spirits down

At the same time she received a strange letter from Hugh—strange because he usually sent her unqualified declarations of love. This letter was different.

Surely you know by now that I am a hopeless freak and never love or adore anyone. I'm not a great passionate nature—give me kindness and tenderness and truth and out of that what glories may grow! My love to you always—a queer brand of love but my own.

J. Noah soon decided to retire completely from business so as to have more time alone with Margaret. He sold the Three-in-One Oil Company to Standard Brands in exchange for stock worth four million dollars, using part of the proceeds to buy himself a seat on the New York Stock Exchange.

But retired or not, J. Noah was not to get his wife to himself. Soon she was back at her birth-control work. When her energy gave out she went to Truro to rest and visit with her father, who was seriously ill.

Ethel was taking care of Higgins in Truro, and he was proving a handful. In his eighties he was as obstinate as ever, even from a wheelchair. One day when the house was cold, and Ethel busy elsewhere, he got up out of the wheelchair and went down to the cellar for an extra bucket of coal. Ethel returned, heard him shoveling in the cellar, and ran after him. By this time he had the bucket full of coal and refused to drop it. Ethel ended up carrying him upstairs with the coal bucket still in his hand.

All this weighed on Margaret's mind. She felt, too, that her cause seemed to have run out of gas. She was enmeshed in the same round of lectures to small groups, sneaking *Family Limitation* pamphlets into the mail, and referring patients to Hannah Stone—either at the Bureau or in her office. True, she was winning a good deal of support among the wealthy and middle class, but things were moving without the splash she craved. Suddenly at a board meeting of the league, with the eugenicists telling each other for the hundredth time that birth control would eliminate disease and deformity as well as empty the jails and orphanages, she determined to stage a huge international conference on birth control and population problems as soon as possible. She chose Geneva as the site because it was the home of the League of Nations, she was sure the League of Nations would be so impressed it would take over the international work.

Yet the very effort of deciding to stage such a difficult conference gave her stomach pains. She checked into the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center for an exploratory operation which showed she had gall stones but did not need immediate treatment. She scribbled in her diary, the repetitive phrase "Juliet, Juliet, Juliet" and retreated to Willowlake and bed. But soon she was up again, trying to convince J. Noah she needed her most potent anodyne—a trip to England to see Havelock and get his help with the proposed conference. J. Noah could even come along.

But J. Noah wasn't sure he wanted to go. After all, he was seventy and all this running back and forth tired him too. Then Hugh sent her a photograph of himself looking more poetic and handsome than ever. That clinched it. She would go to England, J. Noah or not, to see only Hugh and win him back.

The only problem about making the trip was money. J. Noah was sometimes generous, sometimes tight. But he was obsessed with health, both his and his wife's. And like many people of his time, he thought a "change of air" was good for everybody—sea air in particular. He would hand over money for a boat trip as a rule more readily than for anything else. Enough to travel first class, too.

So off she went to England, though this time visiting Hugh and charming him as in the old days didn't help, depression settled on her like a pall. She did no birth-control work at all that summer and returned home in bad spirits. Though J. Noah was also ready to pay for moving from their New York apartment at 39 Fifth Avenue to a more prestigious address at 230 Park Avenue, the very thought of the work involved depressed her further. On September 28 she wrote Hugh that since her return, she had been "hanging around like an apple on a tree, with no go or pep or anything." She had also been in an auto accident and hurt her spine, an osteopath was treating her—he'd fixed her lower back and shoulders, but the tubercular trouble in her neck had definitely shown up again. "It's a game of hide and seek," she told Hugh. "The husband longs for me to run off to Italy with him, get a house on the Riviera where the sun shines, but I'm too lazy and undecided even to think."

Not knowing what to do, she did the obvious. She sailed for London again in early October. Again she went without J. Noah, whom she had convinced to stay home and supervise the winter covering of the plants and shrubs at Willowlake. The flowers in her exquisite rose gar-

den would die, she assured him, if they weren't properly protected, the deer would come down from the hills and eat her evergreens And J Noah, who welcomed anything that would keep him busy now that retirement hadn't proved so blissful after all, stayed home

For a change she let Harold know she was in London, and on October 6 he humbly begged her to lunch with him He apologized for asking her, as if he had begun to fear, from what Hugh had told him, that he couldn't hold her much longer

Will you come to lunch (very simple) with me here on Wednesday or Thursday, or any time before the evening? Do Forgive me for bothering you, but you know how much I want to see you!  
Dear Margaret, your Harold

A week later he was no longer begging She had had a long lunch with him, after which they had gone to her hotel and stayed together for a night of love He was intoxicated again

I walked back under the moonlight across the Park with the love of you and the thought of you and the scent and the feel of you rushing through body and soul like the very water of life And so I went to sleep, and when I awoke I didn't have to say my prayers I was already in the arms of God, who is Love Margaret my own, *stay in London till the end of the month* You came so suddenly, and love flowed out so suddenly that we haven't been able to plan things as we should *Stay, stay, stay* Dear, I can't say what I feel Words won't do it So I'll shut up

Hugh, whom she also saw on this trip, was humble as well He wrote from Sand Pit to her London hotel telling how his knees would quake if ever he found her "too grand and glorious Poor little frightened Andrew Ant (a name Hugh used for himself)—you would be kind to him, wouldn't you? And not stand on your toes and lorgnette him from the midst of the latest Parisian confection!" Then, more seriously "I plod on, not really discouraged, having the faith of darlings like you I perpetually pray to write *a good book* One musn't complain about the way in which one's prayer is answered "

Margaret responded by giving Hugh all the faith she could, though she couldn't stop him from being jealous of successful writers like

H G Wells "I want to hear you laugh," Hugh wrote In another note he said "It is an awful obsession—this wanting to hear you laugh I think I ought to be analyzed and be free from it, and be nice and normal like H G Wells or any other of your grand friends Real he-men! Sweaty beggars! Never mind!"

At the end of October Margaret sailed for home, even though it meant passing up an invitation to Wells' country place to meet some prestigious people who might be useful to her cause She probably sailed because an even more tempting opportunity awaited her—a luncheon in New York from a woman she called in her diary "Queen Marie Romaina" She took J Noah along to impress him, as a queen was certainly a Big Name

Her diary entry for November 6, the anniversary of Peggy's death, is almost unreadable That day, and the week following, she stayed in bed and mourned, emerging only for a meeting on the planned international conference at which "Mrs Selzburger" (probably Mrs Arthur Sulzberger, wife of the publisher of *The New York Times*) was another Big Name guest

"My father married the whirlwind," Grant Sanger used to say He was right Her mourning for Peggy over, she went right back to England to see Hugh, Wells, and Havelock This time J Noah went along, flatly refusing to stay home alone any more But she persuaded him to go to Paris for a while as "the season" was in full swing in Paris, and from there to the Riviera to catch some sunshine for his health Since she was planning to stay abroad for several months in order to get the Geneva conference underway, she also suggested he look for a villa on the Riviera for them to rent for the winter

Once in England she rushed down to Little Frieth near London to see Havelock, but since in her excitement she had forgotten to tell him she was coming, he had left for Cornwall So she hurried to the Mayfair Hotel and immediately wrote a mollifying letter to her husband "Dearest Noah Darling It is really always lonely to be away from you for even one day"

On December 7, she wrote him again

Dearest love This is a busy day I had lunch with Julian Huxley and got from him his ideas and found him deeply interested and willing to help in a limited way I may have to go to Edinburgh and I will have to go to Cambridge I am glad you are

not here! I can work better and get things done quicker when I can concentrate all my energies and time like this than to do otherwise

She *could* concentrate and work better without J Noah She enjoyed having him fuss over her health, but only up to a point She became furious when he told her to go to sleep when she wanted to stay awake, to wake up when she wanted to sleep, not smoke because it was bad for her lungs when it was a cigarette she craved As she had once confessed to Grant when she was ill and away from home "Don't tell Pater I'm not well because he will come flying down here, and you know how that nervous old dear grates on my nerves "

On December 9, she took the time to write her husband a long, thoughtful letter

There is much fear on the part of the Scientists that I have come too late to get help, that I should have been getting them started to work on this last October There is genuine willingness to help me, but a fine honesty in the English which refuses to take on what they cannot do well It makes me almost sick when I think of it, for Dr Raymond Pearl told me I should have come sooner or it would be too late You see Noah dear, all my life I have acted on an inner voice & when that speaks to me it speaks wisely and never fails me

When I disobey it for one reason or the other, I always suffer If only I could help you to believe this & help you to understand it, you would, I know, add to it your splendid powers & make everything I do a glorious success But when we put our own man made minds against God's will & God's advice then disruption & disaster results somewhere It will be a busy week next & I shall hope to have seen every worthwhile Scientist in England I will then decide if I can do the Conference anyway

The sun shines here today It is not cold & I am well I love you dear one, you know, & I will write you a loving letter later

Loving letters or no, J Noah was so angered by her absences that he stopped writing her For a change, she became worried Still, after spending Christmas and most of January with her husband at the Villa Bachlyk—a beautiful eight-room villa between Nice and Monte Carlo



with a spectacular view of the Mediterranean—Margaret went back to London to continue her work on the conference, while J Noah, reluctantly, stayed on alone Her letters start again from the Stafford Hotel on February 1, 1927

I have been deeply depressed today & yesterday over the affairs here I know that were I free to work & keep on the job I could put over a conference that would astound the world—BUT—here I am, interests divided & diverted and I cannot know what to do The movement now needs one dominating force to drive it to success The interest is alive, the time is ripe, but I shall need to give time to it if it is to succeed No one else can do it, so it seems It will crown my past efforts & repay my sacrifices to see this Conference a success Will you help me? Not by money, darling one, but by seeing this thing eye to eye with me & giving me the time I need to work it up properly I know how hard it is for you to let me be away from you & I shall try to arrange it so there shall be few separations, but there must be some and unless you say you can help me, I will not go on

You have done so much to help me make it the success it has become, that I believe you will help me again—forever I can never believe that you have come into my life to hold me back, you who are so vigorous & glorious in your love and splendid in your ideals and generosity! You have helped others to attain their life's work, you have given support and inspiration to others you love less, and I believe with all my heart, with all my faith that you will help me to victory and success My heart is sad, but yours

Obviously the course Margaret had taken at Claverack in "epistolary communication" was standing her in good stead

The question remains, however How much did J Noah know of the real reason for her long stays in England and her insistence on keeping him away? Had he resigned himself to honoring indefinitely his marriage agreement to let her come and go at will, asking no questions, and being content with the little he received?

How much, too, was Margaret deceiving herself, believing that all her hard work had no other purpose than to advance her cause? Did she realize that the admiration and flattery she received from men and

women everywhere were vital factors to her? How well did she understand herself?

In 1926, perhaps in an effort toward self-understanding, she began to search for an epitaph. She found it years later when she chose a verse by Arthur Guiterman called "Harlequin," and marked it "For my tombstone."

It read

This body, now a gallant robe, is frayed  
I must withdraw a while to put it by  
And don a new, wherein I'll masquerade  
So well that none will guess that I am I