

A Priest's
Letters to a Niece

on
Love, Courtship
and
Marriage



by
S.G. Perera, S.J.

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S. G. PERERA, S. J.

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TO
DAPHNE, JOYCE AND MARIE

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I

INTRODUCTORY

MY DEAR GIRLIE,

ARE you trying to pull my leg? Or do you really and truly want me to write a book for your special behoof? You are such a saucy minx at times that I verily believe you are not incapable of the irreverence of practising on the credulity of your Reverend Uncle. But, on the other hand, the tone of your letter is that of one who is at least half in earnest. Anyhow, if I take you at your word and inflict a book on you, you have only yourself to blame, since you actually asked for it in so many words.

What you say about the two books I sent you, is quite true. You say they do not meet your case fully. There is no doubt about that. Those books are written for British, American, or Australian girls in the situation in which you are, namely for those who are arrived at that romantic stage in life when, consciously or unconsciously, they are looking out for Prince Charming to turn up at the next corner. Such folk need some wholesome advice and guidance, lest they make a mess of what is after all a Girl's Greatest Business in life. The advice given in the books I sent you, holds good all the world over, for the true principles of godly conduct and

Christian propriety do not vary with Latitude and Longitude. The application of principles to concrete cases must needs vary according to the actual state of society in which the marriageable maiden lives and moves and has her being. Though we are all born alike and the conditions of our growth and decay do not change with countries and nations, yet the surroundings into which we are born are constantly changing, and differ according to countries and periods.

Courtship in Ceylon is not exactly what it is in the British Isles or in other parts of the English-speaking world, because our habits and traditions and social customs are different from theirs. You are not living in the same surroundings, physical or social or moral, as the girls for whom those books were written. They have their ways and we have ours ; and counsels and warnings given to suit their ways will not suit you, except, of course, in principle.

English girls have more freedom than you have. They are therefore bred to it, and acquire by tradition and upbringing a sense of responsibility to meet the greater dangers arising from wider personal liberty. You are born into an antiquated society of the East, which was once unchangeable but is now constantly changing. By temperament, breeding, ideals and habits, we manage our personal and domestic affairs in quite a different way. Superficially we have taken up quite a number of social customs of the West. We eat our eastern food in the western way, and live a life half Eastern and half Western : our men don the western habiliments ; while our maidens have it both ways and garb themselves, as you do, in frocks at home and in school, but drape

themselves in *sarees* temporarily on festive occasions and permanently after womanhood. We conform to Western standards in many things, especially in public, but seldom give up our Eastern modes of thinking and acting.

And what is worse, we change with time. Time was, not so long ago, when our girls never went out of doors unattended, or moved freely among young men not of the family circle. But, for better or for worse, our girls are now emancipated, or think they are, which is the same thing. The process of match-making has changed with each generation. The marriage of your grandparents must have been one of those old-world affairs, with match-makers, proposals, dowries and all that sort of thing, fully settled by the elders before the couple knew each other except by hearsay. Your Mum and Dad, I dare say, must have made it up between themselves after the preliminaries had been settled to the satisfaction of the elders. Your Ladyship, I am sure, is determined to score it off your own bat, and will probably have your way in this as in other matters. But do you think that your parents or your grandparents were less happy than you are going to be, or that they loved each other any whit the less than the new generation that marries and is given in marriage by the revised rules of the old game?

There is another difference. The girls for whom those books were written live in a homogeneous society, in which all are pretty much alike in all essentials. They speak the same language and have the same customs, with only the difference in the degree of education and the means, and what goes with them. Ours

on the contrary is a heterogeneous society, consisting of different races divided by the hide-bound distinctions of caste and class. In the matter of religion too, they are generally all believers in Christ, with only the distinction of Catholics and Protestants. But over and above these, we have Buddhists and Hindus and Muslims, whose thoughts and ideals and outlook on life are fundamentally different from ours. The Sinhalies, Tamils and Burghers—to leave the others out of count—are generally speaking indistinguishable in public functions and parties, except for the tell-tale ladies' dress and tinge of colour; but in domestic customs and habits and modes of living they differ to a greater or lesser extent among themselves and from each other, according to the degree to which they have been influenced by the unifying spirit of modern times. We are indeed educated in the same schools, read the same books, and mix freely in society, thank God, but in private, in mentality and domestic customs and habits, we still differ about as much as the Russian from the Spaniard or the Baboo from the Burmese.

Therefore any guidance given to a Ceylon girl on the subject of Love and Marriage, must take all these differences into account. What is good for you to know is : How to judge reasonably and correctly in this matter ; What is essential and important in the choice of a husband ; and What is trifling and negligible : in short how to comport yourselves in the different situations in which you may be placed and how to ensure the happiness of your married life. These are the points that must be tackled in the book you bid me write for you.

I am game for it, and will give you my views, not in a book but in a series of letters. I shall have to take my own time over it, for as you know I am a busy man and my time is not my own. I propose to send you a letter, roughly once a week. Please don't show my letters to anybody till I have done: above all not to your parents. They sha'nt be able to say that anything I say in my letters is not right or true, but they may not see eye to eye with me in this matter, and might take me to task for putting ideas into your head which do not suit their views about your future. I am afraid of your parents and I do not look at this matter from the same point of view. They wish to settle you in marriage, in good time, to the best advantage and to their satisfaction. A lawyer recently declared in a court of law that Ceylonese parents look to their own happiness rather than to the happiness of their children in matters of marriage. That means that your happiness comes in only when you settle your own daughter in marriage! Though somewhat paradoxically put, it is in great measure true.

But your Father-Uncle is different. I wish you to be really and truly happy. I dare say your parents wish the same, but I am not sure they will be pleased if you seek your happiness in a way different from their wishes. To me what matters is that you should be happy, both in this world and in the next; but in the next at all events, and in this world only as much as you can be without endangering your chances of the next. I will therefore tell you what is good for your true and real happiness in your married life and how to manage your courtship to ensure it.

You might be tempted to think that a priest's direction in this matter would smack of the sacristy, of incense and candles and bell and book. Or you might even turn round and ask me point blank: "Pray, what on earth do *you* know of Love and Courtship?" Well, young lady, I know quite a deal about it, and I know it just because I am a priest and am supernaturally inoculated against the disease. Do you know that it is the spectator who sees most of the game? Besides, I was not born a priest, but was brought up in the same surroundings that bred your Dad and Mum. I am not going to give myself away by claiming or denying personal knowledge, though I am prepared to make the non-committal statement that generally speaking any young person of twenty, of either sex, who has not had some acquaintance of a personal character with the subject, should be exhibited in a Museum as a freak of nature, worth a penny a peep.

Priests, moreover, have a fairly good knowledge of the vagaries of the human heart, drawn from theoretical study and from readings in the great Book of Life. Other men may know empirically their own love affairs, and what they have observed in their limited circle. A priest's means of knowledge is very extensive, and he has greater opportunities of observation, because of his privileged position of confidant of all concerned, of him and of her, and of his and her parents and friends, and even enemies. He has heard the verb *love* conjugated, positively and negatively, in every mood and tense and number and person. A priest is like an expert physician who knows in theory and practice, the symptoms and causes and diagnosis and prognosis and effects and remedies of

a particular disease. So fall on your knees and thank God that you have an uncle to write at your bidding a treatise on the age-long malady that broke out at the dawn of creation and will soon infect you and others like you, and continue its endemic career till the crack of doom.

With best love,

Ever yours,

FATHER-UNCLE.

II

PURPOSE OF LIFE

I AM very glad indeed that my offer to explain my views in a series of letters has met with your high approval. The questions you put to me I will not answer now, because when you have read the preliminary explanations that I am going to give you, those questions will not rise at all. If they do, you can tell me and I will answer them.

Before tackling the question of Love and Marriage, there are some points that must be cleared, and I will address myself in this letter to the most fundamental of all, a point on which all others depend, namely, the Purpose of Life. It is rather a dry subject, but absolutely necessary if we are to understand Love and Marriage aright. Please don't merely read this letter cursorily, but slowly and carefully, trying to understand the matter fully.

What is the Purpose of Life? Why are we here at all? Are human beings born merely to live and die, to grow and decay, to eat, drink and sleep, to marry or be given in marriage, to beget children and die? If that is so, we shall be like the brute beasts, and the best thing to do is to make the most of life while it lasts. But you know very well that it is not so. We are like the animals in many respects, practically in all our bodily actions. But even, our bodily actions when deliberate, spring not from the body alone but also from the spiritual power that is in us. We have within us a

power that animals have not, which gives our life an immeasurable superiority. That power is Intellect and Will. Intellect is the power of knowing what is true and good ; Will, the power of seeking what is good and true and avoiding what is not true or good. These two powers make us a faint image of God, that is to say, a rational person who is master of his actions and responsible to God for them.

The Purpose of Life is taught in our catechism. But as I am not preaching a sermon, but only explaining matters to you, I am going to put it somewhat differently. If you want to know the purpose of a thing, the best way to find it out is to let the thing work naturally and examine how it proceeds. Now, if you observe men and women at work, you will find that all human beings, great and small, in each and all of their human and deliberate actions, are seeking Happiness. Happiness is, positively, the enjoyment of the good we need, and negatively, freedom from pain and evil. And that is what all men seek in all their deeds. Whether we eat or drink, or work or play, or whatever else we do in our wakeful moments, we do that to get something we think to be good for us, or to avoid something we think painful or evil.

But though men are constantly seeking Happiness, they never get anything more than a fleeting temporal happiness that does not last. No man can have true and lasting happiness here below. Some seek happiness in pleasure ; but when they get what they seek, they find that their happiness does not last, and they are soon tired of it and crave for more ; which is a proof that pleasure is not the purpose of life. It is the same with wealth or

power or honour or health or knowledge or any of the thousand things that men seek. The more they have the more they want, and the want for more makes them unhappy and they seek more still, and thus it goes on from day to day and from hour to hour. From this it is clear that men are born into this world to seek a happiness they do not get here.

On the other hand the only thing that gives a man anything like real happiness is doing a thing that Conscience tells him is right and avoiding what Conscience bids him avoid. The happiness felt in doing right and avoiding wrong is not sensible happiness or happiness of the body, but spiritual happiness or happiness of the Mind and Will. From the sensible point of view, doing the right is often difficult, painful and irksome; the wrong, on the other hand, is easier, more pleasureable and less disagreeable to the senses. The happiness we feel in doing right is the satisfaction felt in Conscience. When we do wrong we may have some fleeting sensible pleasure, but at the cost of feeling guilty and miserable in Conscience. The pleasure passes, but the misery remains. That is the great difference between doing right and doing wrong. A wrong action may give pleasure in the doing, but remorse ever afterwards; while a good action may be painful in the doing, but brings satisfaction ever afterwards.

From all this we are entitled to conclude that the purpose of our life here below is to attain perfect happiness hereafter, and that the only means of attaining that happiness is by following the behests of Conscience and doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong. This is exactly what the Catechism teaches: 'God made

man to know Him, love Him and serve Him in this world, and be happy with Him for ever in the next.' This world is a place of probation. Probation, means a trial or a testing. From birth to death we are tested. We are daily confronted with opportunities for doing good and evil. The good we do ennobles us, the evil we do distorts our nature. The habitual way in which we use our opportunities decides whether we win or lose the perfect happiness for which we were made.

Remark, however, that we are not called upon to do all the good that is possible, or to avoid every possible evil. We are only required to do the good that comes to us as a duty, and to avoid the evil that the world and the flesh and the devil tempt us to do at any given time. Besides the good that comes to us as a duty and the evil that Conscience bids us avoid, we come face to face every day with a number of actions in which we have the choice between a Good and a Better. We are not bound to do the Better. All that we are bound to do is not to do evil. That is why three-fourths of the commandments of God are prohibitory: Thou shalt not...

How do we know whether any act is good or bad? First of all, if we do not know that an act is evil, we are not consciously doing an evil act, and therefore we are doing what we think is good. On the other hand if we do not know that a given act is good when we are going to do it, we must not do it till we have made sure that it is not an evil act. To save us perplexity in this matter God has implanted in us a Voice that bids us "Do it" or "Do it not". If we follow this Voice we are always right. If we disobey that Voice we are always wrong.

It is true that Conscience is not always the same with all men in all things. In the most important acts of life, every conscience agrees. That is why all men consider theft, lying, murder, impurity, adultery and injustice as wrong ; and truth, honesty, justice, purity, kindness, charity, forgiveness, etc., as good and right. In those who have been taught aright and in those who regularly follow its dictates, Conscience is clear and strong ; while in those who have been ill-instructed or who do not care about being good, Conscience is faint ; because they hardly ever listen to it.

Conscience can be improved and does improve, if we wish to know more clearly what is right and what is wrong, and listen to it and obey it regularly. Conscience is dulled by negligence to ascertain about right and wrong and by regularly disregarding its voice. It is our duty not only to do what is good and right, but also to find out whether a given action is good or not. But when a man does wrong honestly thinking it is right, he is excusable in the sight of God. But not so if he suspects it to be wrong and still does it.

I hope you do not feel too giddy after this exercise of mental gymnastics through which I have led you. I did so because it is absolutely necessary to understand the Purpose of Life before we attempt to understand Love and Marriage, What you have to realize is that **This Life is not an Enjoyment but a Responsibility.** Keep repeating that statement till it sinks into you and becomes the needle of your compass in the voyage of life. We must not do as we like in this world. Doing as we jolly well like may seem great fun for a time, but a sorry sort of fun that will distort our nature and warp

our character and frustrate the purpose of our life. We must not do things because it pleases us at the time to do so, but only if we know that what pleases us at the moment is not wrong or contrary to our real happiness, though for the moment we feel some paltry sensible pleasure in it. This great lesson, that human life is a serious business and not an amusement, has to be inculcated when we are young, even before we are able to understand it fully. That is why there is an institution called Marriage which imposes on parents the duty of bringing up their children to recognize this responsibility. That is why God has implanted in us the instinct of Love, so that a man and a maid may choose each other to co-operate in the grand work. That is why parents are endowed with an instinctive love for their children, so that they may take pains to do it. That is why children have an instinctive love for their parents so that they may be amenable to parental training. In short that is the fundamental truth on which everything depends. Got it?

III

MEANING OF THE SEXES

I HOPE my last letter did not make you repent of having provoked me to write. I own that my last letter was dry-as-dust, not only because my style is that, but chiefly because the subject was an abstract one. It is a relief, at all events, to pass on to another subject, which I hope will not be so tedious, though it is a kindred one.

Did it by any chance ever occur to you to wonder why we are made male and female? If you want to know the meaning of the sexes, just imagine what this world would have been if God had created Adam alone or only Eve. It would not have mattered very much which of the two He first created, for neither would have been what they were. For then there would not have been a He, or a She, but an It. That luckless monist would have been a sorry person, a solitary, sex-less, individual, leading a love-less life, without home or family or children—a burden to himself. The world would not have had the faintest notion of what are now the most endearing things in life. The very idea of a father or mother or brother or sister, would have been unknown. There would have been no Love or Courtship or Marriage, and therefore no home, no birth or babyhood, no relatives, no mankind. There would have been only one human of the neuter gender, whose demise there would have been no one to mourn, and who might just as well never have existed.

If God wished to have more than one such on earth, He would have had to create them as He created the first, one by one, successively or simultaneously, and they would have been unconnected with each other by any link, uninteresting to each other, self-centered egoists, and probably unbearable and unfriendly, and even coarse and rude, I dare say, never having had any of the tender fellow-feelings that we have towards our kind by the fact of our common origin and birth into a home and family and a kindred and our mutual dependence on each other. In fact there would have been none of those things that make up the joys of human life or its poetry and romance.

Thank God, therefore, that we are not such. All that is best and noblest in human life comes from the fact that God made man male and female, and that all the rest of mankind springs from the first pair as the fruit of their loins. Man and woman, as separate individuals, are each incomplete. Together they form a unit of humanity. Each sex has certain qualities which require to be modified and completed by the other for the fulness of life. Each must give up life as an individual, in order to live as one a life shared equally by both, which we call wedlock and which is necessary for the well-being of each and still more for the well-being of humanity.

The division into sexes makes the individual well-being of each the means of the general well-being of the whole. If all mankind were to die, leaving but one man and one woman, mankind would flourish again as vigorously as before. But if all men die leaving all the women, or all women leaving all men behind, though half of mankind survive, it is all up with mankind.

Thus the division of mankind into two complementary sexes is at the root of all that is good and lovable in our lives, the source of all our joys, the main-spring of heroism, the means of our probation and the school of virtue. It is of course the occasion also of much evil and sin and crime, but not as the root cause, for though in this world the highest things have often the basest usage, the root cause of evil is the instability of the human will—not that the will is evil, but that the will can be turned to evil. By itself the tendency of the will is for good.

As things stand all men and women are the offspring of the union of the sexes. Each man and woman is bound up with other men and women in a myriad ways, and needs each other's service and suffers each other's influence. You and I are what we are, because of others; not only because we are born of certain parents, but also because we have been influenced by others both for good and evil. Your pretty face came to you doubtless from your mother: your brains, I suppose, from your father. But what about your charming ways? Where did you get that, pray? Your temperament you got from nature; your character is what you made of your self, the resultant of the habitual way in which you used your free will. But your ideas and your ideals, and the whole of your mentality, are the outcome of the example and precept you received at home and in school from your parents and teachers and brothers and sisters and friends, from those who had anything to do with you and from the books you read. You would have been a different person if your training had been entrusted to me. I do not venture to say that you would

have been a better person, possibly you might have been worse. You know the proverb "You may take a horse to water but you cannot make it drink." That is because drinking is a vital act of the animal that another cannot do for him. I might have surrounded you with a thousand good influences, but your perverse will might have resisted them all. The only thing that is really yours is the way you react to influences. That depends on your individual will, which is peculiarly your own, or rather which is you.

Though we are influenced by all around us, and by some more than by others, we have really very little choice as to who shall influence us. Your father and mother and brothers and sisters you did not choose, nor did they choose you. We have to be content with those whom God gave us and make the best of it. The only one left to your choice is your husband. But he is not exactly a relative. He will be your counterpart, your partner and companion in the journey of life, your other self. His influence on you will be no less than yours on him. You will be bound together in a fashion that is unique and exclusive, quite unlike any other human bond. Just as you can never get rid of the fact that you are the daughter of so and so, so also you will be his wife for better for worse till death do you part. In the sacrament of marriage husband and wife surrender themselves to each other for life. If they do not surrender for life, they do not surrender at all, and are not husband and wife, for there is no marriage. Conjugal love by its very nature cannot die. This statement might surprise you. If it does, it is because you have not understood what conjugal love is. You probably know only its counterfeit that passes muster for the right article in

many novels. What can, and sometimes does, happen is that Love loses its tenderness and its sensible manifestations. When that happens the only thing to do is to set about to revive the tenderness, not to jump to the conclusion that there is nothing to revive.

Thus, you see, the reason for the division of mankind into two sexes is to enable us to achieve the purpose of life better and more effectually by mutual assistance. Sex is bound up with the purpose of life. It gives us greater and better opportunities of realizing the purpose of life, by being good and doing good. In married life the interaction of the two sexes cannot but help the purpose for which we live, namely to attain heaven. It cannot but give us greater and more frequent means of attaining our destiny, because marriage develops, perfects and completes, human personality. God's love for man made Him create man, but it is the mutual love of a man and a maid that keeps mankind alive, by bringing into this world other men and women destined for happiness in heaven. God has given to conjugal love a power that is above and beyond husband and wife, a power that is in them but not for them, and in them God works a far greater good than they themselves do.

Am I talking above your head? Though you are eighteen and a Matriculate of the London University and have received the best education that this island can give, you will not perhaps catch this point till you have grasped some of the other truths which it is my business to make you realize. At present, however, it is quite enough if you take in this truth, that the division of mankind into male and female is one of the means of attaining the purpose of life.

IV

THE GLORY OF BEING A GIRL

ONCE overheard a pert little hoyden of fourteen say, in a fit of irritation, that she wished she had been a boy ! What an unnatural sentiment, I said to myself. Cannot a girl be as happy as a boy without being a boy ? Boys of a certain age feel, or at least express, a contempt for girls, mostly because they cannot play boys' games. The girl of my tale must have had many boy playmates whose flippant opinion of her sex she accepted, and thus developed what is called an "inferiority complex". That is one of the results of having only boy playmates. A boy when dissatisfied with himself would say "I wish I were a man." A girl, by the same token, should say in like circumstances "I wish I were a woman" or at least "I wish I were married." There would be some justification for that. But unfortunately it is not only girls who have this inferiority complex, but even adult women and even married women. For what else is the Feminist movement and the Suffragette movement but a tacit admission of the inferiority complex, because, forsooth, law and custom and common sense do not permit women to engage in occupations that are generally reserved for men. The proper course for women would have been rather to pride themselves on that exemption, because they are superior to men. But the suffragists degrade themselves by clamouring for mere equality with the males.

It is indeed a pity that girls are not brought up to a full sense of the glory of being girls. Girls are the

weaker sex and the fairer sex, precisely because they are the nobler and the superior sex. Their body is weaker because it is not intended for brute strength but for moral strength; their form is fairer because they are intended to inspire love; they are equipped with a temperament that is kindlier and gentler, because kindness and gentleness must be their characteristics; they have a capacity for love far superior to men, because love is the be-all and end-all of their existence. They are made for love, to inspire love, to requite love, to radiate love and bear love's labours.

It is true of course, historically speaking, that women were once looked down upon by men, in the bad old days of antiquity, first because they could not bear arms, and secondly because in those days the world did not realize the functions and rights of the two sexes. In those days men thought that they could legitimately have more than one wife. That was an error due to a mistaken notion of marriage accepted all the world over, till Our Lord recalled men to the true principles of marriage, namely that its duties and obligations are equal and reciprocal. By His incarnation, moreover, He elevated a Woman to a height far above the rest of creation. Mary is a Virgin, but a Mother, a creature but the Mother of God. This was a privilege that could only be possessed by a woman, and of all women by the one who was "full of grace", whom "all generations shall call Blessed". As a matter of fact and of history it is the role of Mary as the Second Eve, the consequent devotion to the Blessed Virgin, and her Son's teaching on marriage, that raised all women. The Christian teaching on marriage, once promulgated by Our Lord,

seemed so true and so obviously natural and reasonable, that it has leavened the whole world. Even those outside the pale of Christianity now accept the Christian concept of marriage as at least the more perfect. When, therefore, the true notion of marriage and the great part that Mary played in our redemption have raised woman to a pedestal never occupied by her before, it is indeed a retrograde step, to say the least, for women to lower themselves once more by pining for the forbidden fruit of votes and seats in councils and juries, which when once given they are not so eager to occupy. Let those who want them, have them; but let them refrain from dragging other women with them on the downward path of mere equality with men.

Nobody will deny that a woman can do all the things that men do. Women sovereigns, warriors, lawyers, have been no whit behind the male ones. But it is not the natural thing for them to take to such avocations. When their womanly duty requires it of them, they can jolly well do them, even better than men. A widow can, in the interests of her children, conduct her dead husband's business, whatever it be, even better than he did. But if she attempts to do so in his lifetime, she will very probably make a mess of it, for then it does not fall to her as a part of her duty. Her womanly duty is motherhood and all that is connected with it, and she is fitted by nature to acquit herself creditably in any and every line that motherhood may call upon her to pursue. Even those who forswear motherhood must needs take to motherly occupations under pain of failure. As a teacher or nurse or housekeeper, a woman will be a success; but if she turns to masculine callings she courts

failure. There have been no noted woman composers or painters or sculptors. In oratory a woman can succeed best as a curtain-lecturer, but she will not be able to sway an audience unless she is unsexed or past the age of being influenced by men. A woman in business will be more moved by concrete facts than by cold calculations, more influenced by persons than by arguments, and she will judge from sentiment and not from reason—all of which make her unfit for business. A love-affair with her employer or employee, her client or her colleague, will put an end to the business, for she is made to be man's companion in life, not his competitor.

As I want you to get this point clearly into your head, let me compare man and woman. Physiologically, the head and limbs and every organ necessary for digestion, respiration and for the circulation of blood are the same in both. But while the man is built for strength and endurance of physical and mental labour, the woman is provided with the most perfect and delicate and automatic mechanism needed for motherhood, for conception, gestation, parturition and suckling of a living human being during the most momentous period of its existence. For this same purpose she is psychologically equipped with the qualities necessary for her task, with the affection needed for the care and nursing of her babe. What greater or nobler part can a human being play in life than be the inspirer of all that is best in humanity! What will not a mother do for her child? Is there anything in this world purer or more heroic or more enduring than a mother's love?

As this grand work of forming the body and the mind and the heart of the children of men is so neces-

sary for human nature, the woman is freed from the sordid cares of earning a living, which falls on the man. To ensure his tenderness and benevolence, to inspire him to provide for the mother and the child, she is made the most graceful thing on earth. How beautiful is a girl when she first blossoms into womanhood ! Fair as is her bodily form, fairer far is the innate grace of her person. The gentleness of heart and amiability, the kind word, the pure affection, and modesty and simplicity—are not these beautiful ? Do they not inspire men to go through fire and water to win the love of a fair maid ? It is not so with animals. With them the male is the fairer. It is not the pea-hen but the peacock that struts about with his gorgeous tail outspread ; it is the cock that has the crest, not the hen ; the lion and not the lioness has the lordly mane ; and, in Ceylon at least, it is the male elephant that has the tusks. For in the case of the animals, the mother can very well provide for the young without the assistance of the father, during the short time that the offspring needs a mother's care. Therefore the male is the attraction in the animal kingdom. With humans the child and the mother need protection and sustenance for a far greater length of time, and the father has to provide. Therefore the woman is made to win his heart.

I might even contend that nature has given the woman superiority over men in mental equipment ; not, of course, in the sense that women are better mathematicians or scientists or philosophers ; but in the sense that in all the needs of life, of health and home and family, the woman comes to the right conclusion sooner and without the abstract reasoning of the male. She

is quicker to see the point, to sense danger and to avert it, before the man blunders his way. Tell a man that his house is on fire, and he wants to know Where and When and How and Why, and wastes his time before getting to work; while at the faintest whisper of "Fire", the mother will rush to rescue the baby and the valuables—which is the most sensible thing to do under the circumstances.

The woman is also the more devout and religious of the two, unless evil example or environment or education has sophisticated her. Moral goodness comes naturally to the woman, because it is so necessary for her lifework, of rearing and educating her children. The mother is our first teacher, our first catechist and preacher, whose lessons and influence last even when the fell work of perverse friends and books has done its worst.

Thus motherhood and home and children are the first care of the woman. and she is fitted by nature for her noble task and equipped with all that is necessary for the grand work of bringing into this world and training for the next, each generation of human beings. A man's direct share in the work of continuing the human race is trifling. His indirect share consists chiefly in befriending and aiding and protecting the mother, so that she may devote herself to the greater part that falls to her. Has this earth any grander work to do than to form the body and mind and heart and character of the monarch of this world and the heir to the next? Verily there is a glory in being a girl, which even the inferiority complex of girls and women cannot dim.

V

LOVE

I HOPE you are not already fed up with my letters. If they have been rather heavy reading so far, please bear with me. I know very well that girls detest abstract reasoning and prefer to discuss concrete cases and tangible facts. But I have first to clear the ground by explaining certain principles.

To-day I am going to tackle the subject nearest to your heart, even the great subject of LOVE, about which, I dare say, you think you know a mighty deal, because the very mention of the word thrills you. That is not because you know anything about it, but because you are made for it. Girls are made to be loved and to requite love, and it is no wonder that they are instinctively moved by every tale of love, real or fictitious. At your time of life, they are even in love with "being in love." So I am sure you will not be bored if your Uncle prosed a bit on love, to make things clear.

Love is the general name for an attachment felt by one person towards another. When you say you "love" books or fine clothes or that your dog "loves" you, you are using the word figuratively, not in its proper sense. Love in its proper sense can only exist between persons. Therefore love must needs vary according to the class of persons we love. You can love God, you can love your kindred (father, mother, brothers, sisters and kin), you can love your friends, and finally you can love your Prince Charming ; but these loves are not of the same kind.

First of all comes the love of God, which is a special kind of love, for God does not fall within our senses. We know Him by the mind and by faith. Therefore love of God has nothing to do with feelings. It resides in the mind and the will. We are said to love God if we are eager to please Him ; we are said to love God fully, if we are ready to please Him at all costs ; that is to say, if anything stands in the way of our pleasing Him we are ready to give up that thing, whatever it is. That is an attitude of our superior faculties ; of the mind and the will. We are not bidden to love God with our feelings, because feelings come spontaneously, if at all, and cannot be made to order. In the same class is the love of our neighbour that our faith inculcates. It is not a love of feelings, but also an attitude of our higher nature. We must think well of other people, wish them well, and try to do good to them when we can, for God's sake. If we do that, we love our neighbour.

The love between parents and children, between brothers and sisters and between relatives, is on the other hand a love of persons bound to each other by natural ties. It is, therefore, warmed up by feeling, resulting from the tender associations of origin and home and family, from mutual service and daily contact, It comes to us easily and naturally and by instinct. It is generally a matter of feelings, but as feelings are not within us to command and cannot be forced, this love also, in as far as it is a Duty, is something spiritual. As far as feelings go, I may not be able to love a brother or sister of mine who behaves badly to me ; but I am bound to love him. I must have the right attitude of the mind even towards him ; that is, I must love him

(the person) though. I hate his behaviour. It is also my duty to promote feelings of love towards him, as far as possible, and at all events to avoid contrary feelings.

The love of friends, on the contrary, is not based on any natural tie. We can be friends with our kinsmen of course, but one need not be a kinsman to be a friend. We have many acquaintances with whom we are on the best of terms and whom we call "friends" in the polite sense of the word ; but not all of them are friends strictly speaking. It is not very easy to determine in what Friendship strictly speaking consists, except that it is mutual benevolence between two persons, generally of the same sex, quite apart from any natural tie. To call a person a friend, in the strict sense of the word, we must love that person for his own sake, and not only for our sake. No doubt the fact that he is good to me is the reason or motive why I want to be good to him. But I must positively desire his welfare and happiness if I am to be his friend strictly speaking. This goodness is of a relative sort. I mean, he is my friend because he is good *to me*, and I am his friend because I am good *to him*. He and I may not be equally good to everybody. A person who is a great friend of mine may not be a friend at all of another, who is also my friend ; though of course my friendship may be so strong as to include the friends of my friend for the latter's sake.

Friendship, therefore, is not due to any peculiar personal characteristic of the friend, else he would be everybody's friend ; but rather to something in my friend that appeals to me, and something in me that appeals to my friend. There is a reciprocity between two friends ;

there is a mutual attraction, a give and take, each putting himself out to be of some benefit to the other, and making the happiness of each a matter of personal concern to the other. If it does not go so far, it is not true Friendship.

I have stressed this love of friendship because there is a striking resemblance between Friendship and Love between a man and a maid. Friendship, however, differs from Love with the capital letter—which I will henceforth use only to indicate love between a man and a maid—first, because it is not necessary for friendship that there should be any passion or emotion in it; secondly, because friendship generally exists only between persons of the same sex; and thirdly, because friendship is a love that is similar on both sides, while Love is not the same in the man as in the maid. Otherwise one might almost have said that Love is friendship between a man and a maid. If ever there is friendship between two persons of the opposite sexes, passion and emotion are bound to steal into it, sooner or later and transform it into Love. Theoretically there can be friendship between a man and a woman without leading to Love, but it is so exceedingly rare, and a curiosity for which they have invented a name, a name that suggests Love rather than Friendship. They call it “Platonic Love”, which is love that is not Love, a sort of addled Love, if you know what I mean. A man and a woman, both marriageable, cannot be warm friends without thinking of marriage, unless they are made of steel.

Love between a man and a maid is an affection of a very unique kind, that is sublimated by the sex-instinct, with passion and emotion, leading to Marriage. Love,

unlike Friendship, is exclusive. You can't be in love with more than one person at the same time, while you can have more than one friend simultaneously. Love, moreover, is not the same, and cannot be the same on both sides, for they must be complementary and form one harmonious whole. It is a love similar to friendship in that it supposes no natural tie; it is similar to love of kindred in that it is stimulated by natural instinct. But in other respects Love differs *toto cælo* from all other loves.

If it is only the feelings of sex that are at play, it is called Carnal Love; a passion in the bad sense of the word, and it is not Love. A great deal of what passes as Love in real life and in fiction is of this base variety. Passion, in the strictest sense, is neither good nor bad, and only means the strong movement of like or dislike rising from our lower nature spontaneously, through the activity of the senses and instinct. In animals it is Instinct; in human beings also it rises instinctively, independently of our higher nature. But while Instinct is the only guide of the animals, it is no guide at all for human beings, who must be guided by their Reason. Human instincts are only meant to stimulate men to action; but instinct must be controlled by reason in accordance with the Purpose of Life. When instinct is followed by man without the sanction of Conscience, it is bad and is called pure passion; when sanctioned by Conscience it is good and virtuous and noble. Conscience, therefore, and Will have more to do with Love than passion.

This means that attachment to a person of the other sex can come in three ways. From the higher

powers of the mind only ; then we call it Platonic Love. It may come from the lower powers of the body only ; then it is Carnal Love. Or it may come from both body and mind working harmoniously, and then only is it real and genuine Love, and no mistake. What comes from the mind and the body is a real human action, suited to human beings who are made up of a body and a spirit, intended to work harmoniously with the spirit as the guide.

In most cases Love begins in one way and leads to the other, almost insensibly and without effort. For one may be attracted by a person of the other sex and admire him or her for some qualities perceived by the mind. This attraction brings about the desire to make that person the partner of one's life in marriage, and the attraction blooms into Love. But often enough it starts the other way. A person attractive to sight and sentiment awakens the desire for union in marriage. And the mind straightway considers the proposition and either welcomes it as morally desirable and the sentiment deepens into Love ; or rejects it as morally undesirable and it drops off like a withered leaf. But I am afraid I have come to the end of my paper before the end of the subject is even in sight. So possess your soul in patience till my next.

VI

THE PATH OF TRUE LOVE

I STATED in my last letter, if you remember, that a man's love for a maid is a different sort of thing from the maid's love for the man. It cannot well be otherwise, being only the result of the fact that I mentioned before when speaking of sex, that the two sexes are complementary. If the sexes are complementary, so must Love be. If ever love is of the same kind between the man and the woman, then it is not Love but Friendship, at best Platonic Love. The two blades of a scissors must slide over each other to cut cloth ; so also the love of the man and the love of the maid must coalesce to form true Love. If you have only two left blades, or two right blades, they won't make a scissors. A man's love is something active, aggressive, assertive : a woman's passive, yielding, responsive. A man loves ; a maid only requites that love. A man's love does not presuppose love in the maid, but seeks to stir it in her ; a maid's love essentially presupposes love for her in the man. It is the man who takes the first step and makes the first move in the game. Without that the maid has no move to make. When the man boldly manifests his preference for her, a maid responds with a bashful and demure manifestation of her satisfaction with the move ; and then the atmosphere is electrified and Love's glances scintillate. Or she turns away from it, and the man sulks for a while, curses his fate, but soon recovers his balance and lives to love another maid.

Mark you well, it is the man who takes the first step, in spite of the joke about the Leap Year. A maid only welcomes the idea of being loved by a particular man. His wish is to possess her, with the genuine desire of making her happy. If his desire is not to make her happy, but to seek his own happiness, he is not making Love. She loves to be possessed by one who loves her, with the genuine desire of making him happy. If she does not do this, she is not in love with him but with herself. If the man or the woman only seeks one's own happiness and not the other's, it is not yet true Love, but only the love of concupiscence, which is not necessarily wrong or ignoble, but is not the real article. They can both rise to true Love by purifying their intention and the process is not at all a difficult one.

Just reflect on the difference between the question that a man generally puts to the maid, and the question put to the bride by the officiating priest. Prince Charming will ask you : "Will you be my wife ?" The priest at the altar does not ask you : "Wilt thou be the wife of X here present ?", but quite a different question viz. "Wilt thou take X here present as thy husband ?" When the young man screwed up courage to pop the question, he only wanted to know whether you requite his love. What the priest wants you to say, and what the rite of valid marriage requires that you should say, is not whether you love him, but whether you undertake a duty towards him, the duty to love, cherish and obey. Modern thoughtless girls shy at "obey", as if they would be slaves if they do. If they are not ready to obey, in the sense in which that word is used in the marriage service, they implicitly do not want to marry. There can't be two husbands in

one marriage, and if the bride does not want to obey she wants to be the husband, which she can't be. Whether the marriage service uses the word or not, nature has made the woman's part in marriage an obedience, a passive part, a compliance : and no woman can get over that. A woman can be violated against her will, she can even deliberately prostitute herself. But a man can neither be violated nor prostituted, with or without his will. This is not because the man is in any way a superior being, but because a woman's moral superiority required her physical dependence on man. It is because this dependence has to be a willing one that the woman is the object of all that is noble in men : Love, Homage, Chivalry and Romance. It is this that the priest asks ; whether you are ready to confer that obedience on him ?

Though a maid's love is only a requital, hers is often the stronger, the more vehement and the less perishable : but it cannot exist till she thinks that the man loves her. A man may be disappointed in love ; but a maid never. For the object of a man's love may be already bespoken by another, or she may not requite his love. But a maid cannot possibly love till she is loved. The worst that can happen to a maid is that she may yearn to be loved by a particular man who is impervious to her charms. But if that disappoints her, and she eats her heart away in grief, she jolly well deserves it for being unnatural and for acting not from her maidenly instincts but from sheer passion.

It is very merciful of nature to ordain things in this way, for else this world would have been a Comedy of Errors. A man would then fall in love with a maid, who has fallen in love with another man who is in love with

another maid, and so on *ad infinitum*. Thank God that, though a man may entertain a hopeless love, no girl can. She must feel that she is loved before her instinct for love can awake. That is one up for girls. As for being jilted, man and woman are in the same boat.

Love is a self-surrender for the purpose of living the complete life for which mankind is divided into two sexes. The man who makes up to a girl virtually says to her 'I wish to surrender myself to you, to interweave our lives exclusively to form a new unit of humanity.' The maid who requites his love says by face and eye, prompted by her instinct for motherhood, 'I am ready to surrender myself to you and interweave my life with yours rather than with any other's.' When they have thus expressed themselves in the language of Love, they are both ready to make the mutual self-surrender. But that surrender is not yet made. It is to be made at the altar, when the pair will actually plight their troth to each other in the binding words of the sacrament of Matrimony if they are Catholics, or in the valid contract of marriage if they are not Catholics.

Do you see the implication? First of all, true Love necessarily connotes lawful wedlock. Till the lovers actually make their mutual surrender at the altar, their love is imperfect, incomplete and only inchoative, being only a matter of wishes and desires and words. They are only 'betrothed', 'plighted' 'affianced' or 'engaged', words which indicate that something has yet to come. That something is an act of both, the one necessary act of Love, namely the Sacrament for Catholics and the marriage contract for others. That sets the cap on their Love and seals it for ever, and then only can they be said

to be in Love in the full and perfect sense of the word. Strictly speaking it is not necessary for the fullness of Conjugal Love that they should live as man and wife ; but it is absolutely necessary that they should have made the ritual self-surrender.

One corollary of this is that there is no true Love when marriage for some reason or other is impossible. To be real Love the mutual attachment must lead to self-surrender. If that is impossible, then there is no Love ; only passion at best. A person incapable of self-surrender in marriage is incapable of Love. A child, boy or girl not yet an adult, cannot be in Love ; a married person cannot fall in Love with a third party. There is a false idea of Love, dear to novel writers and readers, that a person who has already made self-surrender to one in marriage, can fall in Love with another after marriage. That is an impossibility. What about the eternal triangle ? You might ask. What about the homes blasted by the accursed arrival of a third party on the scene ? In such a case, whether the previous marriage was the result of passion or not, Passion is at work now. Love is self-surrender, surrender of one's entire self ; an exclusive self-surrender. You cannot surrender to another the self you have already surrendered irrevocably to one. So there can be no question of Love. It can only be the work of fell Passion.

Again when marriage is not contemplated, there is no true Love. If a man cannot or does not intend to marry the girl he is making up to, he is not in Love with her, whatever he may say or affirm on oath. He may well be "infatuated", or "impassioned", but in Love he is not. If a girl cannot or does not intend to marry the

man who is making love to her, she cannot possibly requite, for to requite is to seek self-surrender. There may be in the love-making many of the ingredients that go to form Love, but the fundamental ingredient is not there. Therefore it is not true Love, but true passion.

What is necessary is that they should both intend to marry, not that they actually marry. Therefore two persons may be in Love, really and truly, if they are in conscience free to marry, but are actually prevented from marrying by external circumstances, such as the opposition of parents, or want of health or means, or for any of the many considerations that make marriage practically impossible. But they cannot be in that situation long. If the impediment is one that can be removed, Love will persist. But if it is of such a kind that there is no hope of marriage, then by the same token, there is no hope of Love either ; and the sentiment will die out. There is no use crying for the moon.

Sorry I haven't done with Love yet.

VII

LOVE AND 'ARRANGED MARRIAGES'

I HAVE quite a deal more to say on the fascinating subject of Love, but as I want to have done with that subject with this letter, I will tell you concisely a very important aspect of Love that you must bear in mind.

I insisted, if you remember, on the fact that the idea of self-surrender or wedlock, is absolutely essential to true Love, in this sense that there is no Love without self-surrender in prospect. But if Love connotes self-surrender, then self-surrender must be connotative of Love. In other words, if the idea of marriage is so necessary to true Love that there is no Love unless marriage is intended; then when two persons actually marry, freely and deliberately, one of the necessary and essential requisites of true Love arises with the marriage. Therefore, if two persons contract marriage without having gone through the usual process of love-making, led to it by passion or convenience or any motive other than Love, there is still a good chance for true Love to spring up, provided the marriage or act of self-surrender is free and deliberate.

You might remember I said in a previous letter that passion when sanctioned by reason and conscience, becomes Love. That is true of any other motive for self-surrender, short of positive deceit or bad will. Hence a true and valid marriage, honestly entered into by two persons, can produce Love, though it may not

always do so. Free consent, which is necessary for valid marriage, begets Love, if Love did not exist before. When a man makes Love to a maid, she is instinctively led to requite his love, unless she perceives some physical, social, moral or personal defect to make him displeasing to her. Similarly when a man freely chooses a maid for his wife, and she freely accepts him as her husband, there is in that self-surrender all that is necessary to generate mutual Love. It may not come, but it has every chance of coming, if the two persons possess at least the average good nature of mankind. The only difference between a love-match and a marriage of that kind is that in the former Love existed before marriage, in the latter, marriage came before they had reached the ignition point of Love. In the former Marriage was the result of Love, in the latter Love is the result of Marriage.

I hope you are not one of those who think disdainfully of Love that comes after marriage. Whether it comes before or after makes little difference to the truth or genuineness of the feeling. After marriage Love can blaze forth, far more rapidly than before it. Before marriage Love is only in the incipient stage: after marriage, it is a delightful actuality. When two persons realize that they actually belong to each other for good and all, they cannot help loving each other. We are so made that the intimacy that begins with marriage, the common life, the identity of interests, the mutual dependence and the daily intercourse, cannot but develop into a romantic adventure leading to true and genuine Love with the rapidity of a conflagration.

If two persons of the opposite sexes are often thrown together in the course of work or play or study

or residence, or anything else that leads them to meet and converse often with each other, they are apt to fall in love, unless something stands in the way. What more natural, therefore, than that two persons who have freely contracted to live together as husband and wife for the rest of their lives, should be in love with each other even from the start of their honeymoon? Therefore, though it is highly desirable that Love should precede marriage, yet for a happy married life it is not necessary that the parties should be in love before marriage. It is quite enough that they should be agreeable to each other, and suited to each other, socially and in point of education and standard of life, for then Love will burst forth speedily if they have not been forced into the marriage. I say this from long observation. I have lived in this country, man and boy, for well nigh sixty years and have seen countless numbers of arranged marriages in which true and genuine Love exists between husband and wife.

It seems to me that this indubitable fact must be taken into account in any and every explanation of the process of Love. No amount of theory can undo a fact: and if the theory cannot explain that fact, then it is not a satisfactory theory. Mind I speak of "arranged" marriages not "forced" marriages. Many people think and speak of arranged marriages as if they were forced marriages, though the one is as different from the other as chalk from cheese. A forced marriage is one into which either or both parties are driven like dumb cattle, without any real say in the matter. That kind of thing happened in former times not only in Ceylon but in other countries as well, but exists nowhere

now as a practice. As a rare case it happens everywhere even now. Arranged marriages was the common practice in many countries in former times and is still so to a great extent all the world over. An arranged marriage is one in which the preliminaries are settled in cold blood by the parents, unlike love-matches which are settled by the parties themselves with a great deal of emotion and enthusiasm. But what is amiss if the preliminaries of your marriage are settled by your parents, if it is to your satisfaction? Are not love-matches often the result of match-making mothers? Do not persons brought together by designing friends fall in love with each other? And pray, what prevents your falling to a young man whom your parents picked out? Is it necessary for true Love that the parties should meet each other fortuitously? What is necessary for Love is that the parties should desire to make each other happy. If you do not feel that desire, nothing prevents you from saying No to the "proposal" and waiting for the one whom you can love.

It is true, no doubt, that a certain percentage of arranged marriages turns out unhappy. But that is equally true of love-matches. As a matter of fact arranged marriages have a better chance of happy results than love-matches, seeing that the latter are the result of the feelings of in experienced youth in love, while the former are the calm choice of experienced and long-sighted grown-ups also. The young are precipitate when left to themselves, and do not heed calm reason when they are badly smitten.

No doubt parents often look for qualifications of a secondary nature, such as social position, wealth,

profession, not to speak of race and caste and dowry. But it is equally undoubted that young people are exposed to be influenced by considerations of an equally secondary and more unreal and less substantial nature, such as good looks, pleasing manners, fair speech, empty compliments and the like. Even when a marriage is a love-match the parents have a right to be consulted, especially by the girl : but consultation comes often too late when a girl's heart has been stolen by an unworthy suitor. The parents may then feel it their duty to intervene and break up the romance. It is much better therefore to avoid such a catastrophe by allowing the parents to make the first selection, reserving to the party the final choice. That is what an arranged marriage amounts to in actual practice. As both parents and children have rights and duties with regard to marriage, arranged marriages are a solution satisfactory to both, because the rights and duties of both parents and children are safeguarded.

Moreover, considering the habits of life of the majority of the Ceylonese and the very harmless nature of the arranged marriages that prevail among them, it seems to me that the practice is almost inevitable. Respectable Ceylonese girls, rich or poor, seldom have the opportunity of meeting young men of their state of life except those of the family circle. Even when they do meet outsiders, they have not the means of becoming sufficiently acquainted with them or of knowing their character or circumstances, to be able to judge whether they will make suitable partners in life. The result is that under these circumstances love-matches are often either indiscreet and due to surface impressions or be-

tween close relatives. The Church forbids marriages between near relatives except with a dispensation granted for grave reasons. The idea is to promote the purity of home life by placing cousins on the same level as brothers and sisters, and thus removing the danger of precocious and juvenile amateness within the domestic circle. In the rare cases when a girl happens to requite the love of an outsider who is eligible as a husband, then all is well, and nothing prevents the parents from giving their blessing to the young couple and letting them make a match of it. But when the person who has won her heart is not eligible for her hand, then comes trouble. It becomes the duty of the parents to break up the romance in her own interests: but she, poor girl, resents that intervention, whatever the reason adduced against the match, because her love had been given before she was aware of the ineligibility, and she finds it hard to recall her heart. The parents then have the disagreeable alternative of permitting the marriage in spite of the danger of future misery to their child, or of opposing it to her present misery. Many a parent has spent sleepless nights on the horns of this dilemma.

The modified form of arranged marriages is a way out of such disasters. The parents, when the time is ripe, look out for an eligible candidate. If he is ready and willing, other questions are settled and they are introduced to each other, and the decision is practically left in their hands. It is not usual to bring force to bear on either side. Neither are parents prone to arrange marriages that are repugnant to their children. Such being the case, I do not well see any objection to the practice.

VIII

REMOTE AND PROXIMATE PREPARATION

I HOPE I have not taxed your patience too heavily by dwelling at such length on principles. I did so because a girl cannot have the right attitude towards matrimony without clear ideas on the Purpose of Life, the Meaning of Sex, Girlhood and the Qualities of True Love. That is my excuse for keeping you waiting so long before coming down to realities. Now that I have done with principles, I want to indulge in some plain talking on how a girl should prepare for marriage. You will doubtless think that it is too late in the day to tell you how to prepare for marriage, seeing that you are already on the brink of that abyss. But it is never too late. If you feel you have prepared for it in the way I describe, then all is well. But if you have not, there is still time for you to take my advice to heart and mend your ways, even at this eleventh hour.

There is a double preparation for the great business of Marriage and Motherhood : a Remote Preparation and a Proximate Preparation. In the former you have very little active share, for it is in great part a natural preparation, done for you by nature and by your parents without any intervention of yours and in spite of you. Nature's part consists in preparing you physically ; your parents' part in preparing you morally. This latter consists in your proper upbringing. It is the bounden duty of parents to bring up their children to fulfil their part in life successfully. This is even more important in

the case of a girl than of a boy. A girl has greater need of a home training. She must grow up to be a person of character and industry; else she will be the ruin of her husband and her children. She must be trained early to good habits, good manners, religion and morality, to love home and domestic duties. Her faults must be pointed out to her with kindness, and corrected gently but firmly if they are recurrent. She must be given opportunities of acquiring a sense of responsibility, and encouraged if she does well. Every girl is serving an apprenticeship at home to run a home of her own one day. Her success as a wife and a mother in the future will depend on the way she fulfils her duties as a daughter and a sister now. A mother's task is not the same as a daughter's, nor a wife's like a sister's; but the underlying motive is the same in all cases, duty and responsibility and charity, a sense of what is right and what is wrong, what is proper and what is unbecoming. During this period of remote preparation for marriage all that a girl has to do is to follow the example and precept of her mother, to be amenable to training, to take correction in good part and to be assiduous and docile. This period lasts as long as she is a child.

When a girl blossoms into a young woman then begins her Proximate Preparation for Love and Marriage. It is a very important stage in a girl's life and she must be made to realize it. By the time a suitor appears on the horizon she must be ready to welcome him or reject his advances as her Conscience and Reason dictate. For this she must be well schooled in her duty and propriety of conduct: and that schooling is very largely her own work. During childhood there is little differ-

ence between the upbringing of a boy and a girl. They are very much alike and treated more or less alike in most things. But when the differentiation begins with the approach of womanhood, their paths are different, and she must be made aware of the difference. There will be a great change in habits and outlook, and a girl will be treated with the honour and deference due to her sex. She begins to develop in a marked degree the qualities and tendencies peculiar to womanhood, self-control, modesty, and maidenly reserve ; and her mother must be vigilant and must make her eschew thenceforth all unnecessary association with the other sex, and consort mostly with those of her own sex and age and condition.

Henceforth she must not romp about as she did when a child. She must be more reserved in public, in company and before strangers. She must be more guarded in speech, pay more attention to decorum and propriety. She must be more amply clothed than before. It is not to be expected that she will herself realize the necessity of all this, and she must be instructed, when necessary, on the idea that underlies this discipline, namely that she has a very important role to fill in life and must make herself worthy of it. If she does not realize it herself, her mother will have to bring it home to her with patience, and guide her to respect herself and exact respect from others without becoming vain or conceited. The success of her preparation will ultimately depend on the girl's own acquiescence.

The reason why she must pay more attention to dress should be brought home to the girl by explaining that the female form is sacred and must be screened from the vulgar gaze. We do not wear clothes because

there is anything to be ashamed of the nude body. Why should we be ashamed of what we are not responsible for? We wear clothes because, once we have attained the age of being self-conscious, our bodies are identified with our persons, and register in some way almost every movement of the mind. The movements of the mind are stirred by the senses, and of such movements we are at least in part responsible. This is especially the case with a girl's body, which is adapted for motherhood, and motherhood is a most sacred thing, to be respected by every decent eye. The other sex is particularly susceptible to emotion at the sight of any part of the body peculiar to the female. It therefore becomes a part of maiden modesty to cover at least from neck to knee, so that no part is exposed to view in any position, sitting or walking or playing.

In the matter of dress East and West differ widely. In the West it is the man that dresses. His proper habiliments in office and out-of-doors, as well as at dinner, in society or in the ball room, cover him from neck to foot in a loose fit; while his wife and sister display extensive areas of bare flesh in arms and round the neck, the rest of the body being mostly enveloped in tight fitting garments of flimsy texture following the contours of the legs and the bust. In the East it is just the other way about. Dress is a matter primarily for women, and men are often satisfied with the scantiest of attire. The East has not changed much, and Eastern ladies still drape themselves from head to foot. In the West the growing immodesty of female attire began in our lifetime, and is due to the laxity in morals that heralded the age of quick divorce. We must retain what is good in the oriental

fashion and avoid imitating the West. Nobody will deny that the *saree* is a most graceful garment for ladies, provided they discard the modern tendency to leave uncovered a great length of arm. No doubt dress must be made to suit the climate and occupation. School girls must take count besides of ease of movement for games, without sacrificing modesty.

The reason why girls at this stage should be guarded in their intercourse with adult persons of the other sex is a psychological one. Growing young men cannot well help being instinctively stirred to emotion by the grace of the feminine form and the charm of their company. Young ladies too cannot help being thrilled by the admiration manifested in amatory glances. Therefore both parties must beware of adding fuel to the fire, lest it be prematurely kindled. Both are at this stage too immature for romance. The conditions of modern society do not permit early marriage to young men whose professional studies take up such a long part of their youth; and young ladies at that stage do not know enough of the world to judge the suitability of a partner for life. Precocious amativeness spoils both for life, and a misadventure in Love is a serious matter for a girl whose heart is not capable of quick recovery from breakage, while young men's broken hearts are soon mended. The restricted association in public and private gatherings in social life is sufficient for the normal growth of mutual acquaintance between young persons at this stage.

This Proximate Preparation for Marriage ends generally with a girl's schooling; not that girls should marry on leaving school, but that after their schooling they are ready to take the field. When a girl has finished

her school education she is ready for Prince Charming; for by that time she will have definitively answered, in her own mind, even the abstruse question of moral theology whether all girls are bound to marry. She will have learnt from the book of life that while all are made for motherhood, not all are bound to take up that responsibility. For besides the natural fitness for it by sex, there is the further fitness in regard to health, temperament and character. Like everything else, Love, Courtship and Marriage, are subject to the Purpose of Life. If a girl wishes to fulfil the purpose for which she is in this world, more excellently by being free from the bond of matrimony, she is quite welcome to do so. No girl, however, should decide the matter definitively till she is old enough to realize the gravity of the issue. Even then she must not settle the point without the concurrence of her parents, because of the consequences devolving on them, nor of her spiritual advisor, if she has any, because of the spiritual aspect of the case. Abstaining from marriage involves duties on the rest of the family. Nor is it at all desirable for a girl to think of deciding the point till circumstances make it necessary. Girls, generally, feel no internal urge for marriage, unless spoilt by education, association, cinemas or novels. They begin to feel it only from external stimulus when touched by a spark of Love, which, when it comes, may be altogether absorbing. Till that happens she is normally indifferent to matrimony. In that state, she should not take any decisive step, unless driven by an aspiration for single blessedness so strong as to stand a siege.

IX

RENUNCIATION OF MARRIAGE THE CLOISTER

WHEN a girl has finished her schooling, she has practically only three courses open to her for the fulfilment of the Purpose of Life. She must attain it in the married state, in spinsterhood or in the cloister. The last is one that combines the spiritual duties of motherhood with all the temporal advantages of a spinster, and therefore I will take it first.

The cloister is for those, who want to strive to attain the purpose of life in the most excellent manner possible on earth, by following the evangelical counsels under vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. Detached from the cares of this world, a nun turns her God-given instincts of motherhood to the service of God and fellow-men. In place of a home and children to look after, she devotes herself to the interests of the poor and the homeless and the motherless, for love of God teaching the young, educating the orphaned, nursing the sick or the aged, reclaiming the fallen, or in any of the numerous works of charity and mercy for which the Church approves religious congregations of women founded according to the varying needs of countries and times.

The cloister is obviously not meant for all, though any girl is welcome to it if she is fit for its duties. Its duties are rather exacting. A nun's life is one of seclusion and silence and simplicity, spent in prayer and

penance and patience. She requires good health, a cheerful spirit, love of virtue and a ready acceptance of drudgery and humility. Therefore, unless a girl feels a strong desire to devote her life to good works without repining, she must not think of the cloister. It is not enough that she does not care for marriage: she must have a positive desire to renounce marriage definitively to consecrate herself to God. This desire is not a sudden fit, but a constant attraction, generally from one's early years, though not necessarily so. It often arises when a girl is old enough to realize the vanity of the things of this world. If this desire is present, the lack of other physical qualities, such as health and ability, may be made up for, as in the cloister there is a large variety of duties to suit different temperaments and capacities. But as religious life is an ideal that appeals to the young and the pure and the innocent, a girl has to be careful not to conclude that she is called to be a nun, unless the attraction of the ideal is strong and persists in spite of intervals of neglect and discouragement. It is always good to take the opinion of a sound counsellor, like a trusty and unprejudiced friend, or one's own mother if she has no prepossessions, and above all of one's confessor or spiritual Father. In any case there is no question of a vocation until the authorities of the congregation one wishes to join and the diocesan bishop declare that there is.

Many Catholic girls are undoubtedly called to the cloister, but not all respond to the call. They must not jump to the conclusion that it is always a sin not to respond, unless they have had a private revelation, for God who has given us free will, wishes us to follow the

evangelical counsels by free choice. The path of the commandments is obligatory on all, but not the path of the counsels; for it is only the Good that comes to us as a Duty that we are bound to do: the Better is left to our choice. It is only "if you wish to be perfect" that Our Lord said, "you must sell what you possess and give to the poor and come and follow me." A vocation to a life in the cloister is a supernatural love-making. Just as a girl naturally requites a man's love, but is free to do so or not, so also the acceptance of a vocation is a free requital of God's love. And blessed is the girl who requites God's love, for eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered the heart of man to conceive what things God hath prepared for His elect.

I must say, however, that it is very disappointing to see how few, after all, are the girls of this country who respond to a vocation to the cloister. It seems to me to be due to more than one cause. Our girls of the better class are spoilt by their home education. Waited upon by servants from their early youth, many of them seldom learn to do domestic work, to the great detriment of their health and utility; and a life of work under obedience becomes repellant to them. Others are allowed to fritter away their time at pictures and dances and parties, so that the supernatural is shut out of their lives. In our girls' schools, moreover, most of the pupils are prepared for the same public examinations as boys and follow the same curriculum, as if forsooth the needs of the two sexes were the same. The presence of non-Catholic pupils do not permit the Catholic ideals to be constantly kept before the eyes of Catholic girls.

But there are in Ceylon many Catholic girls brought up in the devout home surroundings in which vocations bloom in other lands. How is it then that convents do not foster vocations? You ought to know, since you are convent-bred. Many of your folk were under the impression that your Father-Uncle was so fond of you because he hoped to cajole you into a convent! That is perhaps a compliment to you, but a back-handed one to me. I cannot possibly lead you into a convent unless you want to go there. To do otherwise would be to endanger my eternal salvation, not to speak of my peace of mind here below. One comfort is that I am sure you never thought that I should be guilty of abducting you, though, truth to say, if you had but said the word, I should most gladly have aided and abetted you to find your way into a convent, where your irrepressible activity would have found full scope. But there is no denying that the same characteristic of yours makes for a well ordered and happy home. As a matter of fact, it is just the kind of girl who would make a good wife and a wise mother that makes a good nun. I once met a young lady of your age who was going to enter a convent. She was full of life and vitality, a Matriculate of London, an athlete, a swimmer, besides being quite a number of other things, who travelled thousands of miles to join a congregation in a foreign country where her sister already was. She was the most popular person and the gayest on board ship, admired as much for her frank simplicity and friendliness to all as for her charming and lady-like ways. Most of the young men on board were half in love with her and her presence was a sermon, for she had such unlimited confidence in her vocation that she did not run away from her ad-

mirers, but faced them with pluck and did them no end of good by raising their thoughts to higher things. At Colombo she rushed to Mount Lavinia for a swim, at Madras she went, with my approbation, to the pictures for relaxation after being cooped up in a ship for many weeks. But she fasted till evening on Christmas Day to receive Communion when the ship put into Aden, because there was no mass on board. I felt convinced that such a versatile maiden, good as gold, would be a most successful nun: and now long years after our meeting, I know she is a very able and active missionary nun, to whom her work is a perpetual honeymoon.

No one need become a nun unless she wants to, but no girl is ever so happy as the one who turned nun to find happiness in the cloistered life. Convents are the happiest homes in the world, but they are not for dainty ladies or soft characters or broken hearts or delicate hands. They are for those who want to imitate the Blessed Virgin, who is at the same time a Virgin and a Mother. Once, when Our Lord was addressing the people, a woman in the audience cried out in admiration: "Blessed is the womb that gave thee birth", which is an oriental way of lauding a man for his greatness. But the blessedness of being Our Lord's mother is a unique one, incommunicable. There could be only one such, 'our tainted nature's solitary boast', as the poet put it. But in spirit and intention there can be many, and Our Lord retorted to the compliment: "Aye, rather, blessed are they who hear my words and keep them." That is what the nuns do.

THE ALTERNATIVE TO MARRIAGE SPINSTERHOOD

IF A GIRL remains a spinster outside the cloister, it is most often by the virtue of necessity. There are actually more adult girls in the world than marriageable men. This is not because more girls are born than boys, but because the adventurous males hazard their lives in perilous occupations and disappear leaving the girls in the lurch. The result is that in the process of pairing, it is the girls that are left over. The first move in the game of Love and Marriage must be made by the man, and if no man warms up to a particular girl, she does not come into the game at all. It may be that she is as good or even better than those who inspire a man's love; it may be that she never set her cap at anybody; it may be that she is of the irresponsive temperament that men pass by: but the fact is that she did not so far ignite the heart of any male acquaintance, through no fault of hers. If that state of affairs continues, she will soon be an old maid, past the age of marriage, neat, prim, kindly and demure, but an oddity in the constitution of human society. As women are meant to be the companions of man and destined for motherhood, a spinster misses her natural vocation, and the world looks askance at her quite unjustly, since the circumstance of her spinsterhood is not of her making and should be no reproach to her. If she takes to some work out-of-doors, she will often find herself a fish out of water, for her sex is meant

for occupation in the home. She will need more than the capacity of her sex if she is permanently to be earning her living. It is only the rich who can be confirmed spinsters, for they can live in comfort in their own homes, wasting their maternal instincts on pet dogs and pet aversions.

Men may make up their mind to be confirmed bachelors, but girls generally do not choose permanent spinsterhood except for supernatural reasons or for health's sake. The urge for marriage is a male affair; and if men, in spite of it, forswear marriage, it is mostly for sordid reasons, either because they think they cannot earn enough to maintain a wife and family according to their station in life, or because they assume a standard of living beyond their means and are loath to give it up even at the bidding of instinct, or through sheer love of a roving life of untrammelled liberty. Such men deserve no pity and richly deserve their love-less life and the neglected old age that will be the result. But a woman is never so selfish in this matter, and if she does not marry it is because no one has yet honoured her by asking her hand in marriage, or she did not care for the person who did so, or was jilted by the person whom she accepted. In all these cases she is justified in her spinsterhood. She can take to some occupation suited to her feminine temperament, such as teaching or nursing or some such thing; or she can even compete with men on their own grounds, till haply she meets the man whom she can make happy, or die an old maid unrepentant. Our chief business in this world is to use our opportunities for doing good. These opportunities are often not those we should have liked to have, and the merit is greater when we take the opportunities that come to us and hanker not for those that do not. Spinsters, there-

fore, are not the disappointed misanthropes that some people imagine them to be. They are freed from more than half the trials of life and are enabled to do good to all and sundry unless their isolation makes them crabby and selfish. Many a man and woman cherishes the memory of a kindly and lovable maiden aunt who diffused happiness and devoted service all around.

I am afraid Ceylon girls are not made for spinsterhood, though of course they make a shift with it like anybody else, when compelled to do so. But it does not come naturally to them: not that they prefer marriage, but that marriage is thrust on them. Eastern customs and manners and traditions take it for granted that a girl must needs marry. Spinsterhood is a reproach in the East. Happily not a reproach to the girl: unhappily a reproach to the family, whose bounden duty it becomes to settle her in marriage. In ancient days, according to the Eastern custom, it was considered very improper for the males of the family to marry till the adult girls were settled in marriage. That was in the days when a family accepted joint responsibility for all its members:—not a bad custom at all, but one that fostered union and mutual service in families. But though the custom is fast disappearing, the mentality that is the outcome of it still survives and the sense of reproach is felt when a marriageable maiden remains unwedded.

It is then that marriages are arranged and the abuse of arranged marriages comes into play. The parents are anxious to remove the reproach and look out for a suitable husband. If they are well-to-do and can give a good dowry, the thing is easily done and a partner is chosen to suit her. The trouble comes when a dowry suitable

to her standard of life is not forthcoming. Good looks and accomplishments are a dowry that finds a partner. When good looks are not there—which is not the girl's fault—or accomplishments lacking—which is often not her fault either—then comes calamity. Such a girl is often at the mercy of her parents. She may be as good as gold, and would earn a good man's love if she had the chance of meeting one, but as it is, she is often driven by force of circumstances to accept any man-jack chosen by her parents, to save herself from being a silent reproach to those she loves. Such a case is most deserving of our commiseration and is the strongest argument against arranged marriages.

But on the other hand I have a conviction that even such girls can be happy in their married life if they accept their lot with virtue and resignation. At least she can make a success of her life and obtain the purpose for which we exist by making a virtue of necessity. She may even be happier than many of her fortunate sisters who pick out their partners to their taste. She may have a hard life, but stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage! Her own intrinsic worth, shown by the ready acceptance of her lot, and her desire to do her duty by her husband and children, will earn her the love of both. She will be like the valiant woman that Scripture tells of in the thirty-first chapter of the Book of Proverbs, a woman whose price is beyond measure: "Her children will rise up and call her blessed; her husband also and he praised her. Many daughters have gathered together riches: thou hast surpassed them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

I remember a very striking case of this kind. A young lady growing in years had no suitor and the parents got busy and found her a groom. She was asked: Would she marry him? She replied truthfully and modestly: if the parents were satisfied that he was a suitable partner for her, she was quite ready to marry him. He was, in outward appearance, not the man to rouse a girl's enthusiasm, and did not come up to the level of the husbands of her sisters; but as he was in all other respects irreproachable, she submitted to the yoke of matrimony. She is one of several sisters, all better favoured. But now she is the happiest of them all, for her husband turned out to be a jewel of a man, greatly devoted to her. God works in marvellous ways when He rewards virtue and duty.

In most Catholic countries, girls often renounce marriage and expose themselves to perpetual spinsterhood for very high and noble motives, to look after an infirm father or mother, to devote their life to the upbringing of younger children after the mother's death, or the children of a widower brother, or to keep house for him, or for similar tasks. That is a most noble way of fulfilling our life's purpose, for such a girl renounces what she thinks is Good for something which is Better. I suppose there are cases of this kind of deliberate choice of spinsterhood in this country also, though I rather think, according to the customs of this country it is not usual for young ladies to undertake such responsibilities, which are taken up only by mature women, old maids by Hobson's choice.

But I do not think you are in any danger of having to waste your sweetness in the desert air, and so I will pass on to the common fate of womankind — Marriage.

MARRIAGE AS A PATH TO HEAVEN

THE normal path by which a girl makes her way to Heaven is Marriage. I am afraid you never looked upon marriage as a "path to heaven", yet so it is; not a path to the metaphorical heaven that some silly people expect in marriage; but a path to the true and real Heaven that is our final destination. It is by no means the only path, nor am I going to call it the best path, but it is undoubtedly the normal path, the path willed by God and fixed by nature for the majority of mankind. The cloister is a way which any girl is free to choose; spinsterhood is another way, in default of marriage or the cloister: but Marriage is the usual way. So you had better spend some of your free time in maiden meditation on marriage and its bearing on the purpose of life.

Marriage, first of all, is only a means, not an end in itself. That means that marriage is not to be sought for its own sake, but only for something higher. Many people, men and women, it is true, walk into matrimony unawares. Led by the instinct that is implanted in us, guided by the senses and blinded by passion, which they imagine to be love, they marry and think of the scope and responsibilities of marriage only when they are face to face with them. That may be pardoned in persons who are ignorant and ill-instructed, who are not accustomed to look before they leap: but those who are wise and wish to do the right thing, must bethink

themselves of the duties and responsibilities of the married state when they are on the brink of it.

Married life gives incessant opportunities of doing good, and raises a number of good deeds to the level of duties in conscience. It is by using these opportunities for good and fulfilling the duties of that state that married persons gain Heaven. An unmarried person has not so many opportunities for good deeds and no such duties. A girl's only duty to others, outside the family circle, is the general duty of love of neighbour. In her personal and individual life, she has only herself to think of. But the married woman has, besides the general obligation of charity towards the neighbour, a very special and definite obligation of a unique character, first towards her husband, and secondly towards her children. These obligations are specific, onerous and life-long. Her own health, her life, and her physical well-being, she must not endanger even in matters in which a single person, who has only herself to think of, may legitimately do so. Even to her time and company and attentions, her husband and her children have a definite right. She must bear with her husband's shortcomings and help him to overcome them. She must control her temper and her tongue and be ready to make sacrifices of her likes and dislikes, as far as possible, in the interests of her husband and children. All this is obligatory on her even if he does not fulfil his duties towards her, for she took him "for better, for worse". Similarly her duties towards her children persist, quite apart from the question whether they are naturally lovable and respond to her training or not. All these duties are heavy and exacting and her Perfect Happiness in Heaven will depend on the

way she fulfils these obligations on earth.

It is in order that this task may be easy for her that nature has implanted in her heart an instinctive requital of the love of a person of the other sex and an instinctive love of the children born of her. When that Love is bestowed on a given person, the duties become natural, instinctive and agreeable, as long as her Love is active. But the obligation undertaken at the altar continues to exist even when the Love has ceased to be active, or appears to have been bestowed on an unworthy person. That is why a girl must take care to see that her Love is of the real and enduring kind that I explained in a previous letter. Whether she has seen to it or not, whether her love was real or imaginary, true Love or merely passion, or even if neither existed and she married only for convenience, once she has freely consented to the marriage, all these obligations arise in conscience and persist for life.

Therefore when a girl marries she takes upon herself very serious and life-long obligations which raise her life from the selfish concerns of her own individuality to the self-less and nobler concerns of a joint life with another, leading to a united self-sacrifice in order that the children may be brought up in the knowledge and love of God. No girl should submit her neck to the yoke of matrimony unless she is ready and willing to fulfil the obligations of that state of life. Those obligations are greater in the case of a Catholic than of a follower of any other religion. The Catholic alone has the full realization of the solemn sanctity of the marriage bond. That sanctity is such that mankind was not fully prepared for its revelation till Our Lord came on earth.

The law of marriage is, of course, written in our nature, but the intrinsic qualities of marriage, its indissolubility and monogamous character, were not fully known even to the holiest persons of the Old Testament, though these qualities were in marriage all the time. The gradual revelation of the perfection of marriage is not surprising if we remember that our knowledge depends on the senses as well as on reason. What depends on the senses is of the body, and like the body is subject to growth. But man became conscious of his duties and these duties became binding in conscience, only when Our Lord recalled marriage to what it was from the beginning, though obscured by the Fall. He therefore made marriage a Sacrament. This does not mean merely that some benediction was superadded to marriage, but that the marriage of Christians is by itself, in its essential nature, a Sacrament, namely a visible sign of Christ's grace: for in the religion of Christ marriage has a relationship with Christ Himself, and is modelled on His own union with the Church. This enables Christian spouses to fulfil their greater obligations by means of the grace imparted through the sacrament.

Moreover, marriage calls for a great amount of rudimentary charity. If you want to live happily with your husband, you will have to treat him with perfect charity all your married life. I mean you will have to treat him always as one whom you love, reverence and respect, all the more because you are a follower of Christ. If you treat him in that way, he will have to treat you, willy nilly, in the same way, for the mutual regard between husband and wife is necessarily raised to the higher level if either, at least, persists in never

coming down from the ideal pointed out by Our Lord. One of the most striking anomalies of social behaviour is that when people live together in intimate familiarity, they are often apt to forget their manners unless manners are the outcome of Christian charity. A girl often treats her own brothers in a way in which she will not treat the brothers of other girls. Towards them, whoever they are, she is nice and kindly and polite, ever ready to please and to show herself pleased. With her own brothers she thrusts politeness aside, and is often wanting in consideration, and even rude. Why is this? It is because her politeness to strangers is only put on, not real. If she had real politeness and it came from the heart, it would manifest itself most to those who are nearest to her heart and dearest, those of the family circle, and not only to outsiders. If she carries that habit to her married life and treats with politeness only other men and not her man, she will not make a happy home. The husband who had only seen one side of her, the polite side, shown to him when he was not of the family, will soon feel that he has been badly taken in, since that disposition disappeared when the uninterrupted fellowship of marriage began.

Politeness is real only when it is sincere, and is the product of Christian charity. Some people mistake politeness for etiquette and think they can discard the rules of politeness in the case of those of the family circle, imagining that politeness is a kind of etiquette. Etiquette is an arbitrary and conventional code of conduct in company, a ceremonial, to which you have to submit, even if you dislike it. Etiquette differs with countries and peoples and periods. But politeness is

quite a different thing. It is the spirit in which good men act towards each other. It is the spirit of Christian charity, which is not confined to the higher circles of society or only to the cultured and there fined. St. Paul describes Christian charity in the thirteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. It is the same still, and will ever be the same. "Charity is patient, kind: it envieth not, deals not perversely; it is not puffed up nor ambitious, nor self-seeking, nor provoked to anger: It thinketh no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in truth, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." This Christian charity is needed in the home, between husband and wife, far more than anywhere else. To be happy in marriage a girl must possess at least the elements of Christian charity. She must not think overmuch of 'How she is going to be happy' but rather 'How she is going to make him happy'. Your maiden meditations should therefore be devoted not to What kind of man you want him to be, but to What kind of wife you are going to be to him. Do that and thou shalt be happy.

CHOICE OF A HUSBAND

I AM sure you know but too well that now-a-days when young people of your age meet, or only see each other, in the course of social intercourse, the boys take great pains to make themselves agreeable to the girls, and the latter are by no means averse to such attentions. That is quite natural and is the outcome of the mutual attraction which each sex exercises over the other, and comes on them unsought. There is nothing improper in it, and it is quite a good thing and very salutary to both, enabling them to know each other. A good deal of that kind of preliminary amateness is displayed by both sexes at At Homes, and Parties and Birthdays and Weddings and other functions of the kind, and the more there is of them the better for all concerned, for it brings the young men and women of each strata of society within the field of each other's magnetism and enables them to pair off happily for the journey of life.

But as in all other matters of human conduct, there is always the danger of excess, against which the young must be on their guard. It is so pleasant an occupation to meet and talk to those of the other sex, to pay slight and harmless attentions, which in themselves are quite proper and becoming, that some of both sexes become quite addicted to this form of general philandering. The mutual susceptibility gradually leads them even to play at Love, and exhibit symptoms of that

tender passion. If this tendency is restricted to particular persons, it may spring from incipient Love; for that is often the way that Love begins. But if it is indiscriminate and directed not to a given person but to all and sundry, it is obviously because of the very agreeable feeling that the indulgence affords. Even then it may be permissible if it is only the instinctive quest for some responsive breast, and is directed only towards persons one feels drawn to and is intended to be dropped when no response is elicited. Unfortunately, however, there are persons of both sexes who are wont to speak and act and comport themselves generally towards each other as if they felt some tenderness, without actually feeling it. Boys often do that just for the fun of it, because of the thrill of self-satisfaction they feel in awakening a response in a maiden's heart without the intention of proceeding to its natural and proper development. On the maiden's side too it can well happen that she welcomes and even encourages the homage of young men merely as a pastime without any serious intention of requiting it. Such people, male and female, are Flirts; and if they do not cure themselves of the malady in good time, they will infect others, for it is a veritable plague. Flirts should be hounded out of decent society, for this wanton trifling with another's feelings, not to speak of one's own, is something criminal.

But let us suppose, for the sake of dissertation, that one of the young gallants is terribly in earnest about you and makes advances. He seeks you out at every meeting and is very nice to you and apparently wants you to notice that you are the object of this adoration. What is the attitude you should adopt towards him? First of

all do not jump to the conclusion that he is in love with you. It is quite possible that he is smitten, but it is just as possible that it is only a passing impulse. In any case it is still too soon to think of Love, but not a minute too soon for you to take stock of the situation. You should have made up your mind, long before this contingency arose, as to what are the essential qualities you want your Prince Charming to possess before you allow his admiration to reach the ignition point of Love. What these requisites are we shall presently discuss. At present we are only concerned with what you should do if he does not possess the essential requirements, and what if he does.

If he has not the indispensable essentials, you have got to be very careful. First of all you must be very kind and gentle with him, and not expose him to the tragedy of riding for a fall. He is, by hypothesis, actually paying you the grandest compliment that one human being can pay another. You have therefore to be gracious as a queen who has to refuse a boon to a beloved subject. Whatever may be the shortcomings that you see in him, you have got to give him an indication that he has come to the wrong shop. He has not yet given himself away, so that if you are not satisfied with him, there is not the least impropriety in withholding any sign of response and making him see that he cannot be anything more than an acquaintance. He might think your heart is already given to another, for your attitude to him will be as if you are already bespoken. If he has not the sense to take his dismissal and pesters you with attentions, then of course it will be necessary to make it quite plain and even avoid him. He will

soon realise how the wind blows, and will perhaps resent it and think ill of you. That is the penalty you have to pay for being such a charming girl. But give him no ground to think that you are proud or disdainful. That he is not suited to you may be no fault of his : it certainly is no fault of yours.

Be sure, however, that you act at once, for if he is not the man for you, you must let him see that gently as soon as you perceive that he is after you. For there is very great danger for you. There is nothing so disastrous to a girl as to see that a person whom her calm reason finds unsuitable is making advances and to delay or hesitate or dillydally in taking steps to avert a requital. Nothing captivates a girl's heart like the perception that a young man is making up to her. His face will haunt her, and she will not be able to think of anything else, if the person is otherwise desirable. The fascination might make her even think that she is in love with him, though Love it cannot be if her mind does not approve it. Many a girl has had to rue the day when, through hesitation and procrastination, she has heeded the siren strains of passion instead of the cold logic of reason. The conflict in her breast between Duty and Pleasure is a veritable misery which can do harm to her body and mind and character. Attachment to a person who is unsuitable has led many girls to sacrifice for ever the real happiness that a stitch in time would have saved. He may be of much meaner condition than she, or a drunkard or a profligate or worse, but his gallant address or fair form or charming ways may lead her, first to sympathize with him, then to excuse him, and finally to hope to reform him by her love. When she begins to

feel like that, she is done for. Heart and Head will be at war, and incline her now one way, now another, till the sense-attraction, which is ever the stronger and the more palpable, will prevail. In spite of her better judgement she will cling to him as the moth to the flame, and there will be the tragedy of requiting the love of an unsuitable lover, and she will marry him, a course fatal to her true happiness—or make herself unworthy of another man's love.

It may perhaps be worthwhile to explain how this happens. Love is subject to the control of the will, but being itself a movement of the will, the control is a species of self-control, especially difficult, as it is, in this case, an operation to be performed on the will by the will itself. The will cannot prevent the imagination from conjuring up thoughts and images of the beloved object. But it can refuse to dwell on them, not directly but indirectly, namely by turning to other thoughts and other images or, better still, by giving full and frequent consideration to the reasons against marriage with that person. If she feels that such a marriage is wrong morally and displeasing to God, there is some hope she will overcome the crisis. But if such is not the case, and the only reason against the marriage is that it will bring misery to herself, she will begin to think of becoming a martyr to Love—and then all is up with her. An able author has described the persistence of the feelings of affection when the mind has ceased to endorse them, in an eloquent passage which I had better transcribe for your benefit, with slight alterations.

“There is no pleasure so delicious, so fascinating, so absorbing as that of sex-love. And the will, having

tasted deep of this pleasure, simply refuses to give it up; no matter what the voice of reason may dictate. And so when it is a question of tearing the feelings of love out of one's heart, a man or woman will not do so, but lets them cling with obstinate tenacity. The clinging is like that of an octopus—a great ramifying beast with limbs full of suckers, which hold like leeches for their whole length; and no sooner have you torn off one part of a limb, than it begins to stick again with another part. The impression is that the octopus is sticking to the unfortunate lover and cannot be torn off. The real truth is that it is the person who is sticking to the octopus, not the octopus to the person. Let him or her definitively and efficaciously determine that the love shall cease, and it drops off the soul like a withered thing. But this is just what the lover will not do. While reflexly determining that the love must be got rid of, the person practically holds to it for the pleasure it affords, and which he or she cannot bring herself or himself to go without. Even if they do, they must continue to think of the beloved and to revel in the tender feelings towards the object, not for the person's sake but because of the fascinating pleasure of the feelings themselves. In other words the person wants the octopus to go on sucking, because it is so nice to be sucked; and of course it will go on."

May God protect you from ever falling into such an infatuation.

XIII

MARRIAGE AND RELIGION

BEFORE passing to the attitude you must adopt when the person making up to you is one who has the essential requirements, I think we had better settle what those requirements should be. It is not a question of the personal characteristics that he should possess, of which you are the one and the only judge : but of the general qualities which a man must needs have before he can be considered a satisfactory suitor for your hand, or for that matter of any girl in your position. These requirements do not depend on your own individual preferences, but on the far more substantial grounds of common sense and the experience of mankind ; and the neglect to give these considerations full weight has led many a girl to life-long misery.

Though the general requisites may be many, not all of them have the same importance. The first and foremost requirement is that any person wooing you must be a Catholic. That is an absolutely essential requirement. Other things, like caste and race, social position and means, are in reality only secondary, accidental, or even negligible if the essentials are satisfactory. I will not venture to say that caste and race must be altogether ignored, though that is positively my opinion : but I only say that they must not be put forward as essential requirements for a happy marriage, for the simple reason that they are not. To take account of a suitor's

social position and means is a necessary measure of prudence. There can be love in a cottage, and there are happy marriages in every state of society; but it is generally only those who are bred in cottages that are happy in them. One accustomed to a much higher society or to a far better standard of living, is not usually happy when she rushes headlong to marriage with a person of a much lower state, as sad experience has shown.

The requirement of having the same religion is, first, an important precaution of natural wisdom for people of all faiths, and for that reason it is enjoined on us with special insistence by the Church. As marriage is a life-long affair, you cannot well live all your life in the most intimate of human fellowships with a person whose religious convictions are different from yours. Religion affects the whole of life and all its functions; each and every conscious and deliberate act of thought or word or deed. It not only concerns your behaviour as an individual, but also each and every aspect of your conjugal life. The very meaning of marriage and its rights and duties, are a matter of conscience to a Catholic. It is not so to non-Catholics. Some religions have no positive teaching on marriage: others permit a man to have more than one wife; still others do not seem to forbid a woman to have more than one husband: a great many do not oppose divorce. But all these things are abominations in the eyes of a Catholic. A Catholic married to a non-Catholic will be bound to his partner in a manner in which he is not and cannot be according to his religion. The bargain therefore is an uneven one. A Catholic while remaining bound to the non-Catholic partner in

conscience may be equally bound in conscience not to live with him, on account of acts inconsistent with Catholic marriage but not forbidden to the partner by his own religion.

In short there is no common ground for a Catholic and a non-Catholic to take their stand together in the bonds of matrimony. The common ground is not solid enough even when the spouse happens to be a non-Catholic Christian. For though Protestants of the many Christian sects believe in Christ in some way, they interpret His teaching in their own way. In other words they accept Christ's teaching only when it agrees with their own opinion, and they sit in judgement on Christ's teaching. That cannot stand with the belief of a Catholic who holds that he must accept Christ's teaching entire, because He is God. Moreover a Catholic is one who believes not only that the Catholic Church is founded to teach the true doctrine of Christ, but also that she cannot by any conceivable means teach anything but Christ's doctrine without belying the words of Christ that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. The very existence of Protestantism is a protest against that claim. Therefore if a Catholic wants to enter the bonds of marriage, he or she must first of all make sure that the other party is a Catholic also, and a girl must never give room to the mishap of requiting the love of one who is not a Catholic.

So far I took my stand on human wisdom, without any reference to the supernatural aspect of the question and the teaching of the Church. The supernatural reason is that a Catholic, being a child of God by the grace of baptism, a member of the mystic body of Christ,

and a temple of the living God, cannot have part or lot in the intimacy of marriage with one who is not all that. The Church, as you know, sometimes gives a dispensation to marry a non-Catholic if that party gives a solemn undertaking not to interfere with the faith of the Catholic, to bring up all the children as Catholics and to marry in the Church. This is a very exceptional case, demanded by exceptional circumstances of which the one judge is the bishop of the diocese. These exceptional circumstances must be circumstances beyond the Catholic party's control, such as for instance that the Catholics in a given diocese are so few that they cannot always find suitable partners among themselves. This does not hold good in Ceylon, except perhaps in some outlying parts. The justification for this dispensation is the concrete fact that in the beginning of Christianity it often happened that of those who were already married in the valid bond of natural marriage outside the Church, the husband or the wife became a Catholic, while the other remained outside the faith. The Apostles declared that such persons may lawfully continue to live together as man and wife provided the unbelieving spouse allowed the convert to live the Christian life freely in the unity of the Church. But this condition was so rigorous that if the non-Catholic did not accept it, the Church could even dissolve the non-sacramental marriage and allow the convert to marry another. To realize the gravity of this usage one must bear in mind that, according to Catholic teaching, a valid marriage outside the Church is indissoluble in every respect. It becomes dissoluble only in extreme cases, when the unity of non-sacramental marriage comes into conflict with the supernatural unity of a Catholic with Christ. In that case the right of the

higher unity must prevail against those of the lower, just as the rights of the soul must prevail over the rights of the body in case of conflict. It is recorded that St. Paul dissolved a natural contract of marriage in favour of the faith at Corinth, and his action is the model for all such cases.

It may happen that the candidate for the hand of a Catholic girl has so little faith in his own religion that he is ready to become a Catholic for marriage. It cannot be denied that there are genuine cases of conversion in that way. They are only genuine when marriage is but the occasion or the motive for enquiring into the Catholic faith, and the person ultimately embraces the faith not because it is a Catholic he wants to marry but because his inquiry has led him to the conviction that the Catholic faith is the one true religion. It is only natural that the truth and purity of the Christian religion comes home to sincere inquirers, for the soul is naturally Christian—*anima naturaliter christiana*—as was said of old. A large number of such conversions are known to me. But it is undeniable that there are cases of hypocritical conversions for the sake of marriage, and Catholic girls ought to be forewarned. I was asked not long ago by a girl what she should do about a young man, a Protestant, who had asked her parents leave to pay court to her, promising to become a Catholic if she accepted him. I asked her what she thought about it. She said she would on no account marry a non-Catholic or even listen to a non-Catholic wooer. She was ready to heed his suit if he became a Catholic, but she could not say whether she would accept him till she knew him better. I asked her to convey that to her young man.

She did so, but he wanted to be assured of acceptance before he began to study Catholicism. She sent him to Hongkong. Many Protestants are like that. Their religious convictions are only skin-deep, and they think they can be Catholics in the same way. Can their love be anything but skin-deep, if they are ready to sacrifice something greater than Love in order to be beloved? No man can love you truly who loves not God more.

I presume you fully realize what this primary requirement entails. It entails nothing less than that you must never permit any non-Catholic to embark on the voyage that leads to the haven of Love. If that narrows the circle of your eligibles, all I can say is that you cannot be a Catholic without being ready to make the sacrifices that your faith demands. As good Catholics we must live in Christian charity with those who are not Catholics. It would be unworthy of Catholics to avoid social intercourse with them. But as Catholics we must draw the line when a Catholic principle is involved. To move freely with outsiders in society and yet to exclude them from marriage, requires great tact and delicacy, but not more nor any less than to move freely in terms of acquaintance and friendship with other persons whom we are not prepared to marry, as for example those who are already betrothed, and those whose condition or standard of life is far above or far below ours. It is well known that Catholics are sticklers for principle and the fact that you are a Catholic, if known to your friends, will obviate the necessity of any action on your part. If any person unaware of your faith shows any symptoms of love, it will be your bounden duty to make some

manifestation of your faith to him, to ward off the evil. Or discourage any attentions, just as you would the impetuosity of a boy too young for you or an elderly person too old for you, or any other with whom marriage is not feasible. You must endeavour with Christian charity to save such a one from the disappointment that is inevitable if he persists.

OTHER ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS

I AM sorry I have not yet done with essential requirements. That Religion is the most essential, the one you cannot do without, I hope you have now fully grasped. Your parents doubtless will want to make Caste and Race also essential requirements: but I am sure, if you are really keen on a person of another caste or race, they will finally give in, though against the grain, if the real and rational ground for this objection does not exist. Except in the case of some caste-ridden and race-proud individuals who entertain most fantastic ideas of superiority on the subject, the demand of identity of caste and race in marriage comes from the reasonable desire that the husband and wife should not be different in habits, customs and upbringing, if they are to live happily together. There was indeed a time in Ceylon when different castes and races had different customs and habits and practices, as a result of which there were barriers obstructing free intercourse on equal terms. But that time is now gone. Modern Ceylonese people, especially those living in large towns, have imbibed new ideas and are now to a great extent unified. For instance, you meet on terms of friendship girls of other races and castes, in school and at home, without ever thinking of such artificial distinctions. What you do with your girl friends, your brothers do, to a still greater extent, with their companions and friends. Thus there is really no discrimination. If, therefore, a

young man of another caste or race, who is a Catholic, makes up to you and you are ready to consider him a suitable husband, I do not think your parents will take up arms, though it is quite natural that they should not be very happy about it; but their Catholic sense of the brotherhood of man, will eventually give in to your wishes. At least so I think, and I shall be ashamed of them if they do not. You need not mind the disgruntled fogeys of the old school who will raise up their hands in horror and wonder what the world is coming to.

But the attitude of your parents will be quite different if the candidate for your hand is not of the same social standard and means as you are. That is not a matter of prejudice, but of common sense. You have certain comforts and luxuries in your home, and you move in a certain circle of acquaintances and friends. If the young man whom you want to favour is much below that standard of life and culture, it is quite natural that your parents should try to deter you from a *mésalliance*. They will say quite justly that you have been carried away by good looks or fascinated by an attractive young man who is not suited to you: that if you had not lost your head through passion, you would yourself see the imprudence of such a marriage. They will say that you will very soon feel unhappy when you are taken out of your habitual circles. The fact that you are quite ready and willing to forego your social position and put up with the altered circumstances, is no answer to their objection. They do not doubt that you are so minded now: but they doubt that you will be able to keep it up long. You will have no effective answer to that, except that it is now your sweet

will so to do. You will have no right to say that your people are unreasonable. The only unreasonable person is yourself. I read in a newspaper some time ago, that an apparently respectable girl was so enamoured of her father's chauffeur that she ran away with him. She must have been a silly girl, who had no uncle to write letters to her.

The same line of consideration applies to means. If the young man who is hungering for you is unable to give you the kind of home to which you are accustomed, you must not allow him to make love to you. If he cannot maintain you in the way you have a right to expect, it is highly improper for him to seek your hand in marriage. He might possibly hope to improve his resources by means of your dowry. If your dowry is such that it can easily be done, then of course there is no great objection to it, if he has the other requisites and you are ready to buy yourself a husband. If you like that sort of thing, there is nothing to be said. I have very little regard for a person who is going to live on his wife. But if he does not mind it, and you are game for it, my opinion does not matter. Will you be able to look up to such a husband with respect? Are you not one who rather likes to hold up your head and give yourself airs? If so, you will want to have your own way in your home because you contribute the lion's share to the household budget. Many a young lady likes position: many another is ready to ignore the fact and make an impecunious lover of her own standard of life happy by supplying the funds to run a home. It all depends on character, both yours and his. It is at least good that you should give some consider-

ation to this point before encouraging a young man who has not the means to give you a comfortable home.

This question of essential requirements will have brought home to you one very important fact, namely that in the question of marriage a girl must bear in mind that the parents have a right and a duty to see that their daughters do not rush into matrimony merely on the personal attraction that a young man happens to wield on them. There are certain preliminary considerations that the parents are better fitted to settle than the girl. In other words, the system of arranged marriages that is in vogue in this country has a rational justification. Except in the case of the majority of the Ceylon Burghers, arranged marriages are the general rule in Ceylon. Even Burgher parents of superior standing take good care not to let their daughters mix freely with the class of young men who are not acceptable as suitors. Sinhalese and Tamil parents also adopt that system of elimination. But in whatever way it is done, there is no doubt that the parents should have the chief say in questions of eligibility. The young people are expected to choose their partners from the circle of eligibles. The modified system of arranged marriages consists in this that the parents make the preliminary selection, leaving the final choice to the parties themselves, a most sensible system combining all the advantages of personal choice and parental selection. If a girl bears in mind the importance of the essential requirements before giving her heart away, she can even obviate the necessity of all parental intervention.

The very best thing you can do in this matter is to consult your mother betimes, making her your con-

fidant in the matter of love. If, as soon as you feel that somebody threatens to fall in love with you, you consult your mother, everything is sure to go right. She will be in a position to judge whether the aspirant to your hand has the essential requirements. Do not run away with the idea that anything will be lost by this precaution, or that you must needs respond at once to a man's love. If he is actually in love with you and you have not misjudged him, he will not be deterred by your hesitation and delay in responding: rather the contrary. True and genuine Love will not be retarded in that way. But if it is only a passing fancy of his, your delay might even be the means of a good riddance. I hope you are not a believer in that Love-at-first-sight theory. It may well happen that the first sight fascinates a young man and carries him off his feet and he eventually ends by falling in Love. Many a young man on the other hand has felt how fickle a thing love is. He has experienced that kind of feeling toward many a girl before he finally fixed his heart upon the person towards whom his momentary feelings found support from the mind. He will then wonder how he could ever have thought himself in love with the others. Yet so it is. Young men are extremely susceptible and cannot help feeling a thrill in their heart at the sight of a pretty figure or a lovely face, and go home to think and dream of that face or figure. But subsequent meetings with that divinity will not have the same effect. It is only when that feeling has returned time after time and when his mind has approved of the movement of his heart that he is really in Love.

So a girl loses nothing by calm deliberation and consultation with her mother or with a wise counsellor.

The counsellor's part is a very embarrassing one. Once upon a time a maiden very dear to me, had no mother to consult and turned to me for advice, because she knew I should not refuse her anything in reason and would not let her down for anything in the world. I listened patiently to the story from A to Z, of every stage of her love affair. She believed he was in love with her : that she was in love with him I had not the ghost of a doubt. He was, fortunately, one whom I knew, a fine fellow, who had not only the essential qualifications but also quite a score of non-essentials. I gave her that opinion with fear and trembling and gave it only as an opinion. It came off. She is now well and happily married for many years. But once she flabbergasted me by advising a younger maiden to consult me in her incipient love-affair, adding, in my face, with mischief aforethought, that if things went wrong she could put all the blame on me ! I shuddered at my narrow escape.

COURTSHIP

WHEN it dawns on you gradually, on the discreet inquiries made by the Secret Intelligence Department of your own maidenly curiosity, that your *inamorato* has the essential requirements : or when your parents arrange with your bosom friend to give you a gentle hint that someone, of whom they had been speaking in high praise in your hearing, has " sent a proposal " as the phrase goes : or in whatever way you come to know or hear or even suspect that an eligible young man is seeking your hand in marriage, then the atmosphere suddenly gets electrified, the stage is set for a romance, the fat is in the fire, and you will begin to speak in metaphors. You cannot possibly feel unconcerned, however much you may try to create the impression that you are. Consciously and unconsciously, your thoughts will go to him, and if you are of a devout disposition—as I hope you are and will always be—you will even begin to pray, not openly for him, but that God may prosper the affair, if it is agreeable to you, or that He may help you to decide, if you are in doubt. You will openly or furtively be paying more attention to your person and to your mirror. Do not be ashamed of all that, for it is quite natural and harmless and only shows that you are facing a crisis in your life.

But keep a calm head on the day that your cavalier finds some opportunity to give you a clear manifestation of his adoration ; or when your folk manage to bring it

about that he is introduced to you, usually at the house of a mutual friend who is secretly sworn to aid and abet the conspiracy. Everybody, including yourself, will pretend that there is nothing afoot, and the meeting quite unpremeditated, but you will be quite aware that everything has been deliberately pre-arranged with a great deal of foresight to make it look accidental. I remember a very interesting case. He and She met at a Rest House "unexpectedly" with a brother apiece. They had a cup of tea, for any time is tea time. After some desultory conversation, he suggested a stroll on the beach that lay invitingly by. The brothers manoeuvred deftly to get him and her side by side, and slackened their pace obligingly to give them a lead of a couple of yards. He talked of many things, and she became suddenly interested in sealing wax and cabbages and kings, till the time passed all too soon and the approach of sunset found them returning to their cars. He stopped short and asked her confidentially in a whisper, Did she know why they met? She was too honest to disclaim knowledge and said "Yes". Was she going to the races on Saturday? She said she was, and they shook hands cordially. He was at the racecourse betimes and monopolized her as much as he dared, and elicited, without much pressure, when and where she would be fulfilling the grave precept of the Church to hear mass on Sunday. There he was again at the specified mass, to distract her attention though her eyes were on the prayer book. His escort to church pretended to be surprised to see him there at that mass and invited him to lunch. He went to lunch that day, and many a day after that, to lunch and dinner and tea, and was a long time leaving. In short it went like a house on fire, and

there was as true a love match as ever there was, stage-managed at the beginning, till the principal actors warmed up to their rôles.

That is how it usually goes, whether it is an arranged marriage of the reformed type or a case of spontaneous ignition. The usual process of wooing a wife is called Courtship, a word expressing an old-world idea, that she is a queen and her presence a court, and he a courtier, frequenting Her Majesty's court to bespeak the royal favour of bestowing her hand on him. He has to observe the chivalrous attitude of a courtier towards a queen, and she the deportment of a sovereign towards a well-beloved subject. He hopes to prevail on her to honour him with the gift of herself; and she wants to know whether she can be happy with him. First of all there is the personal factor, which is beyond analysis. You just like a person or you don't: there is nothing much to be said about it either way, for likes and dislikes are not reducible to reason. It may happen that a person to whom we take an instinctive dislike at first, turns out to be a good fellow when we come to know him. Contrariwise a person who seems very amiable and attractive on surface impressions, may afterwards prove to be insufferable. The process of courtship is therefore intended to give each of the high contracting parties some insight into the other's personality. Courtship is after all only a preliminary test whether they can stand the friction of constant companionship that follows upon marriage.

The personal question is soon settled, especially if either or both have tender feelings or kind hearts or good looks. Next there is the question of the compati-

bility of temperament and the affinity of interests. Temperament is a person's natural tendencies. Some people are prone to anger, others to sensuality, still others to emotion, while others have exactly the opposite temperament, mild, indolent, or cold. Now it is quite clear that if husband and wife are both irascible they will quarrel often, or if both are talkative there will be no one to listen. On the contrary a quiet man may be entertained if he has a vivacious wife and a timid wife will be happier with a bold and masterly man. An indolent husband will be stirred to action by an energetic wife. It is not easy to determine what each one wants, for no man or woman has a catalogue of the qualities that the other must possess, so that he can tick them off one by one. In some qualities the two must be similar for harmony and concord, in others dissimilar. The best and the easiest way to hit it off is to see each other often and observe whether one is likable by the other.

There will always be the great question that will agitate you constantly : Does he really love me ? Whether the love is genuine or counterfeit, you cannot easily make out, for unfortunately they have not yet invented a philometer to measure the degree of love. Words are very unreliable, even deeds are useless for they can be feigned. He may speak and act towards you in the same way whether his love is real or put on. The only test is of course those actions which are unrehearsed and spontaneous. If he puts himself out to please you, and lays great store by your approbation and tries to show that he wants to be worthy of you, you may fairly conclude that his love is genuine. But men are deceivers ever. A man's love has two aspects, one coming

from the body, another from the mind. The former is common to passion and to Love; the latter to Love alone. The former a man may feel towards any person of the other sex with whom he is in constant relationship; the latter only to his lady-love. So that the real test of a person's love comes to this whether he treats the girl as the object of his adoration or of his sex-love; whether he treats her as a queen or as a courtesan. Genuine Love can scarcely refrain from exhibiting itself spontaneously: counterfeit love is shown by deliberate plan. It can appear in the trappings of true Love, but cannot be kept up long without betrayal, unless he is an adept or a consummate actor.

The moment you feel that he really loves you, you will be carried off your feet, for a girl's real requital comes only when she becomes aware that he loves her truly. Before that she is not enthusiastic, though women, as a rule, are better at counterfeiting love than men. Once she really requites — whether his love be true Love or not, provided she thinks it is—she cannot help showing it in her demeanour, in face and eye. It is then that he feels his power, and it is most often in the use he makes of this power that he shows the quality of his love. But the poor thing is past remedy when once she thinks he loves her. That is both the strength and the weakness of a girl. Requital is almost automatic when once she believes that a person, towards whom she has no antipathy, is in love with her and her heart is free: but her maidenly instinct is not too readily disclosed unless she is eager for a husband. It is in the way she comports herself that the man judges her. The courtship is often done in the girl's house, and he has

more opportunities of observing how she deals with her home folk, than she has of his behaviour at home. A good man in love will be repelled by a girl who reveals vanity or self-conceit or petulance or impatience, in word or deed, to those of her home and even to the servants, however nice she may be to him. His love may even evaporate if her behaviour makes him fear that he will be the object of such defects after marriage.

Just as you observe him, so will he observe you. In his case and yours it holds good that, if one's chief desire is only to seek one's own happiness for one's own sake, the marriage is not likely to be a very happy one : for it is based on selfishness, which does not promote conjugal union. No doubt each party wishes to be happy, but unless one's own happiness is sought only by making the other happy, there will not be the perfection of love. But do not look for perfection in his love. If his love has not yet reached the height of benevolence, if his desire is not to seek his happiness through yours, you have still the chance of raising it to the higher degree. There is a love that seeks to possess, and its object is to acquire the beloved. It is not necessarily ignoble, but only inferior to the other. This other is true Love and it is of the benevolent kind, and seeks to make the beloved happy : its object is to give happiness and it is the noblest that man is capable of. The lower can be raised to the higher. If yours is of the higher kind, his will have to be so, sooner or later, by your example and object lesson. If yours is of the inferior kind, his will not be elevated, and the fault will be yours. Therefore, if you want him to love you really and truly, let him see the truth and reality of your love, and all will be well.

B E T R O T H A L

IF at any time during the courtship you find that he is not the man for you, there is nothing to be done but to withdraw at once. You must not, of course, retreat for a trivial reason if he is really in love with you ; but only if you think he does not love, or if, knowing that he does, you have found faults or defects in him which make marriage imprudent. Do not forget, however, that you also have faults and defects and that he turned his blind eye to them. It is only for serious defects of character which goodwill cannot remedy, or for habitual cussedness, that you should reject a man who loves you. Many things can be forgiven to one who loves truly and really. But, in any case, please remember that if you have to withdraw, you must do so with good grace. During the courtship either party is free to withdraw, since the purpose of the courtship is to know each other better. This possibility of withdrawal is an added reason why you have to be extremely careful to be very correct and proper in your dealings with him. He and you must act towards each other with the dignified decorum and demeanour that any gentleman and lady will observe when thrown together in society.

But if the two of you are satisfied with each other, then comes a day when you will plight your troth or become 'betrothed' formally and publicly and are 'engaged' or 'affianced'. That is the last step to matrimony and there are special difficulties peculiar to that

position. Hitherto you met as persons who would like to know each other better with a view to marriage. The betrothal is a solemn assurance on the part of both that you have made up your minds to marry. After that, withdrawal is no easy matter, for the public declaration of your willingness to marry involves a responsibility of which the breach is punishable with certain penalties prescribed by the law of the land, as well as by the Canon Law of the Church provided the betrothal is in writing.

In former times we used often to hear of suits for "Breach of Promise" to marry, and rarely of divorce and suits for separation. Now it is the other way about. More divorce actions are instituted in our courts than actions for breach of promise. The reason seems to be a laxity in morals and the resultant haste with which people rush to wedlock. What was formerly a courtship is now something like an engagement, and what was formerly a betrothal is now marriage. They rush to it in haste and repent at leisure. Public opinion outside Catholic circles has now gradually lost the horror and social degradation that used to be attached to those who fail to keep their marriage vows, because the sanctity of marriage was undermined by the Protestant Reformation, which began by denying that marriage was a sacrament. They now try to come back to it, but the evil is done, and there is nothing so difficult as to revive an institution that was currently condemned. The Catholic Church alone has held to the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage and will continue to uphold it "unto the consummation of the world".

Betrothed persons may suffer great anxiety in conscience if they lack sound knowledge of the signi-

fiance of their state. Custom allows and conscience permits certain privileges to the betrothed, because they are pledged to marry each other. But fundamentally and really their position is not morally different from that of any unengaged couple. They are subject to the same laws and commandments of God as all others. Yet a certain degree of intimacy is permissible to them in view of their forthcoming marriage: but this intimacy does not relax the moral law in their regard. As a matter of fact it only makes the observance of the law harder, because of the emotional state that the betrothal produces in them. It is a subject on which it is not easy to write, while on the other hand it is not easy for the parties themselves to make up their conscience clearly on the matter without some guidance, as their situation affects the primordial forces that move the very depths of our nature.

The intimacy that betrothal permits is the same as the intimacy between members of the same family. You can treat your *fiance* with all the tenderness and affection with which any girl may treat her father or a favourite brother to whom she is attached: and you can allow him all the marks of endearment that you receive from your father or brother. But as a matter of fact he is neither your father nor brother, nor are your dealings with him hedged round by the sanctity that attaches to the members of a family. What you give your father or brother are marks of affection which never arouse the emotional accompaniment peculiar to love between the sexes. Therefore the same endearments cannot be permitted to an outsider without stirring up the passions. That is the difficulty. You can kiss and hug your

father or brother in an outburst of affection, without the faintest danger of arousing any organic activity in yourself or in him. But you cannot do the same to your *fiance* without awakening the sleeping dogs of the emotional accompaniment of sex-love. Whether you like it or hate it is not the question: these stirrings are not under the control of your will. However much you may detest that they do appear, appear they will in you as well as in him, and neither of you will be able to resist them fully, for we cannot help being carried away by the sense of delectation. Therefore they can be indulged in only in the measure in which they become necessary to foster Love. The very same acts are also manifestations of the lower appetite, and therefore thoughts and feelings of the baser kind rise unbidden in the mind and in the body. These will have to be treated as any other phenomenon of the same kind in other circumstances. In short, you can treat him as you would treat your father or brother, and he can treat you like his sister or mother, regardless of any stirrings of the passions when it is right and proper to treat each other so, as for instance on meeting or parting in public. At other times and in private it is not desirable to indulge in endearments, except when there is a special reason for it and it is not prolonged. The principle is that when an act, good in itself, has two effects, one good and the other bad, the act may be performed when the good effect is intended and there is a good reason for acting and the evil is only tolerated.

One great safety valve is this. A well-instructed Catholic girl feels instinctively when to draw the line. It is generally not the girl but her young man who feels

the need for demonstration, and therefore it is the girl who has to make him toe the line. She must "bristle like a porcupine as soon as this line is in the slightest degree overstepped. An instant change of demeanour, a stiff withdrawal, unmistakable signs that any suggestion of liberty is highly displeasing to her, will act like magic." She will thereby give him an exalted idea of the purity and spiritual beauty of Love which must remain untarnished. The law of purity binds during the period of engagement just as before it, and prepares a couple for the chaste love of wedlock in all the perfection of Christian marriage.

The explanation of all this is somewhat philosophical, but I will put it down briefly even though you may not catch the point. True Love—like the human being in whom it is and like the human nature which it is the means of perpetuating,—has a double aspect, the one a bodily aspect and the other a spiritual aspect. The bodily side is an organic activity which produces an emotional state and urges the Will itself to concur in the tendency. The spiritual side is an activity of the Will also, but it does not remain in the will but passes over to the body and arouses the same emotional state. This emotional state is thus aroused by the carnal aspect as well as by the spiritual aspect of Love. These two aspects are in themselves distinct and separable, but they are linked by the emotional state. The two aspects fuse into a harmonious unity in the married state. Outside that state and before the married state is entered, they must be kept apart. Though the spiritual element of Love can be called into play voluntarily, yet as there is danger of arousing involuntary bodily activity,

it is not licit except when there is a necessity to display affection. Carnal activity, on the other hand, can never be voluntarily stirred without sin outside marriage. But the close interaction between the carnal and the spiritual aspect, makes it extremely difficult to keep the two apart even with the best of good will. Therefore those who wish to retain the purity of their conscience have to be extremely careful and guarded in demonstrations of Love before marriage.

THE HOME

I HAVE now led you step by step to your Engagement or Betrothal,—at least on paper. You might be inclined to think that you can manage the rest of the journey by yourself, and turn round to say “Goodbye” to me. Not a hope! Once I get into a stride I can’t easily pull up till I reach a definite halting place. The only such place I see is the Altar, and thither I am determined to accompany you, whether you like it or not, to make sure of tying your nuptial knot as fast and secure as I possibly can. I have still an unlimited supply of that commodity called “good advice”, some of which, at least, I want to fling at your head on the way, like the *confetti* that your friends will shower on you when you “go away” with the groom of your choice. Only I will adopt the literary device of putting down my comments in the form of Reflections in Preparation for Matrimony.

The period between the betrothal and the marriage is generally short, and should on no account be unduly prolonged. But short or long, it must be profitably employed in reflecting seriously on the rights and duties of marriage. Many a girl wastes that precious period in an inane ecstasy of material preparation for the wedding. Her thoughts are of the trivial concerns of the *trousseau* and the details of the ceremony. A certain amount of that, I suppose, is inevitable, especially if there is no one else to attend to it. But far more necessary for the

bride-to-be are the Reflections I suggest. Now-a-days even to be the teacher of an infant class in a village school or to be a hospital nurse one has to go through a Training College. Even Home Nursing and First-Aid need study-circles and books and classes and exams. How on earth then do you expect to be a good wife and a good mother without adequate preparation, seeing that running a home of your own involves not only Home Nursing and First-Aid and Teaching and House keeping, but also quite a number of graver duties ?

So retire into seclusion for some quiet meditation on the solemn and sacred duties of the married state. These meditations are not for gaining any practical knowledge of any of the things you have to do in your home ; nor is it necessary that you should listen to lectures by those who can speak of marriage from experience. The experience you gained in your paternal home and your own mother-wit will give you all the practical information. What I am going to give you is something theoretical : natural ethics and moral information on the rights and wrongs, duties and offices and the ways and means for fulfilling your new job, first of a wife and then of a mother ; namely on Home, Husband and Sacrament. Reflect therefore and chew the cud upon the pearls of wisdom that drop from your uncle's pen.

The "primary" purpose of Marriage is the procreation and education of children. Don't misunderstand the word "primary" to mean the first thing that men and women intend when they marry. By primary is meant the object of the institution of Marriage, an object and a purpose prior to the intentions of those

who marry and quite independent of them. The words 'procreation and education' must be taken together, for the first entails the second and they are inseparable in the case of human beings. Among animals there is procreation but no education; therefore there is no marriage among them. Animals beget young who need no education. Education means the bringing out of what is already in a person. Unlike the animals whose innate powers are brought out by instinct, children have powers that must be "brought out" or educated by the parents. A duckling takes to water as soon as it is hatched without the need of any lessons in swimming; birdlings do not need a training school like our R. A. F. to make their first solo flight; nor do they need lessons in singing to give out their tuneful notes. Nature gives animals at birth all they need for their life-work; a skin, thick or thin according to their need, a permanent suit of wool or fur or feathers, and accessories like wings and claws, an instant and unerring recognition of their proper diet and a scent to track their prey. But it is far otherwise with the human offspring. A baby cannot survive, if the mother dies, unless someone else mothers it. It has to be nursed for a long time, then trained even to stand erect and walk, to speak, and above all to discern right from wrong and to think and reason. They are therefore made dependent on their parents. This training of human children is a most laborious task which needs love, patience and time, which no mother would undertake if she were not imbued with an instinctive love for her babe. The babe would not be easy to train if it had no instinctive love for its mother. This absolutely necessary and instinctive mutual love of parents for children and of children for parents, and the rights and

duties arising from them are the most cogent and irrefutable proof that nature intended human beings to be born and bred in a Family and a Home.

But the love of one's children must be active long before the children themselves come into being. How can a father and a mother love a child that is not yet born? Nature has arranged for it by leading men and women instinctively into matrimony through love of a mate. That love is stronger than even the instinct for self-preservation. Hence the "secondary" purpose of marriage is the achievement of love and union between the two sexes. This is "secondary" because it is only the means of attaining the primary end of marriage. Though secondary in reality, it is primary in point of time for those who marry. In marriage husband and wife primarily seek intimate union with each other, association and companionship in life, of which the procreation of children is the result and their education the sequel.

Thus Home and Family are the outcome of Marriage. Its primary and secondary purpose in time and in intention are based entirely and piecemeal on Love; the mutual love of a man and a maid, the mutual love of parents and children, the mutual love between brothers and sisters and kindred. In short the Home is the abode of Love, of all possible forms of human love. Love indeed plays the greatest part in the great drama of life, and is the one necessary and sufficient stimulus to human energy and action. In spite of the vilest deeds of men and the basest uses to which love is put to, nothing can change the essential truth that Love is the most godly and the most potent activity in the world.

The act of conjugal love that produces a human being is such that it is necessarily, and by its own nature, an indivisible act, proceeding from two individuals in one flesh. It is so intimately bound up with Love that it cannot possibly exist without bringing into action the chief characteristic of love, namely self-surrender. Such a self-surrender outside the state of marriage is a crime, forbidden by the sixth and ninth commandments of God, which therefore refer only to persons who are not bound in matrimony. In the married state all natural acts of love are good and pure, being the ordained means of procreating children.

I have stated these truths only to bring home to you the most glorious and consoling thought that in picking out a person to be your husband, you were only fulfilling the Purpose of Life. You were led to it, no doubt by the desire to make the man of your choice happy; and he was led to it by a desire to make you happy. But your mutual Love for each other has been pre-ordained by God to be the means of attaining the Perfect Happiness of Heaven for which you were created. You are thereby the instruments of bringing into being other persons destined for the same Happiness, and your co-operation is absolutely necessary for them to reach the end of their creation.

Consider, therefore, what wonderful and mysterious things Love, Courtship and Marriage are. You and he are each seeking your own good; but by seeking your own good, each of you are first of all contributing to the good of the other in this world, and gaining your eternal reward in the next; and secondly you are preparing the first steps of others to enjoy the same beatitude. What

a grand thing, that ! Can you imagine anything more sublime than to be the conscious instruments in God's hands to diffuse Happiness around you ? Thank God therefore for having led you in this way to co-operate with Him. God created the first man directly by Himself. The first woman He formed from the rib of the man ; but all subsequent men and women He desired to issue through the co-operation of a man and a woman in the work of creation. You have now responded to His invitation, and are going to found a Family and a Home in fulfilment of God's desire. The only thing that still remains for you to do is to co-operate with God in making that Family and Home a true training ground for the Eternal Home in Heaven.

HUSBAND

AFTER your wedding your life is going to be far different from what it was before. So far you only belonged to a Home. That home got on very well without you before you appeared on the scene, and will get on equally well when you are gone out of it. Your share in making that home was a very subordinate one. But henceforth a Home is going to belong to you, and your share in it is the chief share. It cannot possibly get on without you, for the creator of the Home is the wife. For a Home is not the house we live in; nor the house we were born in. Home consists of the persons bound to us in domestic love. To the husband Home is the presence of wife and children; to the children the Home is the range of the mother's influence; but to the wife Home is the sphere of her love. Therefore every girl that marries must realize that she can make or mar a Home. The husband can do many things; he can even break the wife's heart; he can reduce a home to misery; but he cannot make a Home nor unmake it. But a wife can ruin a home, ruin it for herself, for her husband and her children; for she is Home embodied.

Do you realize the terrible responsibility that awaits you? Hitherto any evil action of yours brought retribution on you and on you alone. Henceforth any evil done by you will involve others as well; others whom you love, others who are a result of your love, for whose happiness you are going to assume a respon-

sibility before God and man. Therefore remember that, if hitherto you had to be good and to do only good actions because you were answerable to God for your deeds, henceforth you have to continue to be good and to do only good actions, not only for your sake but for the sake of those whom you love. It is no easy task to be always good, for that needs self-sacrifice and self-effacement. But love is self-sacrifice and self-effacement; and if you love everything is easy. Nothing can come in the way of your success in the home if you really love.

Of this new Home you are going to found, you are the head, but not the sole head; only a joint head. Your Home is going to be the kingdom of which you are queen, but there is also a reigning king. There will therefore always exist that constitutional difficulty of adjusting the rights of the king and of the queen. The creation of a home contains a spice of adventure. The material details, the furniture and fittings and servants and all that, will occupy his time and yours for a while. But this material part is insignificant. What is significant is the formal part, the relations between him and you. Every Marriage has something of a hazard. Certain things that you did not expect will crop up, and unless you foresee and forestall them, there will be trouble. For, much as you love each other, you cannot hide from yourself the fact that the uninterrupted companionship that begins with marriage is bound to bring to the surface the defects of character that were unnoticed during your courtship and the halcyon days of the honeymoon. If this deeper revelation of each one's character should in any way lessen the mutual esteem, there will be a crisis that will jeopardize the

happiness of your Home. You will soon find out that somethings that you were very fond of you have now to forgo. The reserve which you so far observed towards him will soon give place to an unceremonious familiarity that will be disastrous. Little things will cause displeasure. You will doubtless ignore them at first, hoping for the better. But when they recur, you won't be able to help noticing them. When they are repeatedly noticed there will be irritation, which will increase in intensity because they are borne in silence, till one day when you are in one of your moods, it will get on your nerves and give rise to a display of temper or reproach or recrimination.

Do not suppose that this will be only on your side. He too will have a good deal to put up with from you, for I am sure you have the honesty to admit that you are no more perfect than he. You have chosen him in spite of his deficiencies; he too in his turn took you to wife in spite of your little failings. Seeing, therefore, that you are both aware that each has defects, though neither of you knew precisely their full extent, the only way to get on happily is to reflect now, before your marriage, on the probability that each will have occasion to be displeasing to the other in little things, and to decide now, how you are going to act when it happens. Do you want to have it out and establish your rights; or do you want a council of war and a compromise? Or do you expect him to change his character to suit yours? What if he does not want any of these? Would you not rather decide to put up with it, to take it in good part as much as possible, and suffer it uncomplainingly as a part of the trials of life, and of our probation in this

world and the means of deserving Heaven ?

If you decide to do so, you must also decide to exercise a vast amount of self-control and virtue. Self-control and virtue cannot be acquired in a short time, nor for worldly reasons. No man is honest merely because honesty is the best policy. The only truth in the proverb is, that those who are honest out of love and fear of God, find that after all it is also the best policy. Similarly you can't be good and virtuous merely because you want to be happy in your Home. You can gain self-control and virtue only when you convince yourself that it is your duty to God to be so. If you want to be good only to your husband, that is not virtue but a cloak of your malice and it won't last. If you want to be good, you must be good to everybody. Thus you see, what perhaps you did not suspect before, and what few people fully realize, that the only way to be happy in marriage is to love God above all things.

From these considerations you must conclude one very important thing, namely that what is most necessary is a strong and unflinching determination to be good at any cost : to be determined to be happy at all costs ; happy whatever may happen, happy whatever your husband may turn out to be, happy unconditionally, happy in such a way that your happiness will depend on you and on you alone. But, if you remember, I said in a previous letter that if you love your *fiance* truly you must seek your happiness in his. Therefore when you decide to be happy at all costs, you can only mean that you are determined to make him happy, happy in spite of him, whether he likes it or not ; that you will give him no chance of being unhappy. This

requires that you must begin to think of yourself only as his partner in life. When you write your name on the Register after the nuptial mass, that will be the last time you use your present name. After that you will bear his name. He and you will be Mr. and Mrs. X, and you must not think of yourself any more except as Mrs. X ; his other half. If you cannot even think of yourself without involving him in that thought, you cannot possibly speak or act without involving him, for speech is only the thought expressed in words, and deeds are only thoughts expressed in action. Therefore the whole of your life,—which is only the sum total of your thoughts and words and deeds,—must always bear some relation to him.

For instance, formerly you dressed to please yourself ; but henceforth it can't be so, for you have someone else to please also. You dressed to show off your person to the best advantage to all the world in general, and the pattern of your clothes was what the world in general thought fit, proper, becoming and fashionable. Now it is not so. Whether at home or out of doors, you should wear what he thinks is best for you. What do you care for the rest of the world, if he is pleased ? Similarly with your behaviour, what you do at home, the things that occupy your time, your conversation, your reading, your friends and your relatives ; in all that you have to fall in line with his views.

The only real difficulty in doing all this is when your views are different from his. Whose views must prevail ? Yours or his ? His undoubtedly in all things that are not matters of your conscience. In these he has no say. If he wants you to do or say or think anything

contrary to the dictates of your conscience, you may not accede, since One greater than he, One whom you and he must both obey, bids you do otherwise. When therefore it is a question of right and wrong or good and bad, you must stick to your conscience, because that is a duty you owe God. But even in this matter prudence requires that you should act gently, limit your opposition to what is of strict obligation, overlook his violation as much as possible, pretend not to notice it and forget it if possible, and he will respect you the more for it.

You will notice that I have so far ignored that it is likewise his duty to think of you in the same way, and that his duty to you is exactly parallel to your duty to him. If he fulfils his part perfectly, then your home will be a heaven on earth. But I am speaking all along on the supposition that you want to be happy and make your home happy whatever he may do, and in spite of him. I am not speaking of his duties, but of his rights which are your duties.

You might feel tempted to cry out that if such is the case, wifedom is absolute slavery. It is not. You are not a slave to your husband, because a slave is one who does his duty under the lash, unwillingly, for fear or gain. You are not doing that. You are indeed something similar, one who does things that are difficult to flesh and blood, not because you fear or hope for gain, but because you Love. That makes all the difference. To be a good wife is perhaps a sort of slavery, but a slavery of Love, a slavery that produces your happiness in this world and in the next, a slavery to which you bound yourself at the altar. For if you did not want to be a good wife and to fulfil all the duties of a wife, you

should not have married him at all. To be as perfect a wife as you can is the one and the only means of being happy in your home, and happy in the world to come. It is hard to be a good wife; harder still to be a happy wife; but it is impossible to be a happy wife without being a good wife.

XIX

THE SACRAMENT

OUR Lord Jesus Christ knew full well that it is no easy matter for husband and wife to lead in peace and happiness the perfect conjugal life that He demanded from His followers, without special aid from Him. He therefore decided to give this aid in abundance and made matrimony a Sacrament in His religion. Very few people outside the Catholic Church, if any, know exactly what a sacrament is. That is not very surprising, seeing that the bare idea of a Sacrament is something that had never before entered the heart of man to conceive. It is a thing quite unique, something peculiar to the religion of Christ and to it alone, an invention, so to say, of the Man-God, an institution that only a God can found. The Protestant reformers could not understand it and therefore rejected it and denied in their high wisdom that matrimony was a sacrament.

I am sure you learnt all about the sacraments in your school days, for I have a recollection that you won the prize for religious knowledge in the upper school. But I do not think that young people always understand the full import of the Catholic teaching on the sacraments. At any rate there are many who do not catch the point of Matrimony being a Sacrament. It would not be a bad idea if all Catholics who are about to marry be re-taught the doctrine of the sacramentality of Matrimony, for they would be in a better position to understand its significance and it would be a source of great consol-

ation and strength to them. Therefore, now that you are on the high road to matrimony, listen if you have ears to hear.

The whole economy of the religion of Christ is based on Christ Himself. Our religion is the worship of a divine person who became man to lead us to God. All the doctrines of our faith are concerned with the person of the God-Man: His becoming a man, His birth, passion and death, His resurrection and ascension, the redemption He wrought, the Church He founded to preserve and expound His teaching, and the principal heads of that teaching. That is the theology of Christianity. According to that theology, to be a Christian is to live a new life in union with Christ. This new life is not something added to our natural life, but our natural life itself elevated and transformed into a supernatural state of grace and participating in the life of Christ. We become, as it were, grafted to Him, to use the simile which He Himself used. "I am the vine: you are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me you can do nothing. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me." The branch bears fruit by virtue of the sap it draws from the trunk; so also we live and bear fruit by means of the grace of Christ.

The supernatural life of Jesus Christ in which we participate can increase in vigour and intensity. It increases by every free act performed with a supernatural end in a state of grace. As far as such an act proceeds from us, it is a vital act of our own: as far as it pro-

ceeds from Him, it is an act meritorious for Heaven. By such acts we increase the supernatural grace in us. But besides these acts, Our Lord instituted some visible signs of grace which produce the grace of which they are the signs. They produce grace not merely because of our good dispositions but by the very fact that we perform the rite as instituted by Him.

Such visible signs of grace are called Sacraments. There are seven of them, aptly corresponding to the seven states in which a soul might find itself. When a person is born, a visible Sign of Grace, called Baptism, is performed on him which transforms him, incorporates him into Christ, makes him a Christian and heir to the redemption of Christ. As this is done when the person is young or, being an adult has just become a believer, and is only the beginning of supernatural life, there is another Sign to fortify him to fight the good fight, and it is called Confirmation. Then there is a Sign of Grace analogous to the function that food and drink do for the body. That is Communion, or the reception of the Body and Blood of Christ in a mystical way, or the Eucharist. It feeds our souls. If ever a Christian has the misfortune to lose sanctifying grace by sin, another Sign of Grace called Penance or Confession remits the guilt of the sin to those who repent and confess. And when life's journey is about to be over, and we are face to face with death, there is another Sign of Grace, called Extreme Unction, which strengthens the Christian for his passage into Eternity.

These five sacraments form the spiritual life of all Christians. But there are two others, not for all but only for those who, like you and me, wish to enter a

definite state of Christian life, Priesthood or Matrimony. The Sacrament of Holy Orders makes the recipient a priest of Christ, with power to offer sacrifice, remit sin and administer the sacraments instituted by Christ. It gives him right and title to supernatural aid to fulfil his office worthily. Similarly the sacrament of Matrimony makes the recipients husband and wife in Christ, with power over each other to procreate children and grace to educate these as Christians, and gives them moreover a right and title to all the supernatural aids to lead their conjugal life in peace and happiness as befit Christians. These two sacraments consecrate persons who chose those two states of life. The sacrament is absolutely essential to enter those states. No man can be a priest except by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders : and no Christian, man or woman, may procreate children unless consecrated for it by the sacrament of Matrimony. As every priest receives by virtue of his ordination all the graces necessary to be faithful to his duties ; so also every husband and wife receives by virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony all the graces necessary for the due discharge of the duties of the married state.

But there is one remarkable difference between Matrimony and any of the other sacraments, a difference that cannot but be a source of joy and consolation to those who receive that sacrament. Only a bishop or a priest can administer the other Sacraments, except Baptism, which, on account of its necessity, the Church gives power to any one to administer in case of urgency. But no one can administer the sacrament of Matrimony save the man and the woman who marry. They are both the ministers and recipients of the sacrament.

The priest or bishop who "solemnizes" a marriage is only an official witness of the Church, whose duty is to see that the sacrament is licitly and validly administered by the parties themselves. A valid sacrament of matrimony can even exist without a priest or a bishop in an extraordinary case. The bride and the bridegroom answer the questions put to them by the officiating priest, and their answers are sacramental words, for in uttering them they perform a liturgical function, a ritual ceremony, and themselves administer the sacrament to each other.

Their own selves, body and soul, are the material of the sacrament. Their deliberate words are the formal part. And they in their own persons are the ministers as well as the recipients of the sacrament. Thus the whole of their being, body and soul, mind and person, are consecrated in the sacrament. There is nothing in the sacrament, save God's grace, that is not of them ; nothing of them that does not participate in the sacrament. The sacrament is performed and perfected, begun and finished, administered and received by them for their benefit. At that moment the power of the Most High overshadows them, fills them with His grace, sanctifies them, their union, their wedded life, their future children, then and for ever.

Is that not something for husband and wife to remember all the days of their life ? Can you imagine a more glorious or nobler way of entering the state of marriage than by a sacred, supernatural, sacramental and solemn sign of sanctifying grace ? It is Our Lord Himself who enacted that every valid marriage of His believers should be a sacrament, and that no marriage

of Christians can be valid unless it is a sacrament. When a man and woman bind themselves in conjugal love by the sacrament of Matrimony, they open to themselves a treasure-house of sacramental graces from which they draw supernatural help to fulfil their duties, faithfully, holily and perseveringly unto death. The sacrament gives them particular gifts and dispositions by elevating and perfecting their natural forces. They receive a right to actual assistance of God's grace when they need it for the fulfilment of their duties. Strength is given to them to preserve their fidelity inviolate, to bear with patience the ills of life. There are the trials of life, ill-health, troubles, faults and failings of each other, that must be borne with. The task of rearing children entails considerable sacrifices and self-denial. In some cases the burden is very heavy indeed. But the grace of God will be there, by virtue of the sacrament, to assist their weakness and make what is hard easy to bear. The grace of the sacrament will preserve mutual love and respect in spite of everything. No Catholic marriage can ever be a failure if husband and wife remain true to their faith; while if they fail in their faith they cannot easily be true to their marriage. Verily Matrimony "is a great mystery" said St. Paul to the Ephesians "But I speak in Christ and in the Church."

CONCLUSION

MY DEAR GIRLIE,

I AM afraid you are disappointed with my letters. At least you were very enthusiastic at the beginning but now, alas, you do not appear to be so at all. One proof of it is that though I asked you explicitly, by word of mouth after the second letter, to put any question you liked, and you said you had quite a lot to ask, you remained tongue-tied to the end, with never a question. It cannot be that your questions were dissolved by the clarity of my explanations. I know for sure that some of the things I said went counter to your cherished views. You are by temperament argumentative; not the girl, as I know from experience, to take contradiction lying down. My apprehension, therefore, is that you did not ask questions for fear of being convinced out of your views! Excuse me for saying so, but that is honestly what I think. You probably prefer to hold your views in spite of me, and think you may not succeed in holding your own against me in debate. Is that really so, or am I misjudging you? Didn't Pope or somebody say that 'A woman convinced against her will, is of the same opinion still' or something to that effect?

However, I am very sorry you did not ask any questions, for unfortunately I reckoned on being questioned. I hoped your questions would enable me to make things

clearer in the course of my letters. I was so eager to say in one letter all I had to say on a given point, that I was often unavoidably obscure. Besides, I stated many things without attempting to adduce proof, because as long as you agreed with me there was no need of proving a statement: and if you disagreed you were sure to say so bluntly and give me an opportunity of clearing up the matter. Now you have gone and messed it, so that I am nearly as disappointed with my letters as you are, or even more. There is no help for it now. I am even going to publish these letters, so that they may haply be of some use to others, not my nieces by blood, but my daughters in Christ, namely all Catholic girls. For their sake I am sorry you did not stop me occasionally and ask questions, for then I should have known what were the things that still needed clearing up.

There is one point which I must make clear at all events. You might be inclined to think that I am unduly severe and have put forward a standard for Love, Courtship and Marriage, too high for normal girls. I want to defend myself against this possible charge by pointing out that it is not I who am severe but the Catholic conception of Life. I was only trying to put forward the ideal that is implied in what Our Lord taught and what the Church teaches after Him. I took Sex, Love, Courtship and Marriage, as the God-given means for working out our salvation. That is the only true conception of life. But many people outside the pale of Christianity do not know it, and even Christians and unfortunately some Catholics, do not realize it. It is not surprising, therefore, if it is the non-Catholic and

the non-Christian views that are often set forth in books, in conversation, in stories and pictures and novels, and hold the field outside the Catholic Church. These incorrect views are more agreeable to flesh and blood, more satisfactory to natural sentiment, and form the Broad Way; and many there are that follow it. The Catholic standpoint is quite different and is in fact the Narrow Way. We have, therefore, to be very careful not to bring down the Catholic ideal to the lower level of the worldly ideal. The Catholic ideal of life I explained in my letter on the Purpose of Life. I then emphasized one statement that LIFE IS NOT AN ENJOYMENT BUT A RESPONSIBILITY. On that hangs the law and the prophets.

Shall I illustrate for you the difference between an enjoyment and a responsibility? Suppose your Mum had to be away from home for a day, and put you in charge of the house, and handed you the keys. That means she appoints you house-keeper for a day, to run the house, superintend the servants and look after your brothers and sisters as Mum uses to do. You are authorized to do anything and everything necessary for the purpose. You can dispose of anything in the larder, buy whatever is needed, make any expenditure or payment, and act generally as the mistress of the house. If in the course of your housekeeping you make some mistakes in good faith, it can't be helped, and Mum won't blame you. But if instead you declare high holiday for the servants and proceed to empty the larder, call together your friends and say to them: "Let us eat, drink and make merry, for Mum is away and I have the keys," your Mum when she returns will take you to task and

consider you a silly dolt who did not see that she did not put you in charge of the house for your enjoyment, but paid you the compliment of entrusting you with a responsibility.

That is what God does with you and me. We are entrusted with a responsibility when we come into this world. All of us receive at birth some powers. First of all, we are given the powers and faculties given to all men ; human nature, a body and a soul, an intellect and will, and the senses. Secondly, each of us receives as gifts of God, a race and country and parentage, a temperament, personal appearance and sex, etc. which form the distinct individuality of each one of us—no two being ever quite the same. We cannot well grumble about the distribution of God's gifts, for the kind and number of the individual gifts make not the slightest difference to the final issue of our life, which depends entirely on the use we make of the gifts we received, few or many, and not on the amount of the usufruct. Our Lord once showed this truth in a parable in which a man who received five talents to trade with, produced another five and received the same reward as another who received only two talents and produced two. Another man who received only one talent was punished, not because he did not produce five or two, but because he did not produce one, which if he had done, he would, have received exactly the same reward as the other two. For one out of one is the same proportion, in good arithmetic, as five out of five or two out of two. It is not the absolute number that matters, but the relative number. In the race for Heaven all men and women start at scratch. The handicaps are only apparent.

All of us have the same goal, and that goal is Heaven. We are not created to go to heaven *or* to hell. All are created for heaven and for heaven alone. But some do not get there, through their own fault and miss the goal. Missing the goal is hell. The attainment of the goal depends on our free will, and it is in the use of free will that men really differ. To achieve the purpose of life, we must use our free will according to the ordinance of God, made known to us by our reason, by God's revelation and ultimately by our conscience. If we act contrary to our conscience, we fail in the purpose for which we are in this world, and if we die unrepentant in that state, we lose our soul. When we act according to our conscience, we advance in the path to heaven, strengthen our character and become better able to act according to conscience next time, and eventually save our souls. That is what is meant by saying that God created man to know, love and serve Him in this world and thereby to gain heaven. Knowing and loving God are not difficult, but serving God is not quite so easy. To serve God does not mean rendering Him any service. He is not in need of our service. To serve God means accepting our dependence on Him, not for His benefit, but for ours. We are not absolute sovereigns over ourselves, but constitutional sovereigns, subject to a constitution laid down by God. That constitution is the Law of conscience. If we act according to our conscience, we serve God and save our souls.

Our human faculties we cannot help using, when faced with the object proper to a faculty. The mind cannot help thinking or accepting a truth when it is evident. The will cannot help desiring what seems to

be good. But in all the things on the face of the earth, there is both good and evil. Everything is good in some respects and in some circumstances, but bad in other respects and other circumstances. Therefore there is a right use and a wrong use of things, or rather, there is a Use and an Abuse. Sex, Love, Courtship and Marriage are given us for a definite purpose. That purpose is brought home to us gradually and instinctively as we grow, and we learn at the same time their use and abuse. Our natural instincts stir our faculties to action, and the great thing in life is to exercise our faculties in the right way according to reason and conscience. In other words LIFE IS NOT AN ENJOYMENT BUT A RESPONSIBILITY. — GOD BLESS YOU.

With best love,

Yours ever,

S. G. PERERA, S.J.



A Priest's
Letters to a Niece

on
Love, Courtship
and
Marriage

by
S.G. Perera, S.J.

