

The Young Woman and Her Problem

By Pearl Richmond Hamilton

HAPPY WOMEN

Good, hard thought in any subject produces greater power of thought on every subject. One who does not think deeply does not grow mentally.

Proper food, exercise, rest, bathing—all habits of life that give tone to the general health—help the mind also, and when the mind is in a healthful, cheerful state, the bodily conditions are better than when worry, grief, anger or jealousy are lowering the mental tone with their depressing influences.

One time my mother was ill. An acquaintance, full of cheerful stories, came to see her, and when she left my mother was greatly improved. The next day a woman with a face of gloom visited her and told her of the people she had known who had the same malady and everyone of them died. For several days after this visit my mother was much worse.

A young girl once said: "It doesn't pay for me to get angry, for I always have a dreadful cold as a consequence. A girl who worries is taking poison. She should say to herself, 'I will succeed,' instead of saying, 'I hope I shall not fail.'" She should look for goodness, health, cheer, and prosperity and keep her thoughts as much as possible from wickedness, sickness, gloom, and degradation. There are great pleasures all about one if one only has the mental eyes with which to see them. Recreation is needed by every girl—but the kind is that which tends to produce "a strong mind in a strong body." Dissipation is not recreation.

There never was a time so full of opportunities for women. New fields are continually opening up to women and it is the girl who develops mental, moral and physical power who will have a chance to take her place in the honorable army of workers.

Every girl should try to master thoroughly the work in which she is engaged. Her knowledge of her work should be deep, broad, and very accurate in detail. I have watched girls climb to the top in just this way. About eight years ago a young woman of about thirty came to me deeply discouraged because she had lost her position. She was getting a salary of eighty dollars a month. She said: "You know I am past the age to begin a new line of work. There is no future for me now." I urged her to cheer up. Her dismissal might be an opportunity—the greatest opportunity of her life. For two years she struggled along on little. Then she had a chance to go in a farm machinery firm as a stenographer. That girl studied machinery until she became very valuable in the firm. They sent her to the head office. Promotion after promotion followed until this winter she was given a position at a salary of nearly three thousand dollars a year. It is such experiences as this that give me such great faith in business girls.

A short time ago I found a table showing the possibilities of girls in different kinds of work. A position as bookkeeper affords training in the knowledge of financial transactions, business system, quickness and correctness in calculating until a bookkeeper can become an expert accountant, public auditor, broker or investment banker. A cashier develops skill in handling currency, knowledge of human nature, skill on the adding machine, all of which may lead to a position of bank assistant, head of credit department or an adding machine agent.

A children's nurse may become efficient in treating child ailments, she can increase her acquaintanceship among families, her training in amusing children and knowledge of child nature may lead her to the occupation of trained nurse, playground supervisor, director of children's entertainments or caterer for children's parties. A cook who learns to be skillful in food preparation and the knowledge of food cost may become a cateress or a head of institution kitchens. A dressmaker has an opportunity of learning about textiles, design, skill in buying and business acquaintance—all of which may lead to the occupation of professional designer, textile demonstrator, head of fashion shop, or professional shopper. The position of domestic af-

fords training in skill in household management, skill in buying food, textiles and other supplies leading to the occupations of matron of institution, hotel housekeeper, manager of private hotel or linen manufacturer's agent. The stenographer who tries to attain a working knowledge of her employer's business, who forms the habit of concentration, who cultivates acquaintanceship with business methods and becomes skilled in shorthand and as a typist has a training leading to the following occupations: head of stenographic bureau, head of business similar to employer's, head attorney, notary public, court stenographer, private secretary or typewriter demonstrator and many others, for if these places are not open to women now they will be.

The clerk, by learning the nature and history of the goods she sells and by close study of human nature, can become the buying or selling agent of that kind of goods. The clerk in the book department may become a librarian.

Then there is the teacher, she who learns the habit of systematic planning, who learns of historical, geographical and literary facts, who cultivates the habit of careful judgment, accumulates a knowledge of human nature with a special knowledge of children, may become a journalist, a lecturer, a writer of text books, or the head of extension schools maintained by large industries. These are only a few possibilities for the business girl. I simply mention them to encourage the business girl who is ambitious. The life of a typical, high-minded girl worker is an enviable one. She cultivates memory, habits of accurate observation, concentration of attention, reasoning power, judgment until her mind is so full of useful ideas that there is no room for gloom. "Happiness is not a circumstance nor a set of circumstances; it's only a light and we may keep it burning if we will. We deliberately make nearly all our unhappiness with our own unreasonable discontent, and nothing will ever make us happy, except the spirit within. The only way to win happiness is to give it. The more we give the more we have."

A CLUB OF GIRLS

It was my pleasure to visit a very interesting club of girls during the past month in the Jewish Synagogue. This club of girls is known as the Free Loan Society. They meet once a week to make loans and receive the money loaned. They have helped their people by making loans for buying groceries, paying rent or other bills through periods of reverses and they often help their friends by starting them in business. They have a systematic program governing the return of the loans. After the business hour the girls enjoy a pleasant social hour, an interesting part of which is spent in musical contributions by their own members. The club is a large one and is rapidly increasing in size. One recalls to mind that wonderful organization of Jewish girls in London—an organization of six hundred girls, the leader of which keeps in touch with every member. She never allows a girl to leave for another city without sending word to their people in that city—and when the girl reaches her destination, good friends are there to meet her and find her a position. While talking with one of these girls who had belonged to this London club, I was greatly impressed with the far-reaching results of such service to girls.

SCALES THAT DO NOT BALANCE

Activity means growth and development. Inactivity means decay and death. The girl who has no useful work to do will sometimes express herself in wrongdoing, for restlessness must be satisfied. I must say that a feeling of indignation rises in me when I hear so much of the mistakes of wage-earning girls, but very little—in fact, nothing regarding society girls. The wage-earning girl comes in for attacks of criticism always. As a matter of fact the average working girl is too busy to get into mischief.

Sometimes, because of fear of losing her position, she is caught in the trap

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set by a beastly manager, by that I mean one of those sleek fellows who has a habit of pawing—so I think the word beastly is the only adjective that will express my meaning. I am sure the average manager is a gentleman in every sense of the word but the other kind—the beastly ones—do exist and when a girl is unfortunate enough to be under this type, she lives a life of torture between fear of losing her position and anxiety regarding her own safety. I know girls who are helping support their parents in the Old Country, who feel they must endure much for the sake of holding positions, that they may keep their parents from the workhouse. Then again there are men and women who hang around watching for times when girls are dismissed from places of work or when they are down to the last cent. These men and women are always ready to offer them flattering positions where work is easy and wages high (?). I often wonder why good men and women do not make special effort at these times to come to a girl's rescue. For example—do christian institutions keep in mind the times when, after a business rush, scores of girls are dismissed? Do they realize that beasts of prey regard these times their harvest season?

"She seemed so nice, and I was with the crowd of girls who were let out after the Christmas rush, so I went to her home to work. Another girl who worked there told me it was a nice place, so I thought it would be all right," a girl explained to me last year. She had been

in a house that was raided. Poor girl—the other kind of woman was not there to look after the girls who were let out. But the trapper is always on hand.

We have seen girls fight through and come out courageously successful. We have seen others break down under the awful strain. We have learned valuable lessons from their self-sacrifice and their brave surmounting of difficulties.

The girls who seek work are the highest type of womanhood. They are not the kind who smoke cigarettes around a game of bridge in the home or at a table in a fashionable tea room. I wonder if these timekillers ever wonder what passes through the minds of waitresses who serve these girls and women? They have described their feeling of humiliation to me. Others have told me how the immodest dress of society girls and women at balls has made them ashamed of their sex. When one considers the example the wage-earning girl sees in many women and girls who do not need to work and who feel above the working girl, one marvels at the good common sense and splendid character of the average business girl. We sometimes see women pose as reformers in a sort of patronizing manner—in the "It's so good of me to notice you" style. They reach out with a ten-foot pole and bring them within sight of their commanding personality. I am often amused at the remarks of girls concerning this type of charity. As a matter of fact, girls do not need reforming—they need love—the love that pours from one soul to another.