

# A Woman's Problem

How to Feel Well During Middle Life Told by Three Women Who Learned from Experience.

The Change of Life is a most critical period of a woman's existence, and neglect of health at this time invites disease and pain. Women everywhere should remember that there is no other remedy known to medicine that will so successfully carry women through this trying period as Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, made from native roots and herbs. Read these letters:

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## L—The Guardian of the Accolade

By O. HENRY

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OF the least important of the forces of the Weymouth bank was Uncle Bushrod. Sixty years had Uncle Bushrod given of faithful service to the house of Weymouth as chattel, servant and friend.

Of the color of the mahogany bank furniture was Uncle Bushrod—thus dark was he externally; white as the unlined pages of the bank ledgers was his soul. Enthusiastically pleasing to Uncle Bushrod would the comparison have been, for to him the only institution in existence worth considering was the Weymouth bank, of which he was something between porter and generalissimo in charge.

Weymouth lay, dreary and unbragous, among the low foothills along the brow of a southern valley. Three banks there were in Weymouthville. Two were hopelessly misnamed, lacking the prestige and the air of a Weymouth to give them the third was the bank managed by the Weymouths—Uncle Bushrod.

In the old Weymouth homestead—the red brick, white porticoed mansion, the first to your right as you crossed Elder creek coming into the town—lived Mr. Robert Weymouth, the president of the bank; his widowed daughter, Mrs. Vesey, called "Miss Letty" by every one, and her two children, Nan and Guy. There also, in a cottage on the grounds, resided Uncle Bushrod and Aunt Matilda, his wife. Mr. William Weymouth, the cashier of the bank, lived in a modern, fine house on the principal avenue.

Mr. Robert was a large, stout man, sixty-two years of age, with a smooth, plump face, long iron gray hair and very blue eyes. He was high tempered, kind and generous, with a youthful smile and a formidable, stern voice that did not get along with it.

Uncle Bushrod was the bank's trusted porter, messenger, valet and guard. He carried a key to the vault, just as Mr. Robert and Mr. William did. Sometimes there was ten, fifteen or twenty thousand dollars in sacked silver stacked on the vault floor. He was a Weymouth in heart, honesty and pride.

Of late Uncle Bushrod had not been without worry. For nearly a year Mr. Robert had been known to indulge in too much drink. Not enough, understood, to become tipsy, but the habit was setting a hold upon him, and every one was beginning to notice it. Half a dozen times a day would he leave the bank and step around to the Merchants and Planters' hotel to take a drink. Mr. Robert's unusual keenness and business capacity he was a little impaired. Mr. William, a Weymouth, but not so rich in experience, tried to dam the inevitable backflow of the tide, but he was unable to. The deposits in the Weymouth bank dropped from six figures to five. Past due paper began to accumulate, owing to the fact that Mr. Robert was unable to address Mr. Robert on the subject of temperance. Many of his friends said that the cause of it had been the death of his wife some two years before. Others hesitated on account of Mr. Robert's quick temper, which was extremely apt to resent personal interference of such a nature.

Miss Letty and the children noticed the change and grieved about it. Uncle Bushrod also worried, but he was one of those who would not have dared to remonstrate, though he and Mrs. Robert had been raised almost as companions. But there was a heavier shadow coming to Uncle Bushrod than that which the bank president's troubles and juries.

Mr. Robert had a passion for fishing, which he usually indulged whenever the season and business permitted. One day, when reports had been coming in relating to the base and petty behavior of the bank president, making a two or three days' visit to the lake. He was going down, he said, to meet late with Judge Archibald, an old friend.

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## Now, Uncle Bushrod was treasure

of the bank. Every association he belonged to made him treasurer with out hesitation. He stood A-1 in colored circles. He was understood among them to be Mr. Bushrod Weymouth of the Weymouth bank.

The night following the day on which Mr. Robert mentioned his intended fishing trip the old man woke up and rose from his bed at 12 o'clock, declaring he must go down to the bank and fetch the passbook of the bank and the Daughters, which he had forgotten to bring home. The bookkeeper had balanced it for him that day, put the bal-

anced in a rough suit of gray as if for traveling. He glanced with frowning insistence at the big office clock above the burning gas jet and then looked longingly at the bank—his property, his life, his all.

Now he caught up his burden again and moved promptly and softly out of the bank by the way he had come, locking the front door behind him. For a minute or longer Uncle Bushrod was as stone in his tracks. Had that midnight rattle of safes and vaults been any other on earth than the man he was the old retainer would have rushed upon him and struck to save the Weymouth property. But now the watchful soul was tortured by the poignant dread of something worse than mere robbery. He was seized by an accusing terror that said the Weymouth name and the Weymouth honor were about to be lost. Marce Robert was robbing the bank! What else could it mean? The hour of the night, the stealthy visit to the vault, the satchel brought forth full and with expedition and silence, the provision of the night, his sedulous reading of the clock and noiseless departure—what else could it mean?

And then to the turmoil of Uncle Bushrod's thoughts came the corroborating recollection of preceding events—Mr. Robert's increasing intemperance and consequent many moods of royal high spirits and stern temper; the casual talk he had heard in the bank of the decrease in business and difficulty in collecting loans. What else could it all mean but that Robert Weymouth was an absconder—was about to fly with the bank's remaining funds, leaving Mr. William, Miss Letty, little Nan, Guy and Uncle Bushrod to bear the disgrace?

During one minute Uncle Bushrod considered these things, and then he awoke to sudden determination and action.

"Lawd, Lawd!" he moaned aloud as he hobbled hastily toward the side door. "Such comfort after all these years of big doins and fine doins. Scandalous sights upon de yearth when de Weymouth family done turn out robbin and bezzelin! Time for Uncle Bushrod to clean out somebody's chicken coop and eben matters up. Oh, Lawd! Marce Robert, you ain't gwine do dat. N' Lawd Letty! You ain't gwine go proud and tallen perturbation Weymouth, all de time! I'm gwine to stop you if I can. 'Spec you shoot Mr. Nigger's head off de fool wid you, but I'm gwine stop you!"

Uncle Bushrod, aided by his hickory stick, impeded by his rheumatism, hurried down the street toward the railroad station, where the train was waiting for him. He had expected and feared, he saw there Mr. Robert standing in the shadow of the building waiting for the train. He held the satchel in his hand.

When Uncle Bushrod came within twenty yards of the bank president, standing like a huge, gray specter in the station wall, sudden perturbation seized him. The rashness and audacity of the thing he had come to do struck him fully. He would have been happy to do it in a more dignified manner, but the possibilities of the famous Weymouth wrath. But again he saw, in his fancy, the white, reproachful face of Miss Letty and the distressed looks of Nan and Guy should he fail in his duty and they question him as to his stewardship.

Braced by the thought, he approached in a straight line, clearing his throat and pounding with his stick so that he might be easily recognized. Thus he might avoid the likely danger of too suddenly surprising the sometimes fastidious Mr. Robert.

"Is that you, Bushrod?" called the clamant, clear voice of the gray ghost. "Yes, sah, Marce Robert."

"What the devil are you doing out at this time of night?"

For the first time in his life Uncle Bushrod told Marce Robert a falsehood. He could not repress it. He would have to circumlocute a little. His nerve was not equal to a direct attack.

"I done been down, sah, to see ole Aunt Maria Patterson. She taken sick in de night, and I kyared her a bottle of M'Lin's medicine. Yes, sah."

"Humph!" said Robert. "You better get home out of de night air. It's damp. You'll hardly be worth killing tomorrow on account of your rheumatism. Think it'll be a clear day, Bushrod?"

"I low it will, sah. De sun not red yet, but it gwine to be clear."

Mr. Robert lit a cigar in the shadow, and the smoke looked like his gray ghost expanding and escaping into the night. Somewhere Uncle Bushrod could barely force his reluctant tongue to the dreadful subject. He stood, awkward, shambling, with his feet on the gravel and fumbling with his stick. But then, afar off—three miles away, at the Jimtown switch—he heard the faint whistle of the coming train. The one that was to transport the Weymouth name into the regions of dishonor and shame. All fear left him. He took off his hat and faced the chief of the clan he served, the great, royal, kind, lofty, terrible Weymouth. He bearded him there at the brink of the awful thing that was about to happen.

"Marce Robert!" he began, his voice quavering a little with the stress of his feelings. "You member de day dey all rode de tinnament at Oak Lawn—de day, sah, dat you win de ridin' and you crown Miss Lucy de queen?"

"Tournament?" said Mr. Robert, taking his cigar from his mouth. "Yes, I remember very well the—but what the deuce are you talking about tournaments here at midnight? Go 'long home, Bushrod. I believe you're sleep walking."

"Miss Lucy tetch you on de shoud-

der," continued the old man, never heeding, "wid a sword and say: 'I mek you a knight, sah Robert. Rise up, pure and fearless and without reproach.' Dat what Miss Lucy say. Dat's been a long time ago, but me nor you ain't forgot it. And den dar's another time we ain't forgot de time when Miss Lucy lay on her 'lar bed. She sent for Uncle Bushrod, and she say: 'Uncle Bushrod, when I die I want you to take good care of Mr. Robert. Seem like—so Miss Lucy say, 'he listen to you mo' dan to anybody else. He apt to be mighty fractious sometimes, and maybe he cuss you when you try to 'wade him, but he need somebody who understand him to be round wid him. He am like a little child sometimes—so Miss Lucy say, wid her eyes shinin' in her po' thin face—but he always been—den was her words—my knight, pure and fearless and without reproach.'"

Mr. Robert began to mask, as was his habit, a tendency to soft-heartedness with a spurious anger.

"You—you old windbag!" he growled through a cloud of swirling cigar smoke. "I believe you are crazy. Told you to go home, Bushrod. Miss Lucy said dat, did she? Well, we haven't kept de escutcheon very clear the years ago last week, wasn't it, Bushrod, when she died? Confound it! Are you going to stand there all night gabbling like a coffee colored gander?"

The train whistled again. Now it was at the water tank, a mile away.

"Marce Robert," said Uncle Bushrod, laying his hand on the satchel that the banker held, "for Gawd's sake don't take dis wid you. I know what's in it. I knows where you got it in de bank. Don't kyar it wid you. Dey's big trouble in dat value for Miss Lucy and Miss Lucy's child's chills. Hit's bound to destroy de name of Weymouth and bow down dem dat own it wid shame and tribulation. Marce Robert, you can kill dis ole nigger ef you will, but don't take away dis 'er valise. If I ever crosses over de Jordan what I gwine to say to Miss Lucy when she ax me, 'Uncle Bushrod, wharfo' did you take good care of Mr. Robert?'"

Robert Weymouth threw away his cigar and shook free one arm with that peculiar gesture that always preceded his outbursts of irascibility. Uncle Bushrod bowed his head to the expected storm, but he did not flinch. If the house of Weymouth was to fall he would fall with it. The banker spoke, and Uncle Bushrod blinked with surprise. The storm was over, but it was suppressed to the quietness of a summer breeze.

"Bushrod," said Mr. Robert in a lower voice than he usually employed, "you have overstepped all bounds. You have presumed upon the leniency with which you have been treated to meddle unpardonably. So you know what is in this satchel? Your long and faithful service is some excuse, but—go home, Bushrod—not another word!"

But Bushrod grasped the satchel with a firmer hand. The headlight of the train was now lightening the shadow about the station. The roar was increasing, and folks were stirring about at the track side.

"Marce Robert, gimme dis 'er valise. I got a right, sah, to talk to you on de way. I slaved for you and 'tended to you from a child up. I went through de war 'er body servant tell we whipped de Yankees and sent 'em back to de north. I was at yo' wedding, and I was n'r away when yo' Miss Letty was bawn. And Miss Letty's chillun,

dey watches today for Uncle Bushrod when he come home ever evenin'. I been a Weymouth, all 'cept in color and entitlements. Both of us is old, Marce Robert. 'Tain't goin' to be long tell we gwine to see Miss Lucy and has to give an account of our doins. De ole nigger man won't be 'spected to say much mo' dan he done. He could 'ny de family dat owed him. But de Weymouths, dey must say dey been 'livin' pure and fearless and without reproach. Gimme dis valise, Marce Robert. I'm gwine to hab it. I'm gwine to take it back to de bank and lock it up in de vault. I'm gwine to do Miss Lucy's bidding. Turn 'er loose, Marce Robert."

The train was standing at the station. Some men were pushing trucks along the side. Two or three almsy passengers got off and wandered away into the night. The conductor stepped to the gravel, swung his lantern and called: "Rolla, Frank!" at some one

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"They say that when an ostrich is surprised he hides his head in the sand!"

"I wish to thader he'd everlastingly hide his tail there," observed the men who had just settled a heavy millinery bill.

invisible. The conductor clanged the brakes himself, the bell drawled: "All aboard!"

Mr. Robert released his hold on the satchel. Uncle Bushrod hugged it to his breast with both arms, as a lover clasp his first beloved.

"Take it back with you, Bushrod," said Mr. Robert, thrusting his hands into his pockets. "And let the subject drop—now mind! You're said enough. I'm going to take this train. Tell Mr. William I will be back on Saturday. Good night!"

The banker climbed the steps of the moving train and disappeared in a coach. Uncle Bushrod stood motionless, still embracing the precious satchel. His eyes were closed and he would have been moving in thanks to the Master above for the salvation of the Weymouth honor. He knew Mr. Robert would return without the satchel. The Weymouths never lied. Now now, thank the Lord, could it be said that they embezzled the money in bank?

Then awake to the necessity for further guardianship of Weymouth trust funds, the old man started for the bank with the redeemed satchel.

Three hours from Weymouthville, in the gray dawn, Mr. Robert alighted from the train at a lonely flag station. Dimly he could see the figure of a man waiting on the platform, and the shape of a spring wagon, team and driver. Half a dozen leathery bamboo fishing poles projected from the wagon's rear. "You're here, Bob," said Judge Archibald, Mr. Robert's old friend and schoolmate. "It's going to be a royal day for fishing. I thought you said—why, didn't you bring along the stuff?"

The president of the Weymouth bank took off his hat and rumbled his gray locks.

"Well, Ben, to tell you the truth, there's an infernally presumptuous old nigger belonging in my family that broke up the arrangement. He came down to the depot and vetoed the whole proceeding. He means all right, and—well, I reckon he is right. Somehow he had found out what I had along, though I hid it in the bank vault and meeked it out at midnight. I reckon he has noticed that I've been indulging a little more than a gentleman should, and he laid for me with some reaching arguments."

"I'm going to quit drinking," Mr. Robert concluded. "I've come to the conclusion that a man can't keep it up and be quite what he'd like to be—pure and fearless and without reproach—that's the way old Bushrod quoted it."

"Well, I'll have to admit," said the judge thoughtfully as they climbed into the wagon, "that the old darkey's argument can't conscientiously be overruled."

"Still," said Mr. Robert, with a ghost of a sigh, "there was two quarts of the finest old silk velvet Bourbon in that satchel you ever wet your lips with."

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