

Can Middle-Aged Women be Happy

By Mrs. Nestor Noel

When we think of middle-aged women, and by that I mean women from about forty to fifty-five, we invariably think of them as being semi-invalids. If, as a wise Frenchman has said: "Woman is always ailing," how much more true is this of her between the two ages I have mentioned. And a sick woman is seldom a happy woman. Of course, there is a kind of resigned placidity sometimes; but this is far removed from the real, exuberant happiness of one who is well and is overflowing with the mere joy of living. Therefore, if a person is to be naturally happy, that person must, first of all, be well.

To a great extent, we can most of us be well, if we choose to be; for it is a known fact that even bodily sickness is mostly of the mind and can be controlled by will power. Take, for example, a woman of forty-four who imagines that she must be ill during the inevitable "change of life." She has headaches, dizziness, strange cravings and indefinable pains. She is irritable and out of sorts all day, and, following old traditions, she is firmly convinced that this state of things must last for the usual amount of years. She does nothing to prevent it, except take a few worthless medicines. Now, suppose this woman is a rather hard-working woman and suddenly she comes into a fortune, where are the aches and pains in her new excitement? Temporarily, they are in abeyance, at least whilst she has other interests, and when these get monotonous, she becomes sick again. At least, she thinks she is sick, and that amounts to the same thing.

Excitement is not necessary to keep a woman happy. Indeed, it often has a contrary effect, by reason of the reaction which inevitably follows. To be happy is to be well, and every person who comes into this world has a right to happiness. So what can a woman do during this so-called trying period of her life?

First.—She must persuade herself that she is well. It is not so difficult to attain perfect health as some people seem to imagine. With regard to her body she must, of course, do away with corsets, high heels, heavy-hanging garments and all those idiotic fashions of society which make so many women look like dressed-up dolls and puppets in a show. Clothes were never meant to squeeze and press on all sides until the beauty of the "human form divine" is entirely lost and made hideous and unnatural. There is no beauty in anything forced and unnatural. The lovely shape of the human body in the old statue of Venus is rounded and perfect. Proper breathing, digestion and free movements are hampered by improper clothing. I suppose all this has been said before and will be said again, and women will pay little heed! But if only a few could be persuaded to try to dress hygienically, those few would gain health and happiness, and each individual woman might persuade another woman to follow her example and so on until a great many had done so.

Second.—To gain health a woman of forty and thereabouts must not eat as much as she was formerly accustomed to do. Why do most of us eat? Is it because we are really hungry? Very seldom so. We eat because it is dinner time or supper time—because others are doing so at the same time and so—just for custom's sake—we sit down to a heavy meal we did not want! Because we have healthy children who are growing all the time, and a husband who works hard all day in the fields or elsewhere, we are not bound to eat when they do, if nature does not demand food at that hour. It seems unsocial to sit down with the others—it is harder still to sit down with them and not eat! It may be remarked at first, and a woman would be called disagreeable; but this would pass off in time. A woman must have a strong will and not eat for custom's sake if she be not hungry. While she is ministering to others, and making light, joyous conversation, the fact as to whether she be eating or not eating will soon be overlooked.

Third.—Lastly, if a woman from forty to fifty-five wants to be well and happy, she must be interested in something

outside herself. She absolutely must have a hobby, even if that hobby be business or the interesting task of educating her own children, if she can do so to advantage. In these days of free schools so many parents shift their responsibilities on to the poor teacher's shoulders. Many women, if they would, could educate their own children. I think home influence is always best. Some nice-mannered children come back to us so rough and common after they have mixed with other children at school. This is not the teacher's fault. She cannot be everywhere, especially at recess, and it is at this time that the little ones pick up such dreadful words—slang and even worse!

I strongly urge every middle-aged woman, if she can do so, to educate her own children, especially if they be girls. She cannot imagine how interesting it is until she has tried it.

A hygienic, interesting life has no place for illness, above all for those little ailments which have no name and make us feel "we know not how—but never quite well."

Will to be quite well. Women have no idea how far the will can go towards giving them perfect health and happiness until they have proved it:

"For if she will, she will, you may depend on't;
And if she won't, she won't; so there's an end on't."

Do not consign your old kid gloves to the waste basket. Save them, as they can be fashioned into a variety of pretty and useful articles; and, if you have not enough of your own or lack particular colors, you can beg of your friends. The long wrists of mousquetaire gloves can be fashioned into dainty and serviceable bags for opera-glasses, lined with silk or velvet. These need not be all of one color, but may be of two shades or of different colors. Finish about the top with a thick cord, and draw up with a narrow ribbon, or make in square shape with flap. On the outside you may put your initials, monogram, or any other decoration to suit your fancy, either in silk or bead embroidery. Party-bags are made of smaller pieces, overseamed together on the wrong side. These bags are made large enough to hold opera-glasses, fan, handkerchief, gloves, etc. A little pocket is often put in the lining for a tiny powder-puff. Exquisite sofa cushions are made of this kid patchwork, the favorite designs being diamonds or hexagons. The cutting must be evenly done, and the sewing the perfection of neatness. To do this you will require a regular glove-needle. Ties, head-rests, and corners for the arms of chairs can be made of cast-off gloves, and are especially appropriate gifts for gentlemen. The kid must be cleaned with benzine or some other detergent.

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