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THINGS WE
MUST TELL OUR
GIRLS

Things We Must Tell Our Girls

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THINGS WE MUST TELL OUR GIRLS

I WRITE this little book for two reasons, and I would ask any mother who is about to read it to notice these few words of explanation and apology lest it should seem as if I laid down the law too much, or advised impossible and unnecessary things.

For many years my life's work has brought me into close contact with numbers of girls of all classes. In town and country, in mills and factories, in offices and workshops, for Girls' Clubs and Friendly Societies, for Young Women's Christian Associations, in churches and chapels, in prisons and reformatories, I have lectured to all sorts of girls, talked to them privately, learned their histories, and grown to know their needs, their sorrows, and the causes of their mistakes.

Besides this, I have had the privilege of knowing great numbers of mothers under all sorts of circumstances, their difficulties, their good intentions, and their hard tasks.

It is to the mothers I write the following words—to those who have listened with interest to lectures, who have asked me questions, have written to me about their difficulties, and have often wished for a little book about things to *say* as well as *do*. Thousands of mothers *do* their best, but never think of telling; and some of the most pitiful tragedies in girls' lives come from lack of the few plain words at different stages of their growth, which the mother would have spoken

if only someone had reminded her, and suggested what to say.

I suppose we mothers feel that, in the duties and responsibilities which come to us in the bringing up of children, most things want *doing* more than *telling*. It often seems as if there were very little good in talking; the only thing is to do, and do again, and keep on doing, believing that in the end we must see the good results.

For example, we want the children to grow up to be clean and to like soap and water. They are not born this way, and, if left to themselves, they would never trouble about such things as the daily wash, or the "rub down" when they have been extra warm, or the cleaning of hands before meals, or the thorough scrubbing of teeth last thing at night.

We know that such bodily duties have much to do with keeping healthy and strong, and so we begin by doing for the children ourselves, and we keep on day after day, gradually accustoming them to it all, until they take to such ways for themselves, and go on afterwards as a matter of course.

In the same way, as "use is second nature," we let the children see us constantly *do* the right thing about fresh air and sunlight. We open the windows—always a little, and at times wider, to flush out the rooms and air the house; we draw up the blind, spread out clothes and bedding daily to be freshened and purified by light and wind; and in numbers of such little ways we train our boys and girls, by example and practice, to love those two wonderful gifts from God which are the best health-medicines in all the world. "By and by," we say to ourselves, "they will copy our ways, and do such things for themselves."

Or, to take one more example, we want to bring them up to be regular about the daily duties of the body which keep it clean inside. Bowels need relief once a day, kidneys more often, especially last thing at night and first thing in the morning. The children cannot possibly know about these matters for themselves; they are naturally lazy, and will try to put off attention to wants, and thus get into ways which bring all sorts of trouble and suffering. Therefore we do our part, and see to the beginning of regular habits and punctual times, and, if we are wise, we take an immense amount of trouble to ensure their performing such duties rightly, regularly and sufficiently. All this, and a great deal more that we mothers have to do, means much hard work for us, and a great deal of patience, but we get a rich reward if the children grow up to have strong bodies and good health. "Be not weary in well-doing, for in due season we *shall reap*."

But it is a thousand pities to let it be all doing in the training of the young. Many a well-meaning mother makes the mistake of thinking that if she *does her best* nothing else matters, and there is an end of her responsibility. Something else does matter, and very seriously, too. If we are to succeed and really do our best, there *must be telling as well as doing*. Doing and telling, example and explanation, practice and precept, must go together. Even in such little, simple things for health's sake—as training to love fresh air and cleanliness and regular ways—we ought to tell the children, as soon as ever they can begin to understand, *why* we do this and that, and why we want them to do the same. Unfortunately, however good the home customs may have been, there will come a time in their lives

when habits and ways will be criticised and compared with those of other people. They will meet those who have not been brought up in the same way, and who do not do the same things, and there will be many temptations to let go wise practices because of example, or from lack of time in the rush and hurry of life. Then it will be that what we have *told* and *taught* will stand them in good stead, and help to preserve and strengthen the background of habits. Then, in the testing times of grown-up life, "I remember hearing my mother say" will often be a stronger influence and help than "I remember seeing my mother do." Of course, the two must go together; words are no use without deeds, and what we tell will have no weight if our own practice does not correspond. But we must take care to talk, to give reasons for what we say should be done, and if we do not know the reasons we ought to try and find them out.

It is about the telling of other things than those which concern bodily health, that this book is written.

There are so many evils in the world, and so many wrecked lives, because of the silence of mothers on the most important of all subjects. Either from forgetfulness, or unwillingness, they have left out the telling of things that are of vital consequence to those they will leave behind, and the sadness and mistakes that follow are very terrible. There is not a mother who does not know this if she will stop and think about it.

Let us consider what people generally call the moral side of life, and see what our duties as mothers are, about the things that must be told the young.

First, there are the children's questions about the beginning of life, which are nearly sure to come. Creation is so interesting and wonderful to a little child, and its curiosity, which some people call "nasty," or "naughty," or "awkward," is really given by God to help it to learn. Nature's way of making a child's mind grow is to put it into its head to ask questions. "Where do the eggs come from?" or "the kittens?" or "puppies?" Or, most interesting of all, "How did the new baby come?" or "What is it to be born?" They do not always ask the same questions, and some children may never ask any, but the most natural and healthy-minded generally do, and those who do not ask are often wondering and thinking and perhaps talking about such things to playmates or other people. We mothers ought to be very glad when the questions *do* come, because simple truths about the beginning of life are much better learnt while the children are small, and when they can get a start with wholesome ideas about things, which they are bound to know sooner or later. Birth and death, the beginning and ending of earthly life, are full of mystery and solemnity, and every good mother wants her child to grow up with a right feeling about both, and a knowledge of what really happens so far as we poor human beings can understand or explain.

Some people feel afraid to answer children's questions for fear of their talking in public and making awkward remarks. But this depends on how we do the telling. It should always be done in a natural manner, with an earnest word about *why* we never chatter just anywhere, or to just anybody, about such subjects.

One great difficulty is that our training was probably quite the other way. If we look back to our childhood, we remember how people silenced us by all sorts of stories. It was the old way of answering children's questions. Either they were hushed up and told to be quiet, or else some story was invented, and the child was left to find out some day that its mother had told a lie.

"When a new baby arrived in our home," said a girl, "I asked where it came from, and the first reply I got was that the doctor brought it in his bag. 'No, he didn't,' I answered, 'because I have seen his bag, and it was not large enough.' Then I asked again, and was told it came from the parsley-bed. 'That can't be true,' said I, 'because we have no parsley-bed and yet we have a baby, and grandmother has a parsley-bed and no baby.' And so I went on asking until mother told me 'God sent it,' and that silenced me for a time, because I felt sure this was true, though *it was not all*. But now I am older I cannot think why they tried to keep it such a secret, or why they thought they could satisfy my childish curiosity with silly stories which I was sharp enough to see through."

Why, indeed? This old way of telling was all wrong, and has been the cause of much sorrow, because it was *the beginning of silences and untruths about other things*. The children have a right to know the facts of life, and we ought to answer their questions *truthfully*, even if at first we have often to add: "This is all I can tell you now, but when you are older and can understand, I will tell you more." Only, let them feel that what you do say is true. The truth is God's; there cannot be anything to be ashamed

of in what He has planned. Another comfort is, that there is no shame in the mind of a child when it asks the questions. *Our* uncomfortable feelings and awkwardness are only because we know about the sin and misery mixed up with it all, and for this very reason we should let the children get to know the clean truth before the evil of the world has touched them. Besides, as they have so many difficult things to learn about grown-up life before it comes, it is much better to begin *gradually* and *as soon as possible* telling them what they can take in. I do not mean that we should tell anything about the wrong side while they are little children, but that we should introduce them to the *real facts* as soon as they begin to want to know. This is just as much part of our duty as mother as it is to teach them to say their prayers, or to be clean and tidy and honest.

"Much more hard," you exclaim. Yes, but it becomes easy if we make up our minds that the truth comes to us from God and is *meant to be passed on*.

Sometimes, the difficulty is to choose a good opportunity, and to think of the best things to say. The birth of kittens or puppies often gives us a chance of explaining how such new things, while too small and tender to manage for themselves, have a warm, safe home provided for them within the mother's own body. But I think myself that there is no better time to speak plainly about the beginning of a new life than when another baby is coming or has come. Even if no questions are asked and the child does not seem to notice, it is such a good plan to get the telling over while we can do it ourselves. We can say

how the new baby began its little life within the shelter of the mother's own body, so that it might be warm and safe from injury, and grow big enough and strong enough to breathe and feed for itself. The name given to this place of shelter is a very old word, and the children will hear it in Bible-reading and in church, so let us tell them at once that the "womb" means the part from which life comes, and it is like a special room—just as we have in the body rooms for breathing, and digesting, and thinking, about which they will learn in school.

When the time comes for the new baby to start life by itself, we call it "being born," and we ought always to think and speak of birth with reverence.

If you have never tried talking like this to a child, you would be astonished at how naturally and simply the knowledge is taken in.

While it is wrong to be silent and refuse to answer children's questions, it is equally wrong to be coarse and flippant, and we want from the first to give a feeling of reverence for motherhood and child-birth. Warn them that they may hear their companions talk very differently because *they* have had no one to teach and tell them properly.

Sometimes the question asked may be about fatherhood. This is more difficult to answer because it is not possible for them to understand until they are much older—and yet we do not want them to get wrong ideas, or to talk to others who may tell them coarsely and jokingly, and lay the foundations of evil thinking. The mother of a little boy answered wisely, I think. She said: "Fathers have their part in the great and solemn work of the making of a little child; God made mothers and fathers to help one

another in everything. But it is too difficult for you to understand while you are young. Do you remember the other day when you asked Daddy to let you have his gun and try to shoot, he told you that it was too heavy and too dangerous, and you must wait till you were much bigger and stronger? So now about many things you must wait until your understanding is bigger and stronger and then I will tell you all. Only, meanwhile, do not talk about it to other people, or ask them questions which only your mother should answer. You will learn in school about the father and mother plants; and there are fathers and mothers everywhere—amongst the animals and amongst human beings; and God has given both their duties to perform, so that they can leave behind them their little ones to grow up, and be the men and women of the world when they are gone. The mother's is the chief work, because it is she who shelters and keeps the little one until it is able to manage for itself."

But whether we answer in these words or others, however difficult the question may be, we must never tell an untruth, or a half truth vaguely, or scold for asking, or call it "rude," or make a child feel uncomfortable and ashamed. And let us remember what an inestimable blessing and protection for after-life it is if a child gets a clear vision of foundation facts while its thoughts and wonderings are simple and unselfconscious. When having a little talk it is easy to remind of how children are like father and mother, and that all babies are the same in this because they have both father and mother in them. Each gives half to make the new little life. Trees and plants come from father and mother seeds, which must

join to make a new tree or plant. Birds build their nests together, and prepare for the coming of the young ones, but the father bird must give his tiny living seed to join with the mother bird's, before she can make the beginning of the baby bird. The two half lives must meet—it is God's law about new life. So with our own human kind. The father gives the little seed which is his part, and the mother gives hers, before the new baby can begin. Only, as there is nothing in the world so precious as a new human being, everything is beautifully and wonderfully planned to keep the beginnings safe. The father puts the tiny seed within the mother's body where it can unite with her seed, and then, in the shelter, warmth and safety of her little nest, the baby begins to grow. "What is it to be born?" may be the next inquiry, and then comes the chance of explaining that "being born" is our way of telling that the tiny thing has grown big enough and strong enough to make its journey from the nest home and leave the mother's body to breathe and feed for itself.

Children are often puzzled by old-fashioned words and phrases which grown-ups say and sing as a matter of course, but about which our little ones get weird and wrong ideas. "What does it mean," asked a child, after morning service in Church, "when we sing 'Thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb?'" "Darling," said her mother, "it is a very old hymn, hundreds of years old, and the words are old-fashioned poetry. But they only mean that the Lord Jesus did not 'despise' becoming a little baby and beginning His tiny life as we do in the 'nest room' of His mother's body." The intelligent little questioner was satisfied; the words that had puzzled her

mind were "abhor" and "womb." But, had she asked further, it would have been easy to give "pure" as the meaning of the word Virgin, and liken it to "Virgin snow," "Virgin soil," "Virgin gold." Never let words worry a child, and let us seize every opportunity of saving it from misunderstanding, shock or foolish mistakes in after years.

Besides answering questions, we mothers must be tremendously careful never to repulse our children's confidences. It is such a blessing if they come and tell us what they hear; even if we are shocked and vexed by some story they repeat, we must be very gentle in our remarks, and never drive them from us by scolding. If a child is made to feel ashamed and injured, we shall lose its little tales and confidences; it will grow to feel estranged and distant, and we shall not get the precious chances of pointing out what is wrong or dangerous.

Another subject about which mothers ought to do more telling is that of the *dangers to which the children may have to be exposed*.

Of course, if school is near, and if we are able to have them constantly under our own eye, there is not the same need of warnings while they are very young. But it often happens that while children are quite small we are obliged to send them on distant errands, or on long, lonely walks to and from school. In such cases we ought to be careful to tell them how to take care of themselves, especially the girls. It is very difficult to speak plainly enough and to teach self-protection at such a tender age. And yet there are risks both in town and country—very particularly in the country, and our little girls should be told plainly never to answer if spoken to by a strange man,

whether he is old or young; never to take money or sweets from a stranger, and especially to come straight and tell us, or some grown-up friend, if they are rudely treated or frightened by a man. There is no need to give any reasons or to say much; children are wonderfully sensible in remembering. *But they cannot know unless they are told.* Two little girls who had to travel backwards and forwards by train each day to school, were talked to in this plain way by their mother. On one occasion a man was very rude in the railway carriage and annoyed and frightened them. They remembered their mother's instructions, and on reaching their destination went straight and told the station-master. He sent someone to watch and protect them on their return journey, and the man was caught and punished for gross misconduct, just because *a mother had not forgotten to say what was necessary to her little girls.*

Years ago, I remember the long country walks of girls, most of them quite small, who used to come by lonely fields and lanes from the neighbouring villages to my Bible-class. We had some plain talks, and made a rule that if ever they were molested, or followed, they would come straight and tell us, and then we made up a party to protect them going back, and discovered, if possible, the culprit. By this means, many a piece of rough play—or worse—was stopped, and many a person who had no business to be at large was brought within the notice of the police. Who can say, too, how many little girls were thus saved from fright or cruel treatment?

It can scarcely be necessary today, but it may be as well to add here that little girls—and no less

their big sisters—should always be sensibly clad, particularly in respect of underclothing and knickers.

But we must go on to think of older days, when the mother must tell of still more important things.

As soon as childhood's days begin to pass, the boys and girls become different in many ways. We cannot treat them all alike; they must be trained and talked to differently, so I will write here only about the girls.

Any time after eleven or twelve years of age there may come in a girl's body the change which means preparation for womanhood and motherhood. Unless someone explains it, the girls cannot understand, and they may be frightened or feel ashamed, or be tempted to do dangerous things which injure health for the rest of life. Girls have told me of foolish things they have done to hide what they fancied was "something wrong with them."

Surely there can be no doubt about our duty here. *Before* such a change happens a mother ought to speak to her girl and tell her what it is, and how to manage. One hears of mothers being shy with their girls, and feeling obliged to ask a neighbour to do the telling. But this must be because they do not realize what a very simple thing it is, and how there need be no fuss or difficulty in saying what has to be said. The body is beginning to change and grow up, and get ready for its older responsibilities, especially for its wonderful power of motherhood. The outward sign of this new time of life is generally called the "monthly period," because somewhere about once a month there is a getting rid of a certain material which the body does not want.

We can remind the girl of how the breath is one way by which the body purifies itself—we *breathe out* things which are not wanted; so, too, the perspiration through the skin is another way of self-clearing.

The monthly occurrence is an extra way by which the body throws off material not required at the time. This seems to me the best way of explaining it at *first*, especially if the child is very young when it begins, though I would tell as soon as possible, that it is connected with the wonderful power a woman possesses of helping to hand on the gift of life to another human being, and therefore is peculiarly sacred. While we explain that it is nothing to be frightened about or ashamed of, we take care to add that nice people do not talk about it, any more than they talk about other things the body has to do, like daily visits to the closet.

There are other changes besides those in the body. A woman's mind is coming, a woman's ideas and hopes and interests, and a mother's heart.

We ought to begin to make companions of our girls—to talk naturally about grown-up matters, to take them into our confidence, and tell them numbers of things that will be useful to them in after-life. The only subjects about which a mother should keep silence are those to do with her own shortcomings and mistakes in the past. Let us give them the benefit of our lessons and experiences; but if *we* have had bad times and falls from the right way, it is better never to speak of it, lest these things should lose their seriousness to our children. *Our* sins and failures are between us and God, and it seldom does any

good to talk about them to our fellow-creatures.

Sometimes it is just the other way, and I have heard a mother say: "I don't feel I can talk to my girl and advise her, because I haven't been all I could wish myself in days gone by." This is rather like saying: "I have had smallpox, or diphtheria, or consumption, myself, and therefore I do not feel I can talk to my children about how to avoid such things."

No; the talking *must be done* to those who are going out into life, whether our own experience has been bad or good. It is unfair, it is cruel, to withhold knowledge from a girl that will help her to keep straight. Ignorance is not innocence. It is the ignorant person who runs into danger, and—as many of us women know—bad men like girls to be ignorant, because they are more easily persuaded into wrong. I have heard a mother boast of the ignorance of her big girl of fifteen, as if it were something to be proud of. She prided herself on this girl having "the mind of a child," as she called it, and all the time she was making plans for sending her out to earn her living, and to face the world's temptations and difficulties without a word to guide her. For such a mother there must be many a bitter sorrow and reproach in store, and she will only have herself to blame if things go wrong.

Let me suggest to my fellow-women some further things that need saying to our girls when growing-up life begins. They are no longer children; body and mind are going through great alterations. They will look at life differently, think about new things, care for new pleasures, be interested in personal appearance, want to look "nice," and they will begin to like and seek the company of young men. All this is perfectly

natural; but they need our help to understand it all and to avoid carrying anything too far or running into danger.

For example, let us be sympathetic, and take an interest in a girl's wish to look nice. If she is pretty, let us speak of it naturally, as a trust from God with which to help to do good and make others happy. It is far better that she should know it from us than that she should find out that she has personal charms from the compliments and flatteries of men. Let us encourage her to take trouble about her clothes, while we also tell her how wrong it is to spend more time, or thought, or money, than is really necessary on external adornment. We mothers have a very solemn duty here. The love of admiration which begins at this age, and which may lead to extravagance and silly selfishness, is one of the worst dangers through which we must try and guide our girls. Many a one has started on this pathway and ended in misery and ruin. Let us tell them that those whose admiration is most worth having—both men and women—like best the trim, neat looks, the straight, well-grown figure, the girl who knows how to hold herself, who looks healthy and capable, and who does not spoil herself by silly extremes of fashion, or by appearing to be dressed up to attract attention. There is so much a sensible mother can say when clothes are talked about or the appearance of other people discussed.

Besides clothes and personal appearance, growing-up girls begin to be interested in young men, and we mothers must make a point sometimes of talking quite naturally about this subject. There is nothing wrong in the instinct: God made the sexes to care for and attract one another.

Ignorance and misunderstanding lead to recklessness and mistakes. The girls need to be told of the wonderful power of a young woman, and of how she stands for so much if she is only strong for goodness and purity, and particular enough about how she is treated. It is not that women are better than men, we explain; they are quite different in numbers of ways, and each has a special part to play in every relationship of life. God has given woman the kind of influence which makes her able to lead men and set up her own standard of what is right and nice, which they will often try to follow *just to please her*.

We cannot speak too plainly against the romping and flirting, and wandering about at night with men and boys, which is so common today. Of course, customs in the home are a great help. Parents are often to blame because there have been no regular ways and home rules, everybody being punctual at meals, and taking a share in the home-life and work as far as possible. But, I am sure that rules *alone* are not enough. The reasons must be understood. We must try to make the good sense of our wishes clear, and explain *why* an action is safe or dangerous, respectable or not. For example, a girl should know why familiarities and rough romping and jostling and hustling, and late walks at night, may lead to harm, and not merely think of it as something of which her mother disapproves. There is the wrong of it towards a man of which she should be told, of how it is cruel to encourage him to be familiar, and to play at love-making. It tempts him to think and do wrong things which probably have not entered the girl's mind, and yet she herself is to blame. The girl takes the lead and is responsible, because

most men will conduct themselves according to what she seems to wish, and they will go as far as she will let them.

The girl has a right, too, to know what familiar, careless ways with men *may cost her*. I have heard it said by girl-mothers in rescue homes: "I never meant any harm; it was only fun and romping. I never knew what the danger was until too late to help myself. If only someone had told me plainly!"

We may feel ourselves that such a thing cannot be altogether true, that a girl *must* know when she is doing or allowing something of which she would be ashamed; but, as an absolute fact, it is often *ignorance of consequences* which is at the bottom of a fall, and it is an awful responsibility for a mother not to have told plainly what things meant, and given an unmistakable warning of what might happen. Tell her of how the man goes scot-free if he gets a girl into trouble, and that it is she who has to bear the months of suspense and dread, the pain and weariness, the disgrace in the eyes of friends, and finally the shame when the baby comes. If a girl is inclined to be flighty, and does not seem to be affected by the plainest warnings, we shall at least have done what we could.

Plain speaking in this matter is essential for this further reason, that half-measures, hints and unexplained prohibitions have led many an innocent girl to feel that there is danger in the mere presence of a man. Paternity should be clearly understood by the time a girl leaves school or begins to mix freely in companionship with the opposite sex.

But there is the right and proper side of it all

about which a girl must be helped and guided. A time comes when she ought to be able to have her young men friends, and it is for us mothers to help, and to make it easy for them to get to know one another.

This time is often very trying for us; but I think we must all agree that a mother is much to blame if she refuses to allow the "keeping company" to go on indoors, and compels them to go about the streets and lanes, with all the surrounding temptations. *If there is no real and reasonable objection to the friendship* with a man, it is our duty to do our best, and make it as easy, pleasant and *safe* for the girl as possible.

But, here again there is some telling that ought to be done. A girl should hear her mother talk about the different sorts of men she will meet, the signs by which a woman may judge whether a man is good or bad, so that she may have something to guide her in making her decisions. A few bits of motherly counsel will be a great help, and even if she does not seem to heed at the time, the words may come back to her afterwards.

Tell her not to make herself too cheap in her ways with men. The greater store she sets by herself, and the more determined she is to have respectful treatment, the more highly will she be thought of and prized. Men always value most what is hard to get.

Tell her never to become *great friends* with a man until she knows something about his home, how he has been brought up, what he is like to his own people, how he treats women, where he spends his evenings, and how he talks and feels about religion.

The first things that matter are not good

looks, or money, or pleasant ways, but a good character, respectful ways to women, honour, unselfishness, steadiness, regularity at his work, and kindness to children and animals. Urge her not to be in a hurry to have a sweetheart, but to let the man who seeks her company be a friend first, so that she may get to know what he is like, and that he may show himself worthy of her affection before she allows him the privilege of kisses and caresses.

Talk to her beforehand about how, when people are engaged, there is no harm in *waiting*, as this is the best time of all for growing to understand one another, the best time for her to make a stand about things that are not easily altered after marriage. It means so much more happiness if he is thrifty and careful with his money, and she shows she approves of this, and helps him in it. Many a girl thinks only of pleasures before marriage, and tries to make the man spend his money in buying her presents or taking her to places of amusement. It is a bad start for the future, and she cannot blame him if, when days come of sore need for every penny, he has got into the habit of spending on self-indulgence.

And, oh! let us be sure and tell our girls plainly that it is misery to marry a man who has been loose living; it may mean years of horrible suffering for the wife, and perhaps the handing on of special disease to the children.

The old days are passing, thank God, when it was considered necessary only for the woman to be pure, but quite natural and excusable for a man to have "sown his wild oats" and done what he felt inclined. Such an idea never came from God. It had its origin in the days when

men bought their wives like slaves, and expected them to be what they considered satisfactory, while they never troubled to think of what they ought to be themselves. There is only one law about purity, and it is the same for boys and girls, men and women. A man *or* woman who has broken that law is a "damaged article," and both are equally wrong in God's sight. A girl has as much right to be particular about the previous life of the man she consents to marry as a man has to expect that his wife should be virtuous and of good character.

Say much to the girls about the importance of temperance in a husband, the immense value to health and happiness if he is a teetotaler. Sometimes a woman thinks that by marrying a man she will be able to reform him. But the power to influence in this direction must be used before marriage if it is to avail. I have found in my experience of many homes, that an engagement begun in unsteady ways is bound to lead to failure and sadness. "He first spoke to me," said a girl, "one Sunday afternoon, when he owned he had been having a drop too much and felt a bit excited." She did not seem to mind such a strange beginning, and when warned would always say: "I know when we are married I shall be able to keep him straight." Alas! there have followed the years of trouble we all feared for her, and his bad habits have brought her to miserable poverty. Happily, they have no family, for a girl should know that if she marries a man who drinks to excess, no one can say what evil effects may be handed on to their children. It must be a real crime in God's sight to run the risk of bringing into the world children who in

some way may be handicapped as a result of a parent's drinking habits.

This brings us to another important point. If a girl is old enough to think of marriage, talk to her a great deal about *looking forward*. She should consider the man with whom she keeps company, not only as to whether he makes a pleasant companion for walks and a nice friend to take her to entertainments, but as to whether he will make a good father when the children come, and whether he can hand on a healthy, wholesome heritage.

It is inexpressibly sad—it ought to be a disgrace—for sickly people to marry, and a girl ought to be told plainly that no one has any right to be the means of handing on disease. I suppose old-fashioned people would have thought it very improper to tell a girl to look ahead and think of motherhood and children like this; but we have grown to know much more about the responsibilities of parents, and the power to look forward and plan one's conduct according to *what is best for the future* is the highest gift bestowed on human beings. The capacity for passing on life and helping to create another human being is so serious and lasting in its effects, that surely it ought to be considered more carefully than anything else in all the world.

When a girl is engaged we must speak plainly to her about keeping her lover at a proper distance, and allowing no familiarities that should be the privileges of married life *only*. Tell her that the man who wants to make too free and take liberties because, he says, "being engaged is as good as being married," is unworthy of trust or love. Nothing could be more selfish;

he is thinking of the gratification of his own lusts, and just for this base reason is willing to run the risk of bringing her to shame. There is a belief in some places that when a couple are engaged it does not matter if there is a baby coming, as long as they keep it to themselves and "get married in time." We must fight against such an idea with all our might, and tell our girls that this is in reality a breaking of the Seventh Commandment, for which being engaged is no excuse. We should try to make her appreciate that, quite apart from the great risk of becoming—if anything should unexpectedly prevent the marriage—the mother of an innocent little so-called illegal child, there is an ideal to be aimed at of perfect love, the complete and unfettered surrender, body, soul and spirit, of two individuals wholly in love with each other, and to anticipate this wonderful intimacy of marriage is, to say the least of it, to dull the edge of later happiness.

Do not put off talking about these matters regarding men and marriage until it is too late. A girl ought to know it all *before* her affections are engaged, otherwise she may think our advice and warnings only mean opposition, and this will make her the more determined to have her own way.

There is one more very anxious subject about which I want to urge my fellow-mothers to talk plainly to their girls. We commit a great wrong towards them if we let them go out into the world to earn a living without knowing definitely about *the dangers to which they may be exposed*. The best safeguard to a girl is to give her the knowledge of how to protect herself, and to tell her how to recognize the beginning of danger. The

same plain advice is needed before going to posts in shops, offices and factories, or, indeed, any place where men and women work together.

Employers and men at the heads of departments are often most annoying in their attentions to the girls who work under them; it begins perhaps with small familiarities, and a girl must resent such beginnings, show that she does not like it, let the man feel he has nothing to gain by it, that she is not "that sort," and, generally speaking, the attentions will cease.

Urge your girl who is leaving home never to enter a public-house or hotel-bar with a man or allow herself to be treated. This is often a device for making her lose her good sense and clear judgment; men know well—and, alas! so do many women—that there is nothing like alcohol for taking away one's power of saying "No."

Tell her never to feel flattered or be taken in by the attentions of men who are in a better social position than herself. They may talk of *love*, but it is only their word for *passion*. All they want is to amuse themselves and satisfy their desires at her expense, and whatever promises they make it will only mean that, after they have had their way, she will be cast off and forgotten, to bear her own degradation and shame.

Besides the plain talks, a mother should try her best, when a daughter is going to a strange place, to find some friend who will look after her, or some club or society she can join, so that there may be something to do in leisure times. It is when she is lonely, and has her time out, that temptations come; urge her never to take the slightest notice of any strange man who speaks to her when she is out, and to leave the company

of other girls who may not be particular. If introduced to someone by a companion, she should find out what and who the man is before she goes for walks, or accepts invitations, or takes presents. Let her know that there are men—vile creatures, old as well as young (and often the old are the most dangerous)—who are on the lookout for any chance of getting hold of an innocent girl; and if once they can persuade her to make appointments to meet, or accept some little attention, she will get into their power and not be able to turn back. Sometimes it is women who are on the watch on behalf of such men, or as a means of livelihood, to lure away young girls to houses whence they never return, and this is not only at railway stations, but in quiet suburbs of towns, where one might never suspect such dangers. The League of Nations Social Questions Committee is attacking this great evil, but I am sure we should talk to our girls about bad women as well as men. We can speak kindly, but warningly, for the warnings may be dreadfully needed. Such women were once pure, perhaps well-intentioned and only ignorant, but having been betrayed and fallen once, they have drifted into an awful life of sin.

A mother may exclaim: "Why tell her of such things? I should like to think my girl never knew of such wickedness." But how can we keep her from knowing? There is not a town or village in England where it is not met with. Advertisements of plays in the streets, novels on bookstalls, stories in magazines, reports in newspapers, scenes at cinemas and theatres, have constant allusions to the subject. What if a girl—perhaps naturally inclined to seek admiration

and to dislike work—should meet with some women who tell of the fine clothes, the jewellery, the excitements, the life of pleasure “so easily earned,” and the story should fascinate and deceive her? I have known this to happen in a home where today a broken-hearted mother and father weep over the loss of a daughter. She was lured away to the terrible life by a girl friend, who tempted her by the prospect of ease and pleasure. I would tell my girl plainly of the other side of life amongst these poor women of the streets of the horrible disease and suffering to which they mostly fall victims, and of the fact that they only live a few years when once they have sunk so low.

The girl *who knows beforehand* is the girl who is safest. I am sure some mothers are to blame for not speaking more strongly and honestly about immorality from the very first. When the falls of others are first spoken of perhaps among our own circle of friends and acquaintances, there ought to be no glossing over and apologizing for it in our mode of speech. It is strange that people talk lightly of the breaking of the seventh commandment; and while they would call murder or theft a crime, and speak with indignation of the murderer or thief, they talk about adultery as something “unfortunate,” or a “mistake” or “slip,” and our children grow up to think of it as nothing very important.

While being very tender to the one who has sinned, ready to help and forgive, slow to judge harshly when we, too, might have fallen if left without warning, or exposed to the same temptation, let us be honest with our children about the sin itself, and tell them plainly that the God who

said, “Thou shalt not kill,” and “Thou shalt not steal,” said also, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.”

It all comes back to the same thing with which we started. The telling is almost, if not quite, the most important part in the work of a mother, and it ought to be plain speaking from first to last. When we pray, “O God, bless our children,” when we ask for strength to do our duty by them, so that they may grow up to live blessed, happy and successful lives, let us add: “O give us wisdom and courage to say as well as do. Keep us from forgetting anything that ought to be told. Help us to speak the truth, to teach our girls to reverence their bodies, to guard themselves from danger, to make wise choices, to be brave and strong on the side of right.” And when we pray for our girls as they go into life, “Keep them from evil, and guard them in the moment of temptation,” let us be able to add thankfully, “We have told them all we knew, we have spoken the truth plainly,” they can never say, “We did not know because our mother failed to tell us.”

ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN * CONCERNING THE MONTHLY PERIOD

The hygienic measures advocated below are recommended for normal girls in good health. If you are not strong and healthy, but wish to take the exercise advised in this leaflet, you should consult your doctor before doing so, especially if you ever suffer from indigestion or pain in the stomach, breathlessness or pain on exertion, excessive loss at the period or discharge between the periods.

1. The monthly period is a natural function and not an illness. You ought, therefore, at these times, to feel quite well and to be free from pain or discomfort.
2. The ordinary rules of cleanliness and hygiene should be observed as at other times. There is no risk in the use of soap and water, in spite of the usual prejudice against it. A warm bath should, if possible, be taken every day throughout the period; if this is not possible you should wash the whole body, including the feet. Chafing of the skin can be avoided if you have opportunity for changing the sanitary towel. There should be a daily action of the bowels as at other times.
3. In order to keep strong and well it is necessary that you should have some exercise every day in the open air, such as a brisk walk or games. It is important that you should continue this exercise as usual throughout the period, as, by so doing, you will probably prevent the onset of monthly discomfort and pains in the future.
4. Girls engaged in active work, especially that involving bending movements of the body, are usually free from suffering, provided that this activity be continued throughout the period; but those whose occupation entails long hours of standing or sitting are apt to develop pain or sickness. It is, however, important to realize that, in a normal, healthy girl, such suffering is unnecessary, and can be overcome by her own efforts. Exercise, continued until a warm glow is felt, relieves the pain; whereas rest, though giving temporary relief, prolongs the time of suffering and tends to make it recur.

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5. If you are otherwise strong and healthy and free from abdominal pain at other times, but suffer pain at the period, the most beneficial form of exercise is active work such as digging or scrubbing, or vigorous games like tennis, netball or hockey. Provided that the muscles have been kept in good training by such exertion, exercise of this kind should be taken throughout the period, especially on the first day.
6. If you have but little opportunity for outdoor activity, you should study the list of exercises given below. These have been used, with great success to cure pains and sickness which were severe enough to incapacitate girls from their work every month. In the worst cases, it has been necessary to do these exercises for 15 minutes every day for several months—sometimes twice a day during the period. Considerable strength of mind will be required to carry out this somewhat monotonous routine. But if you suffer badly you will realize that it is well worth your while to persevere. Moreover, not only will you save the portion of your earnings which may be forfeited every month, but your services will be more valuable to your employer.
7. After doing these exercises for a few months your periods will probably be painless. Nevertheless, after this, it would be good for you to continue the exercises regularly. But it is quite essential for you to do them every month for at least three days preceding the onset and for the first three days of each period. Otherwise, your pains or sickness are liable to return.
8. If you have the opportunity of joining a drilling class, do so. The exercises are more interesting if done with others, and can be converted into enjoyable games of competitions.

TABLE OF EXERCISES

1. **Floor Polishing:** Kneel on "all fours." Swing right arm, with elbow stiff, through a semicircle, as if polishing the floor, reaching as far forward and as far back as possible. Repeat swing ten times with each arm.
2. (a) **Bending:** Stand with feet apart. Stretch arms above head, bend forward and touch ground with knees straight. Return to first position. Repeat slowly eight times.
(b) **Twisting:** Stand with feet apart. Stretch arms to

side on level with shoulders. Twist trunk round until right arm points directly backwards. Twist again until left arm points directly backwards. Repeat vigorously ten times.

(c) **Swaying:** Stand with feet apart. Stretch arms above head. Sway body and arms to right, then left. Repeat slowly ten times.

3. **"Rowing":** Sit on floor with knees straight and feet pressed against wall. Lean forward and touch wall with knuckles, allowing knees to bend slightly. Repeat rhythmically twenty times.

4. **Right to Left and Left to Right:** Stand with feet apart. Swing right arm up as far as possible. Bend down, bringing right arm over, and touch left foot. Repeat six times. The same with the left arm and right foot.

5. **Floor Patting:** Kneel, sitting back on heels. Twist body and tap floor with both hands four times on left side. Kneel upright. Twist body and repeat tapping on right side. Repeat eight times each side.

6. **Bean Picking:** Throw 20 small objects, such as beans, on the floor. Pick up one at a time and place on a shelf above the head, using hands alternately. Do it as quickly as possible.