

The Bee's Home Magazine Page

Three Answers

By JANE M'LEAN.

What is life? The minstrel plays it
On a reed of sweetest strain:
"Life is song, that wakes to music
Joy or grief or depths of pain.
Nature trills it in her bird calls,
Croons it in her tenebrous rain."

What is life? The mystic sees it
In his crystal: "Life is fate
Lurking just around the corner,
Coming early, coming late.
Laws are fixed and fate is changeless:
Watch the stars and dream and wait."

What is life? The man who lived it
Gives his answer, and he saith:
"Life is love, a hand that beckons
Through the dusk, a long drawn breath
And a kiss whose warmth we carry
Lingering with us into death."

The Bargain Counter of Life

By BEATRICE FAIRFAX.

All through life most of us accept substitutes for the things we really want. We justify ourselves to ourselves by saying that we can't have what we want, and so we might as well take the next best thing. We fill up our minds and hearts with idle vanities and find our souls on empty shells—and excuse ourselves by saying we do this in order to attain contentment. What we really do attain is hired up and useless lives from which opportunity is shut because there is no room for her—and from which growth is excluded because we force an unnatural development.

There are some of life's gifts for which there is no possible substitute. For love there can be none. Nor for honest work, truth and honor, and high ideals, and friendship, and appreciation of beauty, and religion, and ambition, and a humorous conception of one's place in the universe, coupled with a sane sense of responsibility, must be in every life that is to be fine, and big, and constructive, and happy. Nothing else will take their place. There is nothing "just as good" as sympathy and understanding—nothing else will equip you for love or friendship—nothing else will make you so lovable or so worth living with.

No one can cheat you but you, yourself. You never have to accept substitutes for the things you really want; you never have to take the next best thing instead of your own high desire. Then why do you do it? Because you are too impatient to wait for the consummation of your desires; because you are too much a doubter to believe life will give you the opportunity to attain what you long for; because you are too ready and willing to take the opinion of any one as to what is a worthy ambition instead of holding to your own conception of it; finally, because you are too lazy to work for the fulfillment of your ambitions or too easy-going and weak-willed to formulate clear ambitions—for any of these four reasons, you take the first thing that chances to be offered instead of striving and struggling for what you really want, and what your nature needs for its fulfillment.

Consider the case of poor, abused love. How many women marry the man they love—or any one of the dozen or so men somewhere in the world who might come up to their ideal? Eleanor adores Dick. Dick marries Lucille. Promptly then Eleanor rushes into an engagement with Robert and marries him partly because she is afraid of an empty life, partly to prove to the people who might suspect her of an unreciprocated affection for Dick that she is wrong, partly to show Dick that she is attractive to some man and partly because she craves love and imagines that she is getting "something just as good" or the next best thing to what she really wanted.

What happens? Eleanor has no love to give Robert. She cheats him; she cheats herself; she denies herself and the man whose greatest mistake and crime is nothing worse than loving where he cannot inspire love, a chance at real happiness. If Eleanor had waited, a love greater than the fancied or real one she felt for Dick might have come into her life. She might have found contentment in work. She would have left open for herself a chance at happiness. But no! Blindly and quickly she must seize upon the next best thing to what she really wanted. And with the image of one man in her heart she cannot make herself happy with or give happiness to another.

For love there is no substitute love. Take the case of ambition. Suppose you long to be a great singer. Suppose you have the equipment in ability and temperament and even opportunity—provided you will work and earn and deserve it. But the road is long and hard and means deprivations and difficulties to be overcome. The goal is far away. Right at hand lies a certain competence in chance to sell insurance. You take the easy path of salesmanship, although in your heart there is one great vision that blots out everything but the one thing—fear of work.

You have assurance that you could hardly fail as a singer—provided you would work. But you are lazy. You assure yourself that an artistic career is uncertain at best and you become a mediocre salesman (who will never have to starve, it is true) but, who, with heart and interest centered elsewhere, will be most unlikely to climb to any position of responsibility in your company. And all your life you sneak away to hear great singers and rouse yourself with a start from dreams of what might have been if you had been willing to wait and work.

And now for work—the saving grace of humanity. Is there anything "just as good" as that? Is a "clinch" or a "snap" or a dishonest get-rich-quick scheme or a life of idle luxury gained through accident of birth or in some mercenary way to be compared with it? The only "next best thing" to work is—more work. There is nothing "just as good" as a chance to make a place for yourself in the world or to prove your ability and strength and fine mentality.

Suppose you drift into some occupa-

tion where by going through a quick routine every day, by making the motions of attending to business you can manage to get on. Will this profit you anything? Most decidedly not. You may make a living and keep a foothold on earth. But you won't grow. Your power to meet and cope with situations will not be cultivated. You will simply putter along at your task.

For love and ambition and work—for any of the big realities of life there is nothing "just as good."

I don't believe in idle repining. If you long for a college education and positively cannot manage to get it, don't whine—don't sit around and feel that life is empty. Get an education. It may not be the one you wanted, it may not be just as good. Don't offer it to yourself as a substitute—but set about learning all the things you want—an education. Don't just fill up your life with humdrum interests and try to forget that you wanted to go to college. It was to learn you desired. Well then you can learn.

Eleanor, who loves Dick and is not loved by him is not out off from all love unless she hastily marries a man for whom she does not care.

Editorial for Women

"Old Wives for New."

By DOROTHY DIX.

Is a woman of 55 too old to interest her 25-year-old husband? A dentist in New York City says that she is. He has forsaken his wife for a little peaches-and-cream girl, and he excuses himself by asserting that his wife is too old for him, yet they are both the same age.

Of course in cases of errant fancy one excuses as about as good as another, and any old reason goes for a man wandering from his own fireside, but, in reality, the question of whether a middle-aged woman is older than a middle-aged man is one purely of temperament. The record in the family Bible has nothing to do with the case, for there are both men and women who are senile in the cradle, and children at 70.

It cannot be denied that the general impression prevails that a woman is older and less attractive at a given age than a man is. Perhaps this was true in the past, when women bore many children, had few domestic conveniences, worked like galley slaves in their homes, and when they had little education and no outside interest to keep their minds stimulated. Under such conditions women faded early and became atrophied both in soul and body.

But such is not the case in these days, when life has been made soft and easy for most women, when the care of their persons has become a religion with them, and when the average woman reads more, travels more and studies more than her husband does because she has more time and opportunity.

As men get along toward middle life they are apt to slump. They grow careless about their personal appearance. They hate to dress up. They narrow down to a few interests and have little concern about any subjects other than their business, the stock market and politics. Worse still, in only too many cases, they become egotists who will talk of nothing but themselves.

As a woman approaches middle life she is in such deadly fear of being shelved that she puts forth every effort to make herself agreeable and attractive. She dresses as well as she possibly can, she joins study clubs, she keeps up with every movement and can talk on any subject. More than that, she cultivates tact and adaptability, and studiously seeks to make herself agreeable, for well she knows that the feminine Tommie Tucker must sing for her supper.

The truth is she has gone out of fashion with women. Nobody knows how old she is, but she is certain that she is as young as her husband.

In-Shoots

No want ad ever found a lost reputation. We can always discover the taints on the other fellow's money. It is not often that a wife can please her husband and her mother-in-law at the same time.

Censored



Dear Sandy Claus
Please bring
me a doll

Mental Concentration As an Asset

By CHARLES F. THWING, LL.D.
President Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.

Mental concentration is a uniting, quickening and vitalizing of all the forces of reason devoted to a single end. It is thinking to a point. It is summoning knowledge to aid thinking, demanding thinking to enlarge one's reasoning, requiring reasoning to arouse feeling and commanding feeling to hold the will resolute. Its foes are diffuseness, discourtesy and indolence. Diffuseness is the playfulness of intellectual youthfulness. Indolence is a mental indifference which may or may not be recreative.

The support of mental concentration are enthusiasm, interest, desire for achievement, health, strength of will. Mental concentration needs all natural buttresses. For the mind, at almost every stage, likes to wander. It prefers the picturesque to the logical, the emotional to the rational, the passive to the laborious.

The will is, however, to nail the mind close and hard down to its thought. The heart is to prompt the mind to rejoice in definiteness or fixeness, even if it be hard for a time. The conscience is to be convinced that only by close devotion can worthy results be secured. Health is to be amply sufficient to fill up all the exhaustions made by long continued intellectual processes.

In such a concentration the mind finds forces of which it had not been conscious. It seems often to create new forces. It raises itself to the nth degree of power. It gets its second wind. Its slow-moving feet become wings.

It runs with the chariot, not with the footmen, and it does not become weary. The spirit of the very gods seems to fill its being. Its sight becomes insight. It calls out the intellectual reserves. It discovers the truth of the remark of William James that each of us has resources of which he does not dream.

Under the force of mental concentration great achievements are consummated. Its lack spells inefficiency and failure. Its possession is victory. Thus James Russell Lowell wrote his poems. Thus Lord Kelvin made his great discoveries and inventions in many diverse fields of human effort. Thus the greatest of modern states achieved. Of Gladstone, Morley says (Life, 1, 196): "He was never very ready to talk about himself, but when asked what he regarded as his master secret, he always said, 'Concentration.'"

"Slackness of mind, vacuity of mind, the wheels of the mind revolving without biting the rails of the subject were insupportable. Such habits were of the family of faithlessness, which he abhorred. Steady practice of instant, fixed, effectual attention was the key alike to his rapidity of apprehension and to his powerful memory."

"Toll was his native element; and though he found himself possessed of many laudable gifts, he was never visited

by the dream, so fatal to many a well-laden argosy, that genius alone does all. There was nobody like him when it came to difficult business. For bending his whole strength to it like a mighty archer stringing a stiff bow."

Sir James Graham said of him in these years that Gladstone could do in four hours what it took any other man sixteen to do, and he worked sixteen hours a day.

When I came to know him long years after, he told me that he thought when in office in the times that our story is now approaching, fourteen hours were a common tale. Nor was it mere mechanical industry; it was hard labor, exact, strenuous, engrossing, rigorous.

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