

# A SHELF OF RECENT BOOKS

## HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED

By John E. Lind

**O**F all the delusions whose flickering flames lure mankind out across the marshes, the most hopeless is the Messianic delusion. A man may have imaginary enemies and forget about them; he may be grandiose and become deflated; but let him once believe that he has a panacea for human ills, and he is lost. The rest of his life must perforce be spent in preaching his doctrines to any audience he can gather.

Dr. Lay's present thesis has to do

with marriage, especially with unhappy marriages. By a simple physiological expedient any marriage can be made a happy one; any husband transformed into a perfect knight; and any wife into a composite of Venus, Helen of Troy, and Ann Pennington.

What this magic-working formula is can hardly be told here. Lay perforce uses many circumlocutions and euphemisms to express it. Suffice it to say that it is one known for many years and advocated by Havelock Ellis and many other writers on sex. It is a physiological and psychological truth

frequently preached in appropriate instances by physicians, but it is only one aspect of matrimony. Surely it is a naïve type of mind which could suggest that in it lies the solution to all conjugal problems. Married people are kittle kattle to shoo behind, as Dr. Lay would find had he any professional experience with them. It is one of the most deadly features of the psychoanalytic doctrines that they imbue all sorts of amateurs with desires to talk about them, or, worse still, to write about them. Some of these boosters of Freudianism have had personal experience with the psychotherapeutic benefits of the method; others merely wax enthusiastic from the printed page. To which class Dr. Lay belongs is not a matter for discussion here. At least, he writes better than most of them, although in his latest book we do stumble across such expressions as this: "so unanimously approved by most erotologists" (page 155).

The book is enormously padded. Necessarily prevented by the censorship from being explicit about his panacea, Professor Lay indulges in endless repetition. Everything in his three hundred pages could have been put with great ease in ten.

One of the handicaps under which he labors is a lack of humor. As a result, some of his material, especially the episode between the middle aged married couple (pages 114-121), is excruciatingly funny.

It would be a very pleasant thing to believe that no matter how ill mated a couple may be, how deficient either of them in beauty, intellect, amiability or charm, they can become deliriously and rapturously happy by the waving of a wand. It would be pleasant also to believe in Santa Claus, Cinderella, and wishing rings.

According to Dr. Lay, a woman with dirty neck and finger nails, spading potatoes in a garden, may be just as thrilling as any fair lady of any poet's dream. One may be permitted to elevate the eyebrow? The psychological fact, which has burst upon him like Chapman's Homer upon Keats, is all very well, but it is not the *summum bonum*. The psychoanalyst, after months of study, sometimes ventures to think he understands something about one human being, and is able to advise him about his adjustments to life. The problem is complicated when it is a question of the adjustments of man and wife to each other; and no psychologist worthy of the name would think of laying down any general laws in the matter.

The formulation of any such principle as Lay's has the same relation to psychotherapy that chiropractic has to medicine.

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A Plea for Monogamy. By Wilfrid Lay, Ph.D. Boni and Liveright.