

CHAPTER I.

The Class Society

Social Structure – Relationships - Family Size – Social Class - Women’s Suffrage – WWI – Factory Working - Education Increases Expectations – Social Domesticity – Owner Occupiers - Kinsey Report – Doctor Spock - Statement – Case Study – Questionnaire – Talking the Matter Through.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, just a generation before our period, 1910-2010, the relationship between parents and their children was one of intolerance. The ‘man of the household’, after his wife’s child bearing period, had numerous children – fifteen not being uncommon. The brake on even larger families was the early death of many babies and young children. The father was frequently held in awe; what he said was believed and what he ordered obeyed. Wives addressed their husbands not by using their Christian first names but by their title of Mr.

The houses of the many were small and the families large. The only way life could be made bearable was by discipline... this being the main difference between the decades, during this hundred year period. Ridged rules and laws - social, religious and household, were laid down for every facet of life... This was not to inhibit thought, which it did, but linked to behaviour – keeping one’s place, this being a method of suppression...; social behaviour was channeled and funneled, down a narrow path, which all social classes proudly maintained. Each social class, sect and division knew what to: eat, wear, play, perform, and worship.

It was possible to move within this structure, both up and down, and within each layer. This was generally brought about by a change affecting the family’s income. As soon as this change occurred the standard of living followed suit. An increase in income could be achieved by: entrepreneurship, education or inherited wealth. One or either of these projected the family upwards. Some of the causes why there was a fall of income: a split-up of the family’s estate, decline in the estates value, a poor marriage, resulting in a divorce, reduction in stock market values, bad investments, government taxes, gambling, drinking, poor health, war and loss of job. This directed the person downwards – to a lower social level.

Women’s Suffrage

At the end of the nineteenth century opportunities became open for women working in cloth making factories, as secretaries, and as shop assistants. The liberalization of education enlarged the teaching profession. It was a slow business gaining political and social emancipation. The first country to offer women the vote was New Zealand in 1893 and the last, France, Italy and Japan in 1945.

By 1903 women’s suffrage became a force to be reckoned with... By direct action demonstrations were arranged and campaigns held; the result: arrests were made and fines imposed. Gradually by keeping the campaign alive – in the news, the matter became a topic of conversation.

In Britain women had to leave the teaching profession and civil service when they became married. This gave women the choice of career or raising a family. In 1912 nurse Margaret Sanger began raising the issue of many adverse health effects caused by too frequent childbirths, abortions and miscarriages.

After WWI Marie Stopes, 1880 – 1958, published ‘Married Love’ in 1918 and three years later, ‘Wise Parenthood’. The campaign for women’s rights and ‘Family Planning’ was an enormous

success eventually gathering momentum till Lady Sear's draft, sex anti-discrimination bill in 1973 which itself led to the 1975 British Sex Discrimination Act, 'Equal Pay for Equal Work'.

However, the First World War did more for the liberation of women than any other factor. It was their work during the war – which made their contribution indispensable, which gained the support of the country. There was no chance of the breach being plugged. Women became independent and liked it. No longer did they have to put up with dominance and derision. As their wages supported their husbands so the increase became indispensable. Standards began to raise expectations climbed and horizons broadened. Large families became a thing of the past and certain sectors of society became women's preserves.

As the First World War got into its stride automation, and the conveyor belt system of mass production, became the norm. Every part of the armed services needed more materials and fighting machines. New trucks, tanks, guns, merchant ships and aero planes were invented and built. Women were an essential part of their production.

After the war transportation – the movement of freight became an indispensable part of an industrial society. The production lines that had turned out war materials were now converted to turning out the latest gadgets and household goods. There was more to buy and more money circulated by the increased working population.

To cope with the new machines, peacetime activities and the manufacture of consumer goods further and higher education had to keep pace - businesses had to engage new skills and handle new equipment. Colleges and Polytechnics devised courses for the new burgeoning technology. New materials had to be discovered and invented to build the latest machines. As mechanization developed cheaper products became available, as all aspects of society advanced so did the cause of women's liberation.

As the men returned from the war they naturally wanted their old jobs back. The unions assisted this to take place forcing women out of the factories and workshops. Heavy industry and factory workings now became preserves of the men. Building and construction work employed no women.

It was in white collar office jobs that women ousted men. Personal assistants, stenographers, secretaries, shorthand typists – typists of all descriptions, roneo-copyists, filing clerks and office juniors gave women employment, even in hard times. Hospitals claimed another vast section of female workers as did shops and department stores. It was these women's wages that boosted their husband's earnings. It was this additional money which gave many families extra cash to invest in housing. Gradually, where at onetime, families rented these new build houses a different group of owner occupiers took possession. New housing estates were developed. All these new homes needed furnishing and household goods.

Women not at work had to deal with childrearing and running the home. Shopping and cooking, both required forward planning... tasks that were slotted in-between cleaning the home, washing the clothes, and ironing. Young children were taken to school and picked up; this started and finished every schoolday. Organizing children's play, extra curricular experiences, and out of school experiences had to be arranged, and paid for. Having a property of one's own made household chores more bearable giving a sense of positive feedback - doing something for oneself. But it never fully compensated for being paid, an action that demonstrated worthwhileness, and being wanted.

House building enjoyed a great boom at the turn of the century. Owner occupation was a complete change from the expectations of previous generations. Building Societies blossomed extending the loan period to twenty years. The housing boom just after the construction of the railway network in the late eighteenth century was now extended. New garden suburbs linked towns together filling in the spaces between the railway stations. Mass owner occupations quickly change

the previous renting market. Smaller families allowed greater savings. The ten percent deposit on house purchase was now achievable - for the many.

The numbers of insured men continued to rise. Women peaked at three and a half million – a third of the figure for men. Women were a quarter of the workforce and rising, as more became trained. The employment of women in full and part-time work did not alter the preconceived role of women – having their place within the home looking after the children. The numbers of men ‘domesticated’ were few and far between – men expected to be waited on - their meals ‘ready’ on time.

Once again it took another war, and the even greater necessity for women to go out to work, to administer and provide for ‘all out war’. This finally gave them a chance to say, ‘I can choose my own lifestyle’ something they could not do beforehand! A husband and wife began to share household chores. It was still a long way off before they could both focus on their careers.

The fifties families turned their backs on the old social order; they wanted a freer more libertarian world where women had the same opportunity as men - with equal pay and conditions.

Education: increased expectations.

Men, who helped in the home, stayed close to the home and were happy maintaining the fabric of the home, were considered domesticated. Those men who preferred to stay away from the home: to find work, take part in a hobby or sport, join associations and institutions, occupations that drew them away from the home, were considered, undomesticated. Men who found joy in raising children, teaching home economics, attending those who were ill, remained close during confinement and birth, were considered ‘civilly domesticated’.

Social Domesticity

To be domesticated is more to do with a feeling, rather than employment. It is also concerned with all those things which go on inside a house or dwelling – about the furnishings and contents – decoration and layout. In many respects it’s to do with man’s evolution, aestheticism and level of taste. For a man to be domesticated removes him from those that hunt, go to war or seek adventure. It can be said that society is becoming more domesticated as an evolutionary trend – becoming more civilized: the sexes, sharing responsibility, helping raise the children in a safe environment whilst engaging in ‘household activity!’

Age of Childbearing

According to National Statistics there were obvious changes in the number of births from the 1950s to 80s. This was attributed to the changes in the ages of mothers at childbirth. Women born in the 1940s had the lowest - they were those who contributed to the 60s baby boom. The graph shows that it was these women who had more children than those born in the 50s climbing back to 1920s levels. The decline of family size averages in this century is due as much too many women not having children as to smaller sized families. Since 1963 there has been a decline in the number of children born, although since 2003 there has been a slight increase. What has happened is that there are more births to older women – aged 40 and over. The average age of women giving birth is just over 29.

Kinsey Report

The Kinsey Report, [Dr Alfred Kinsey 1894-1956, **Sexual Behaviour**, Revised 1998], was controversial, eventually became an accepted record of human behaviour; treating the taboo subject with the correct statistical procedures. Dr Spock, [Dr Benjamin Spock, 1903-1998, **Children and Child Care**, Revised 1992] wrote these two best sellers which have not been bettered, on all aspects of Marriage and Children. Both these books are essential reading for all couples. Little has changed over the last few years to make his original thoughts irrelevant or out of date.

All couples should be aware of the Kinsey Report and its findings - particularly those of frequency - of intercourse. They point the finger at normal/average behaviour. It was not only a ground breaking statistical report but highly necessary - to form a basis in understanding. The figures may shock, excite, or fill you with fear, but whatever feeling they do generate, they are statistically proven.

The fertility rate for couples in 2008 was 1.97 a rise over the last seven years from 1.63. The last time it registered two was in 1973. The average age for women having a first child remains at 29.3. It can be expected that the fertility rate, long-term, suggest that it will continue to drop, including those of immigrant couples.

The positive aspects of a written statement.

It might be considered rather mechanical and unromantic to agree to a written statement of intent before marriage. A list of expectations and goals to question each other on understandings and considerations. This seems to me to be a satisfactory way of covering all aspects of life together making sure there are no misconceptions and expectations, for we can all live in a romantic haze, but bills and children have to be considered.

This list of topics covered makes sure that each person knows what the other wants and needs and can highlight areas that need explanation and dissecting which may reveal hidden hopes and fears.

All answers show a train of thought - indicate an individuals state of mind. It is then up to those who are involved to question themselves, to explore and expose differences. To find areas of agreement - to become more compatible - give a firmer footing for future decisions. The sooner these things are talked through the easier it is. Being open and frank is not being silly but sensible and saves embarrassment later when issues become almost too big to enter into discussion about. Being 'set in one's ways' is after all to be avoided - it limits advancement and discovery.

I do understand that some individuals, even if they are disappointed by their intended partner's answers, will continue with the marriage as an act of defiance. That does not predicate that the answered questionnaire is not valid, it remains a joint effort - made at a particular time and place in the relationship. If one or other changes their opinion - wishes to alter their answer, a revised agreement should be discussed and agreed upon. This ensures the altered position has been aired and it is then up to the couple to find an agreed compromise.

There are those who may believe they can alter their partner's opinions, hopes and desires over a period of time - by stealth, continually pressing the point or raising the issue. This may be achieved if the issue is relatively unimportant, but in the case of sexual matters and children this should never be done - will cause resentment and unhappiness.

This may all sound rather cold and clinical taking little regard for continuity and momentary desire. But that is the point, on the spot decisions are rarely good, or long lasting. There is a positive side to 'talking things through' and setting them down - to form an agreement.

I have set out here a case study, to give a general overview of one particular couple's hopes & fears. Although it is general it does give firm foundation for discussion & comment:

Case Study

Janet and John met at university – they were on the same course, reading Sociology. After living in hall for their first year they set up camp together – in a shared flat. Their relationship blossomed... spending their vacation's together - including Christmas', in each other's family home.

Both sets of parents viewed the situation as 'the new way', recognizing that their child was in a stable relationship, which was proving beneficial - each young adult knuckling down to work - supporting each other. Both graduates were expected to obtain a good pass mark and go on to find suitable employment.

In their final year they decided to get married, putting off the day until they had each found a secure job and obtain an acceptable employment contract...

They explained all this to their parents. They were not alarmed, expecting this to happen, happy that their child was treating the matter seriously. The parents were sufficiently interested to contact each other introducing each other over the phone. They learned that the other's child had explained the matter, wishing to plan the big occasion, with their parent's approval.

Wanting their child to do as well as possible and not be diverted both sets of parents said that they would help to make a down payment on a car if they succeeded in obtaining a good mark, knowing that being mobile helps when job hunting.

The parents decided to speak to their child separately to offer help where they could with the arrangements, and to set out some of the details all couples are faced with when contemplating marriage. Fortunately the parents were happy with their child's choice of partners and keen to ensure their child got off to a good start in married life.

Both sets of parents owned their own home, through mortgage repayments – loan and interest. Knowing how hard it was financially, when they first started - keeping up the Direct Debit payments, they were sufficiently concerned to explain how important it was to provide as large a deposit as possible.

The parents explained that running a car and saving for a deposit was going to be very difficult... that there would be times when cut backs might have to be made... putting some of their more elaborate plans on the back burner. The parents explained that some jobs are not as secure as others - make mortgage repayments difficult to guarantee. They painted a gruesome picture of the Debt Collector's or Bailiff's man calling, removing furniture to the tune of the sum owed. They went on to say that having a good name at the bank by keeping up regular savings, is important for future security... seeking deferred payments requires a good past record.

In the future when time needs to be taken off work to have a child or to get over some illness having a sympathetic Bank Manager is a relief. The parents emphasized, that they should become 'credit worthy' by keeping their bank accounts free from becoming overdrawn.

They went on to explain that it is not always possible to be a member of a health club, golf club or have an overseas holiday, as well as provide extras for a family. Eating out and giving parties might stretch the bank account too far. Their overdrawn accounts cause stress making you short tempered and snappy towards your children - who do not understand. After all, Janet and John hope to be dedicated parents and work hard - there must be some enjoyment... and life after all cannot be perfect all the time!

Not all couples want to have children or a large family. The state of marriage is a commitment which is there to provide security for children. If you believe that private education is necessary for your

child the fees are a big drain on the family's account. Not all children are blessed with good health and the possibility of having a child disfigured or disabled should be considered. Perhaps life insurance is a good thing after all? Many consider children necessary for a good marriage although having more than the average number may force you to move house to provide each with a bedroom.

Both Janet and John are adamant that they would not allow their children to eat meals in front of the television but to sit up properly at the dining room table, insisting too that mobile phones and recorders are switched off. They believe that children should have their tasks to do and to help with the clearing away and washing up. Before bed each child is questioned about their day making sure there are no unhappy incidents spoiling a happy environment. They both consider it important to listen to their children and to show affection and praise whenever possible.

Questionnaire

Do you believe it is better to own your own home or to rent? Is it important for you to have children? Do you believe children make a marriage or would it be a disappointment if you only had children of one sex? Is sexual satisfaction important to you? How soon would you like children? Do you believe that it is right to spank your child if they perform badly, misbehave or do not stop shouting? Would you allow swearing in your house? Is your partner's happiness more important than possessions? If you prefer house purchase rather than renting should the property be in your name, your partners, or jointly owned... will you make that commitment in a will. Would you live in an old farmhouse or modern villa, built in the country or in a town? If you insist on natural food cultivation without chemicals would you be prepared to grow your own? If children are sought are you prepared to relocate to a larger home, close to a school, or near a baby minder? Would you extend into the attic? Do you believe in selection for grammar schools or are comprehensive schools good for all. Perhaps you believe secondary modern schools are only fitting for a certain group in society. If your child requires special medical treatment, needing its own room, would you be prepared to move? Would you rather furnish the home before starting a family? If you can only afford to furnish the kitchen and bedroom how long would you wait to do the remainder - before starting a family? Would you have your parent live with you rather than rely upon the state to provide a home. If the house needs redecoration are you going to do it or would you call in someone else. How good are you at replacing a fuse? What style of furniture and décor do you prefer? Are your partner's tastes similar to your own? Would you say you and your partner are in the same social class? Do you and your partner enjoy similar music and film subjects or have a hobby, or sport preference. Which television programmers do you enjoy and are they compatible with your partners. It is said that having 'A Belief' leads to a more fulfilled life. Do you agree? Is it important to you to be married in church? If you lose a game does that make you keen to improve your skill or do you tend to give up. The ... Monarchy increases tourism Are you happy to provide the taxes to maintain the status quo? Do you believe a pet gives the home a comfortable feel? Do you think of the world's sustainability when you fill you car with petrol or diesel, or when you put out the rubbish? Do you know about the Kingsley Report, or have read Dr Spock on Child Care. Do you pay your bills promptly or do you wait until the last moment. What do you think is more important, 'to keep to your word or give in to doubts'?

Talking the matter through

Now that's over with perhaps we can talk through your answers. I hope you agree that it has been a worthwhile task; knowing some of your partner's hopes and fears and highlighting some of your own has been an important discovery.

There are some who believe they know their own minds - are sure in their opinions and feelings. Some are not so sure. There are those who believe they know what they want but cannot give voice to them - perhaps they are shy or retiring; and there are others who can never make a decision - because they can see so many conflicting issues - each problem a stumbling block to be overcome.

How infinitely more difficult it is to ask people about their sexual needs, and how those needs are going to be satisfied, especially considering such matters as physical, emotional and social variations in a changing environment. It's a wonder that any marriage remains constant. It is all these variables that make having some sort of contract or statement - outlining preferences, habits, hopes, our goal.