

ROLE OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE,  
YOUTH PROBLEMS

XVII.

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## Preface

The first time this seminar, whose purpose, it seems, is thesis writing, met I dare say not over three students had an idea of their topic. As, one by one, it grew closer to announcing my choice, I made desperate casts for hungry ideas. Finally I had a nibble which seemed irrevelant at the time, in recalling an overheard conversation of two boys. They were talking of war; 'no, they didn't want to go but "we'd go all right because people would expect us to go."

The adult world places a multitudinous demand upon them, for adjustment, for learning, for meeting standards. We must admit that the rapidity of emphasis and the shifting scenes must present a bewildering front to youth. Have we as Public Health nurses who recognize the place of maternity and infant welfare, the school child, the ill, overlooked the opportunity in giving assistance to one of the most promising and valuable group in the world? Have we missed an opportunity to educate this group in the practical importance of health, and consequently develop an understanding in our field?

The first time I blurted out the topic, it was very nebulous, but it developed itself into a real subject, in fact so much of a real subject that I doubt my ability to handle it competently. It has, however, given me cause to think and it has been a fascinating subject on which to read. From my self-evaluation it has been most worthwhile; as for the literary efforts--that you may question.

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## Introduction

As one surveys the Public Health field it seems odd that there is not a generally accepted definition of its aims. That may not be an indictment, as this is a relatively young public service, and like a very active ameba it is placing out many pseudopods in discovering its relationships. Perhaps it is more wholesome when an inquiring citizen flatly asks, "Well, what is Public Health?" and one is thrown back to explaining in terms of the local situation. On the other hand if the staff talked in similar terms, and in this instance the nurse included the broad vistas which Public Health really encompasses it might make him aware of his future community possibilities. Mustard (1) makes this same observation, "Opinions and conclusions as to the scope of the Public Health field are undergoing change. There are as many perspectives as there are interests concerned, and one's opinion is almost inevitably influenced by his own particular interests and background."

My preference is Smillie's (2) broad conception in his definition: "Public Health practice is both a science and an art concerned with the prevention of disease, prolongation of life, and promotion of both physical and mental efficiency through organized community effort." (C.F.A. Winslow.) He continues by pointing out the principal divisions of Public Health functions, viz, Sanitation, Communicable Disease Control, Public Health Education, Protection and Promotion of Individual Health, Disease Prevention research, and the development of social machinery insuring standards of living adequate

1. Harry S. Mustard M.D. "An Introduction to Public Health"
2. Wilson G. Smillie "Public Health Administration in U.S."

for maintainance for proper health" which one must admit is anything but restricted.

It is not many years ago that health meant abundance of bodily vigor, and even yet if some people are pushed for a definition they stress physical well being. Inasmuch as education is beginning to stress the "whole child goes to school" so is health beginning to take into consideration mental as well as the physical side for health education. At the present time, with "more hospital beds for mental disease and deficiency in the United States than all other hospital beds combined (1930)"(1) attention is being focused on the preventative aspects. It is a truism, especially in this country that if you can show authority that you will save money your program will be accepted gratefully. It behooves the administrator of Public Health to keep in mind "the cost to the state of hospitalization for mental disease and mental deficiency is the largest single item in the state budget." (1)P243.

As a part of the program in fostering good health, with emphasis on both physical and mental health, an individual concerning himself with such service must include, then, mental hygiene. We must have some concept of its background, some realization of its need, and some conviction as to the value of psychiatric case work approach to people. Again referring to Smillie's program in promotion of Mental Health I list four principles given by him:

1. "Individuals in need of assistance in making difficult

1. Smillie--"Public Health Administration in the U.S."



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adjustment rarely understand the situation or know how to take proper steps without the help of those possessing some psychiatric knowledge.

2. The cause for most maladjustment arise in the early years of childhood.

3. The first step in aiding an individual is to determine his inherent capacity to make an adjustment to his own environment.

4. Having done this, one must then aid the individual to find the level at which he can live most successfully . When this has been done, certain logical steps follow, namely:

- a. Cultivation of frank, emotional attitudes.
- b. Teach the person to deal with actualities so that he does not evade difficulties or transfer them into false situations.
- c. Aid the individual in the cultivation of an objective view of life.
- d. Attempt to distribute his interests through a wide and varied range of activities.

It is clear that all these various steps may be taken by a public health nurse, or social worker who has had proper training in mental hygiene, who knows and understands the individual and the family, and who can help them solve their particular situation."

For the development of this paper I have concentrated on the relationships with youth and the Public Health nurse. Stress is particularly placed on the adjustment of this group to the world about them, and if the Public Health Nurse has any responsibility in the matter.

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## The Role of the Public Health Nurse.

What and who is this individual, the Public Health nurse, and to whom is she responsible? Many, many years ago, the role of the public health nurse was undoubtedly filled by Mrs. Og, an elder tribal woman, who, by reason of her experiences, was an authority on matters of illness and family discord. She was not unduly perturbed at the presence of death in the tribe, unless it became of epidemic proportions in which case she attributed the cause as being angered spirits. Later, the public interest in illness was manifested by placing the unfortunate sufferers in the streets of Babylon object of any "cures" which had worked on this or that individual showing like symptoms. One finds this type of interest present yet under the guise of neighborliness or friendship, though many times it may be detrimental to the patient's welfare.

Still later, the emphasis was not as strongly placed upon the cure of the patient as the acquiring of a reserved seat in Heaven for one's own soul. No doubt the good ladies and gentlemen received a good deal of happiness and satisfaction for their own ego, but this "dispensation from Providence" rather irked the recipients. There is an advancement in the field of social relationships from this point of view to the more recent development in an effort to understand human behavior rather than condemning it. It may be a far cry from Mrs. Og, but we must admit that she, as well as we, recognize a need and make an effort to satisfy that need.

Why is the Public Health Nurse? Positions are created by the realization that there is a need. Medicine developed from the crude barbar surgery because people felt that someone should do something about their illnesses, and that they be responsible. It would be unnecessary to have X-ray technicians if the X-ray had not been discovered nor used. We would need no great army of radio operators, manufacturers, or Jack Bennys if Marconi had not utilized the principals of wireless telegraphy. What, then, lead to the development of a Public Health nurse?

Have you ever considered that if Mr. Jones of America had a full awareness of the progress of science and what it might mean to him, Public Health Nursing might be unnecessary? The mother and father, healthy, the habits of sensible living firmly a part of them from childhood, pregnancy with early pre-natal visits to a physician with appreciation of public health methods, a satisfactory delivery arrangement, and post-natal examinations as a matter of course. The development of the child, physically and mentally to its greatest possibilities. Immunization and vaccination at six months, tuberculin testing every three years until it is no longer a menace, ("if the rate of decrease can be accelerated, as results from certain recent studies would indicate as possible, ten years may suffice to bring about the happy result"). If physical examinations were a yearly event in Mr. Jones's life, if adequate facilities for the care of the sick were

made, if mental hygiene were taught, and practiced, the Public Health nurse as we know her would not be needed.

But science has far outstripped Mr. Jones who is so busy with his economic difficulties that health and health problems are minor considerations for him, until he becomes acutely ill. A government pamphlet \* catches the undertone of this social lag by pointing out "an eminent English scientist is saying 'Let us declare a science holiday until the world can catch up,'", Sismondi who ( some one hundred years ago before railroads and steamships) was saying 'Let inventions cease, at lease for a while.'" I doubt if one seriously wishes this to happen, but certainly we need educational interpretation of the progress and improved methods concerning health to Mr. and Mrs. Joneses of America. The Public Health Nurse is one of the individuals functioning in this field.

In an effort to improve man's relationship with man we may have several approaches, it may be from the interest of crime prevention, economic situation, recreation survey, health improvement, religious affiliations. Fortunately emphasis of the present day is being turned on the individual or family as a whole. The public health nurse no longer goes in to do just a dressing and ignore a problem though it be in the economic realm, which is causing family friction. If she be the only trained worker



in the field, no longer does she shut her eyes from other problems and needs. She has become a unit in interpretation, education and assistance, functioning primarily in the health field, to any individual needing her for better and happier living of Life.

And who may be the Public Health Nurses? As the needs of these individuals and families may be placed in varied spheres so must the preparation of a worker dealing with them be as varied. We would scarcely expect an Eskimo to know what to do with a typewriter, without training; now would one expect a nurse to correctly interpret behavior due to family friction, without some preparation along that line. She may be called upon for social problems, which, if there is a social worker in the field would belong under her jurisdiction, and which, if there is not, would be handled by the nurse herself.

At the present time the nurse working in this field is a graduate registered nurse. The nursing school from which she graduated must fulfill certain requirements of theoretical and practical work. She is then required to attend a university or college which fulfills the National Organization for Public Health Nursing requirements, for approximately a year, and receives a Certificate of Public Health nursing at the completion. The type of work includes principles and methods used in Public Health

Nursing, social case work methods, community organization and experience in the different fields of this work, as Visiting Nurses, School and County nursing.

She may be sponsored by different groups. She may be a nurse who is put in the field by an organization to show what may be accomplished by such a program and to stimulate the citizens of that community to develop a permanent unit. She may be employed by a school or a specific type of case, as Tuberculosis. Gradually however, the emphasis is coming to the generalized program which have a personnel capable of integrating all these specialized interests into it.

We have an individual trained to interpret the family to the Physician, the Physician to the family, and the family, in some cases to itself and the community. For what is it, that she is responsible? The functions in Public Health Nursing has been issued by the NOPHN from which I quote:\*

"It is the responsibility of the public health nurse to assist in analyzing health problems and related social problems of families and individuals; to help them with the aid of community resources, to formulate an acceptable plan for the protection and promotion of their own health, and to encourage them to carry out the plan. The public health nurse:

1. Helps to secure early medical diagnosis and treatment

for the sick.

2. Renders or secures nursing care of the sick, teaches through demonstration and supervises care given by relatives and attendants.
3. Assists the family to carry out medical, sanitary and social procedures for the prevention of disease and the promotion of health.
4. Helps to secure adjustment of social conditions which affect health.
5. Influences the community to develop public health facilities through participating in appropriate channels of community education for the promotion of a sound, adequate community health program. shares in community action leading to betterment of health conditions.

All the functions of the public health nurse put together form a well-rounded public health nursing program. If one service is carried on as a separate activity, it needs to be in close relationship with other phases of public health nursing. In practice it is impossible to separate one type of nursing service from others which may be needed in a particular family. Hence in the interest of efficiency and economy, there is a trend toward having one nurse in a limited area perform all functions."

There follows a development of the types of Public

Health Nursing: Maternity, Infant and Preschool, School, Industrial, Communicable and Non-Communicable Disease, Vital statistics and Sanitation, "Efficient work in any service depends upon the understanding and use of such principles and techniques as the following: Mental Hygiene, Nutrition, Records and Reports, and Medical Standing Orders."

"The modern public health nurse brings to her work the training of a graduate register nurse, and in addition to this, special study in the control of communicable diseases, the recognition of social problems, and the study of human behavior and methods of teaching health. She is thus equipped to assist the physician in the bedside care of the sick, the health officer in the control of environment, and the people themselves in an understanding of healthful living.

"...She is one of 20,000 or more public health nurses in the United States, who give health supervision and skilled nursing care to the sick in their homes--both to those who can pay and those who cannot--under medical direction. She instructs the members of the family how to give nursing care between her visits. She interprets the rulings of the health department regarding quarantine and precautions to prevent diseases. She teaches the expectant mother how to carry out her doctor's orders regarding her own care; how to prepare for her confinement and the coming of the baby.



She helps to safeguard the health of the school child and the worker in industry. She assists in the promotion of health through the wise use of community resources and endeavors to bring about better home conditions and a more healthful environment. In all of these activities she applies the most recent scientific knowledge in regard to health conservation."\*

It is quite natural for the Public Health Nurse developing her program to not give more consideration to youth. Frequently the community itself, is the principal factor in this omission. The nurse may find them interested in school health when she enters the community. Very well, she accepts this and begins from that level to expand. Certainly communicable disease control will soon be firmly instilled; then pre-school program will be started. With this alone the nurse may be a very busy person, but visions of the need in maternity work draws her onward. Perhaps there is enlargement in the number of the personnel, very well, expand this program, adjust some of the problems which she has seen but with which she was unable to deal.

Occasionally she discovers a "teen ager" coming to her attention but with the press of her work and the indifference of the community toward this group (unless vandalism has started) she may do "symptomatic" treatment. Her contact with this group is small, simply because

the other programs have been developed with minor consideration to them. The nurse on the other hand may realize their needs, yet find that education of the community, lethargic to their problems, a difficult one. It may even be so deeply submerged with the problems of the present program that further burdens to irk their conscience is ignored. And yet it is, for them, a vital one to maintain a positive environment to encourage young people to live there. The nurse may wearily think "I'm improving the health of babies through pre-natal and maternity work, the preschool child gets some attention at least, and the school child has an opportunity for better health, surely by the time they graduate from the grade school, I should be through." That, unfortunately is the same thought other individuals dealing with children have. The home may consider "with High school Johnny should grow up", the church may say "I've kept them in church until now by this time it should be a habit; the community frowns on acts of childish behavior which six months previous they ignored. The pressure which this has, this "you should know how to act by now" is not a small one to put on an individual who is desperately striving to adjust to this social group who perhaps allowed him unwarranted freedom yesterday.

Has the public health nurse, then any responsibility in assisting this individual. The principles given on P.10

states "Help to secure adjust of social conditions which affect health." In these problems the nurse may be unable to change social conditions but the interpretation of them to these young people may be all they require. Certainly she has a responsibility in facing them, these social conditions may have a more far reaching effect than a fracture. This thesis is not so radical as to believe that consideration of youth is the most important part of a program of Public Health nursing but in a well rounded adequate plan it should have a part. No group of people have a mortgage on the Public Health nurse, whether it be babies, mothers, toddlers, school children, youth or adults!

## An Introduction to the Youth Group

The youth of any nation, depending upon its interest, may be those individuals approaching cannon fodder age, high school or wage earning. The youth is the adolescent the "teen-ager"; the "boy and girl" problems, the child merging into an adult but as for having a definite chronological time for designating one as "you are now an adolescent" it is nearly impossible.

Dr. Conklin points out "There is a period of several years in the life of every human being when he is no longer a child nor is he yet a mature adult. The length of that period varies greatly. Some individuals and some peoples mature early. Other enjoy, or suffer, a considerable period of growth after childhood has passed and before the full development of powers and abilities have been achieved, before life settles down into the routine of an adjusted efficient adult."\*

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Richard Loring brings this period out a bit more graphically. "I suppose most parents and teachers of the adolescent regard themselves as reasonable candidates for martyrdom. Like the family, the adolescent is a time-honoured subject for all kinds of controversy; like the family also, the adolescent seems in every generation about to disintegrate under the strain of changing conditions, but like the same social unit of which he is a member, the adolescent defies prophecy and bobs up as serenely in the age of Bernard Shaw as

\*Dr. E.S.Conklin "Principles of Adolescent Psychology 1935

\*\*Dr.R.E.Loring "Behavior Aspects of Child Conduct 1932



ever he did for the mid-Victorians. He is a confirmed optimist, independent, conceited, and pathologically ungrateful for all the verbal attentions that his elders thrust upon him. ....Twelve or thirteen years is the beginning of that period in the life of every boy or girl when home does not satisfy, parents do not understand, the teachers are unintelligent bullies, and the adolescent demands the right to live his own life. It is a very trying time for everybody. The child begins to assert himself in all sorts of distressing ways. To father and mother John seems suddenly to be entirely different from the boy he always has been. He swaggers around, answers back when criticized, neglects his work in school, wants to stay out at night, juggles shockingly with the truth, and not infrequently takes money that does not belong to him. Mary is equally a trying person. She is silly and trifling, forgets to do her share of the housework, shows signs of "boy craziness", adopts the ideals and manners of favourite film stars, wants to buy ridiculous clothes and spends a great deal of time in her room before the mirror making herself into a hideous caricature with rouge and lip stick. "

Adolescence may remind one of a pendulum which is having a difficult time establishing its arc; many times it swings over to childhood reactions and pauses a bit before it dips again into the adult world. That is why

adults, who dislike anything unpredictable, are so upset with Johnny's behavior of resistance one day and surprising leadership the next. "Adolescence may thus be thought of as primarily a period in which the personality is differentiated and molded into that which is to be characteristic of the individual in the years of adult life. It is the period of leaving school, of breaking away from parental domination, of vocational selection and adjustment, of establishing self-reliance and self-responsibility in conduct; it is the period of sexual restraint in the years between sexual maturation and the age when marriage is approved; it is the period of which the body as a whole reaches its mature proportions and is normally a time of vigorous health; it is a period in which the religion plays a large and often changing function in life; and it is above all a period of social adjustment, one in which the social situation has perhaps a larger influence upon the personality pattern than at any other time in life. It is a period so freighted with problems and possibilities as to make it a most critical period of growth." \* The adult however does not concern itself with the individual endeavoring to make this transition, but judges him by the decisions he, an adult, makes.

It would take another thesis to deal with the many

\* Conklin Ibid, P.2

characteristics of the adolescent group. I shall only endeavor to include the main types of these characteristics. The change in physical characteristics is well known to the nursing group. The contour of girls assume the curves of maturity, the hips broaden, and the breasts develop. Menstruation occurs, frequently irregularly at first. The boy's voice deepens, his shoulders broaden and there may be disproportionate growth of parts of the body. Sexual organs reach adult proportions. "Of the effect of these changes of size and of pattern upon the self concept, the self feelings, and the attitudes towards others every one can recall something. .... Perception of personal awkwardness consciousness of feet and hands and nose or other feature disturbs what little social poise may have been achieved and may contribute not a little to notions or complexes of inferiority. " The complications which this physical growth has for these individuals may cause a much deeper emotional upset than the average adult is prone to think. The disproportionate size frequently gets the adolescent into all sorts of embarrassments, his hands tip over the water glass at the dinner table, his feet have a habit of sprawling in people's way and sometimes tripping them. His coat sleeves suddenly are much too short to his parents dismay. "Clothes that are bought too large as insurance against being too early

outgrown and clothes that are so far outgrown as to make the youth look boobish contribute much to the embarrassments and trials of being youthful."\* The variant voice of the boy causes further unexpected embarrassment and seems prone to occur when the boy is under some nervous tension, as in class recitation. The girl, too is having her difficulties. The width of her hips in comparison to the rest of her body, may cause her to spend many diligent hours in exercise. She may begin a dieting regime despite the danger of this. She is apt to be especially sensitive during menstruation believing that her classmates may be able to discern this. Both boys and girls may have skin eruptions which causes them acute misery, and may cause withdrawing from their social group. An advertisement of a well known product features this as their central theme using the adolescent almost entirely.

Dr. Conklin has given a splendid chapter on the psychology of clothing with the adolescent. He points out that "adolescence is the period of highest clothes consciousness." He quotes Hurlock figures as being over half of the males and females reported that adolescence was the time in their lives when their happiness was most affected by matters of clothing. Students of the psychology of clothing have often pointed out that the customs of clothing at once satisfy two conflicting tendencies in the human being. They satisfy the desire



to be like others and they satisfy the urge to be different, to be individualistic. If clothing is so prominent a concern of adolescent years it can only mean that these two desires, to be distinctly different and at the same time be like others are prominent features of adolescent motivation...." I doubt very much if parents are aware the reason for Johnny's sullen response to "go on to the dance" when he is aware of his ill fitting suit and the economic impossibility of securing a new one.

Occasionally clothing causes concern for a pre-adolescent, giving him problems with which he has no resources to cope.\* Tim was in such a predicament. His parents were destitute, the father a very hard drinker and uninterested in his son, the mother worn from the struggle. Tim was making an effort to meet the social disapproval of his classmates in school, to the odor of his clothes by washing them himself, but he was helpless to provide himself with a new gym suit to replace the one at which his classmates laughed. His response to this situation was made to gain at least the respect of his classmates--he scorned authority. He persistently endeavored to escape this painful situation by the simple expedient of staying away. The Visiting teacher contacted him and began to reconstruct the positive side of Tim. "It may be added that some clothes which Miss Knox got for him proved of real help in the situation." He did finally become accepted in his social group and eventually made a positive member of society.

Frequently the Public Health nurse may be the individual who will need to interpret these bewildering offsprings to their parents and to the community. She may find a mother who after realizing the importance of correct clothing will be glad to cooperate in a program of finding expert advice through a saleswoman or dressmaker. Understanding by the parents will temper much of the harshness of brotherly criticism.

Another difficulty these adolescents have to face is maintaining good postures. Posture difficulties affect these young adults to a dismaying degree, occasionally it is assumed to mask a physical quality of which they are embarrassed. The long gangling height present in some of these individuals cause the stoop and "debutante slouch." As was mentioned by Thom, posture training should begin in childhood--not when mother and father discover that Johnny looks like a walking question mark. Schools too, should be censured here; it is not surprising that with six hours spent in leaning over books the student develops the so-called "angel wings". Problems arising from physical growth should be kept down to the lowest minimum, certainly any remedial work possible should be done to prevent any greater loss of poise. Work by the orthodontist should be done as soon as possible to alleviate the wearing of appliances to the teeth in the late adolescence.

It seems to be the prerogative of the adult world to

smile at the efforts of this group to adjust socially. The consternation of an adult trying to handle the attached airplane which is common to county fairs is much the same as the consternation which the youth experiences in trying to handle his rapidly changing and increasingly powerful machine. The causes in both cases is the functioning with unknown machines. Such is the case with the social adjustment these youths must make.

"Adolescents are hostile to social environment just because it is new to them. Primitive man fears new situations, he dreads change. Adolescents behave toward the more pretentious social programs much as the barbarian does toward advancing civilization. They are at first suspicious; then they develop antagonism; and if this is not subdued there presently springs up out-and-out rebellion; yet the whole psychological process is quite unconscious;...."

"Modern young people participate in the process of social adaptation with fear and trepidation, and this it not to be wondered at when we consider that the boy of today, during a period of about five years, is having to adapt himself to anywhere from one hundred to one thousand times as much as his primitive cousins of a few thousand years back had to face during adolescent. Becoming a man or woman is a much more complicated process than it use to be." \*

Too, the boy and girl in primitive society knew he must attain definite standards as set forth by the tribe

to be accomplished at a definite time. Formal ceremonies as pointed out by Miss Hollingsworth in "Psychology of the Adolescent" is proof of the recognition of the importance of puberty. In these ceremonies the qualities which are most admired in the adult male and female are stressed. The boy must show courage, skill in hunting self-control, and ability warranting him to become a warrior of the tribe. The girl too undergoes ceremonies, fasting, learning the duties expected of a wife, obedience, submission and attractiveness of self. The transition from this frank and open declaration of achieving maturity to allowing youth to learn by the more severe trial and error method is well put in Thom's introduction to "Normal Youth and Its Everyday Problems." \*

"Our ancestors faced many of the facts of life more frankly than we do. Among other evidences of this are the manuals that have come down to us from the Middle Ages known among scholars as "Conduct Books." .....They were addressed to parents and children, to boys and girls; and while some were openly aimed at social and worldly successes, others were more or less sensible hygienic instructions or lofty spiritual exhortations. The notable thing about them were that they candidly recognized the need of the young human being to be taught almost everything necessary for healthy and decent living, and cultivated no reticences on the tacit assumption that "nature" would look out for things.



"With the growth of elegance and the increase (or change) of conventions, we began to hide the etiquette book at the back of the shelves, apparently assuming that a well-bred youth knew its contents by instinct; we banned the mention of many natural processes and phenomena; we took for granted more and more that most of what concerned the birth and nurture of children, apart from the purely intellectual matters entrusted to the school master, was instinctively known to parents or could be safely left to oral tradition."

We have begun swinging back to a bit more sane consideration in the education of youth, however we are far from doing a thorough job. Parents are yet reticent in presenting answers to their youngsters question in a frank manner or are they willing to permit formal education to assume that function, which rightfully belongs to the parents. It is interesting to note that education is beginning to feel their responsibility in teaching their students something beside Latin and Geometry. An interesting book in this direction is the one "Building Personality and Character" by Wheatley and Mallory. It is developed as a orientation textbook for the High School student. The first part deals with simple facts of elementary psychology presented in a very interesting manner, the second section deals with "vocations and human relations". The emphasis of the book is laid primarily in the masculine

W.A.Wheatley, R.R.Mallory "Building Personality and Character". 1935

world, especially in consideration of the vocational opportunities, but transition is possible, I presume for the feminine side. The pictorial representations of abstract ideas, as for instance the types of thinking, were most interesting, and the use of the "cooperative we" instead of the "preachy you" would gain favor with adolescents. I felt that this was a determined step in acquainting this group not only with their own psychological set up, but the community as a whole. However, the placing of great value on college education is questionable in my mind, inasmuch, as many of the snarls of this group results from this striving to attain a higher level than their intellectual equipment could possibly reach.

There are four spheres which adolescents must make an adjustment for a well balanced life.\* He must achieve the psychological weaning from those on whom he was dependent, usually the family; he must have an opportunity of attaining economic independence in the vocation he is interested in and adaptable to; he must have an opportunity to become acquainted with members of the opposite sex; and last, during this period he must create a philosophy, a "life plan" by which he can live. It is in these four things that adolescents find their conflicts to a great extent. Authors tend to amplify these and reclassify them into detail; they may approach them through different

\*Leta S. Hollingsworth "Psychology of the Adolescent." 1928

channels but it can be usually be traced to one of these four points. One author has the following chapter heads: "Family conflicts, Educational and Vocational problems, Marriage problems and What Girls want of Life,"\* which shows similar consideration of adolescent problems in these spheres.

It is, then, in these, or some application of them that adolescent must be oriented. It is in these that society places pressure, sometimes pressure which is contradictory. In professional education which is a means of attaining future economic sufficiency the youth may desire marriage but in the eyes of society and his family he is unable to provide for her; he may be strongly indoctrinated with a religious creed from childhood but which he is unable to adjust to scientific facts, he may desire the achievement of individualism, "on his own" but financial assistance of his family is imperative for his professional course. A business man having a big deal may demand and get absolute quiet at home, instant cooperation at his office, studied period of relaxation; but a youth struggling with problems more elemental than his must continue his academic work, meet his classmates, perhaps have a date with his girl friend--or feel the smart of social disapproval. Perhaps means of escape would be less employed by the adolescent if conclusions were not so hastily drawn by family, school and community. One may hear the

snorts of derision at such idealism, hear the oldsters say "That's life, you might as well get use to it". Society's disapproval may be much more painful than the physical pain of the primitive's ceremonials. I have no battle with the tactics of a society who has performed its foundation work with childhood well, but if these inexperienced youth are struggling to find a place for themselves in a unknown situation, with no conception of social weapons, it seems public court martial is not in order as much as a bit of interpretation and education in whatever realm the adolescent is finding difficulty. "The deeper and better a child has lived, the less stress will he experience in the transition to adolescence. If his emotional incentives, and intellectual insights and appreciations are kept up, the change is made, without crucial strains. For the adolescent both school and home should be places for expression, trial and error experimentation, cooperation, accomplishment and enjoyment."\*



### How the Adolescent May meet his Problems.

We are quite willing to grant, as a rule, that given a group of ten young horses which are put to a moderately high hurdle, that we have ten possible reactions. One horse, who is biologically of the draft type, may under sufficient pressure make an ungainly attempt and crash through the bars. Forced to do this a number of times and eventually he will balk. Why? For the reason of physical discomfort, and lack of satisfaction. Another who is not yet physically ready for such a jump may too make the attempt and painfully fail, refusing to ever try again, though later he could do it with ease. Another may love to jump, doing it gracefully, and realize the "social approval" it gets. Still another who had had a previous experience with a barb-wire fence, brands all fences to be avoided. The last may have its interest in racing, and seeing no use to expend energy going over an object when with a little forethought it could go around it.

The human race well recognizes the limitation of horseflesh. In some instances it does so with human beings. One does not anticipate that we shall all have the voice of a Caruso or a Lind, nor would we with years of education. But we expect that the child will go to eight years of school, continue into Highschool

and finish college with honors. We have placed such a value on formal education that youths are sometimes pushed into an inimical situation, for them, as were young men "enlisted" to serve in the King's navy by "press gangs." They might prefer work suited to their physical temperament, their interests may lay elsewhere, but they go to school. "The academic curriculum being essentially a stepladder type of training, assumes that every child who enters first grade shall be prepared for college entrance. The large percentage of school children who fail without even reaching the sixth grade has been grossly ignored in the persistent attempt to force an academic education upon all those who enter the public school."\* They frequently fail, and as Howard and Patry says "persistent criticism, ridicule, sarcasm, unfair comparison, unwholesome competition and a home and school environment lacking in opportunity for some form of successful achievement will dull the keenest mind and break the strongest spirit."\*\*

We are unable to base all these failures purely on inadequate intellectual equipment. It is true that parents are most concerned with school failures fearing that they reflect mental retardation. "Parents who are quite indifferent to their children's manners and morals, who are totally ignorant of the children's emotional satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and who

\*Thom Ibid P 154

\*\*Howard and Patry P 173

jealousy, cruelty and various other personality traits as mere phases of development to be passed through and outgrown, rise up in indignation when their children do not receive their promotion in school at the proper time." They are prone to blame the school system, the teacher, the community, anyone but themselves.

In the presentation of a problem in which the child is unable to cope with academic requirements too frequently is the educational system and the community ready to blame the intellectual equipment. Thus the child is forgotten in the fight between parent, school and community. A nurse to whom such a problem is brought should endeavor to piece the child's background. Occasionally it is mere inadequate preparation of the child for the work, and with the advent of trailer families we can expect even more of that. Interest, the basis of learning, or motivation, of course may be absent in academic studies with the total indifference of the student as a result. Outside interests are so strong that the youth really has little time for "trivial algebra problems." The nurse should seek professional assistance for such a case as any of the above, being able to give him her findings.

We are beginning to grant that the son of a farmer need not necessarily become a farmer. Sadler would undoubtedly desire to qualify this by saying: "It is no disgrace for the son of an artizan to become a

physician, but it is looked upon as something of a shame for the son of a physician to become an artizan." Education and vocation go hand in hand, and therefore it seems it will be necessary for someone to help these young people to say to their parents. "I don't want to be an accountant, I want to build dams."

To achieve "psychological weaning" is in itself no small job for the adolescent. Whereas the primitive tribe would signify the severing of family ties, the modern boy or girl may still be a family dependent in the middle twenties. This urge to "get away from family supervision and to become an independent person" may or may not be satisfied. Sometimes the breaking away is too painful for the immature adolescent and he continues to depend upon parental supervision or a parent substitute.

Frequently the time of this weaning occurs during the college years, or boarding school. Homesickness is a symptomatic expression for the parental solicitude and comfort which the student finds missing in dormitory life. Should he not persist in establishing himself as an individual, he may return home and continue being "mamma's boy" to his own infinite unhappiness and disgust. "In this connection it may be added that covert hatred or contempt is typically the eventual portion of the parent who hinders the psychological weaning of his child."

Hollingsworth Psych of Adolescent" P 57



One feels that the song "Take a Lesson from the Lark" might be applicable here. At least when one has witnessed the pushing of the young birds from the nest when the proper time has come, the human parent should realize that, too, is their function. Mothers are apt to be the worst offenders on this score and one can readily understand why. After twenty years of having the task of raising children she is reluctant to see her business being declared closed; and she needs desperately, new interests to which to turn. Conklin in fairness points out that "one must not think that all adolescents go through a serious struggle in the process of being emancipated from parental domination just because some do have to struggle. Nor should one conclude that all parents seek to obstruct the achievement of independence on the part of their children because experts in the analysis of adolescent behavior finds this true in certain cases."

One of the tragic results of inadequate weaning may be found in some marital relationships. The woman may be seeking a parent substitute in her husband, or vice versa; the coming of a child may cause friction from the one who dislikes the others attention to the newcomer. The worse catastrophe is however, the chance marriage of two such people, neither one being mature to satisfy the others desire for supervisory coddling and protection.

The adolescent find difficulty in adjusting to another

perfectly natural urge--that of mating. The primitive boy having achieved tribal recognition was free to mate at an early age with a tribal girl. Not so the modern adolescent. Despite the maturation of the sex impulse at the same age, he must restrain it until marriage is possible, and this delayed many years for economic independence to be established. Preparation for the professional fields may delay marriage until the thirties are reached. Sadler believes "that the educational system must more and more be equipped with differential speed gears. It appears to me we could provide for three differential speeds in intellectual training. Youth with an intelligence quotient of 135-150 might be allowed to proceed at high speeds and would possibly save five years." The author should consider however that professions require emotional maturity as well, and unless the individual was a well\*rounded person that an intellectual blotter would be worse than the loss of five years.

I presume nature fully intended young men and young women to have the opportunity of being together. We have passed the age in which colleges were strictly of one sex, although there are many segregated schools today. Psychologists believe this to be an artificial situation. Groves says (quoted from Miss Hollingsworth) "Discussion regarding the advantage and disadvantages of teaching boys and girls together continues, but fortunately for the welfare of the family the trend is constantly toward

co-education.....Sex attraction is a perfectly normal element of the adolescent period. Co-education does not produce it; segregation cannot prevent it. It comes because it is due in the development of the young person." Many places make no allowance for this, there is no recreational center in which the young adults may mix with social approval. The only public dance hall available is disapproved by the family, the school can not be used for dancing so the adolescent gets into the car and fares forth on the petting party. Blanchard does not condemn this practice, feeling that it may make for a more harmonious and successful marriage in later life. There are authors who note that co-education schools do not solve all the difficulties. Ernest Groves says "even the most healthy association of young men and women cannot eliminate problems that are caused by the postponement of marriage for the purpose of getting an education."\* So it again revolves around the economic phase of modern life.

Perhaps the solving of this problem will be along the line that Miss Hollingsworth points out. If it were a certainty that children would not be born the young adults might marry and "each contract supporting himself or herself." However birth control is not developed to the point of certainty and "it has been suggested that under these conditions the parents of the young couple should stand ready to continue their partial support, until support of offsprings can be fully achieved by the

latter that it should become a duty of parents in view of the prolongation of infancy which civilization brings."

The gaining of a philosophy or a religion, too presents its conflicts. To what extent the average adolescent concerns himself with conflicts over philosophy is undetermined. The elders might be well pleased at the response to the question, "Do you believe in God?"

of 5,500 college students, 91% of whom answered affirmatively. The author (Conklin) adds that this may not be too valid in the face that the students might answer what they thought they ought to answer. A study of the attitudes of adolescents toward church by Thurstone-Chase reveals an average sampling of what would be the results in the general public. "One may suspect of course that from pubescence up through the years of adolescence there would be found considerable shifting of attitude toward the church." \* Certainly one knows there is a difference between the religion of a child and an adult, and this change logically enough would come between. Another author tends to believe that the religion to which the adolescent is becoming indifferent needs to be modernized a "twentieth century translation..."\*\*

Lita Hollingsworth has perhaps, given the best and clearest analysis of the position of the adolescent of today. "Much is said to-day of the need for a new religion. Progressive clergymen recognize that those youths who will replenish the intellectual class in the rising gen-



generation are not accepting literally the beliefs of the established churches. The modern mind is fashioned by the impact of scientific methods and facts in a way that was not possible in previous centuries. The modern youth, scientifically trained, perceives man as an animal, created by a natural process called evolution. He understands his world as mechanism, his existence as chemistry. The anthropomorphic god and the concepts of special creation and of posthumous reward for moral conduct no longer meet youthful need, among those from whom religious leaders were in a former day recruited.

Yet although the modern educated youth of fine intelligence sees himself as a mechanism in a mechanistic world his ego is as rebellious as was the ego of the youth preceding him, against personal extinction. ....This state of affairs sets many hard problems for theology. Perhaps the only possible solution will be the development of personal religion, each thinker building for himself whatever system of ethics and whatever explanation of life he may be able to devise and to adopt emotionally."

I believe orthodoxy will continue to be the stronghold of the greater proportion of human beings for some time. Those who are not able to accept such creeds will no doubt be put to it, in adolescent, to formulating a philosophy of their own.

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The reactions of an adolescent who is unable to gain satisfaction, who has terrific conflict, or who has not been able to find satisfaction or sublimation for

his drives will be much the same as a hungry animal in a cage. He will endeavor to escape from the disturbing element. How he makes this escape is irrelevant to him as long as he gets away from the situation.

It may be physical flight, it may be a neuroses, it may be a temporary escape such as alcohol or narcotics which will make him oblivious for a short time to the tension.

Do not misunderstand me when I mention physical flight as a means of escape that all running away is a problem. After all, we, or most of us have, the curiosity of seeing the other side of the hill, and that is in the category of desire of adventure. We have heard much of this migration of the adolescents, but which Federal investigation does not bear entirely out.

"The evident youth of the unattached was not a confirmation of the dire prediction that an 'army of boys' was on the road. In none of the twelve months reported .....does the proportion of unattached transients under twenty years of age exceed one-fifth of the total (250,000 estimated). One is interested in discovering the reasons these 50,000 boys were on the road. The number greatly increased during the summer due no doubt to the improved traveling conditions, the termination of school and the lack of employment for college students. (1933). "Careful interviewing of the young transients frequently elicited

the frank statement that he was on the road less from economic insufficiency than from a desire to see the country when favorable weather and facilities for his care made transiency preferable to inactivity in his home community." Less than 2% unattached women were reported by the transient camp being considered a minor problem, though no doubt representing, in each case a serious situation.

If school represents a day of continuous failing, schooling teasing the boy or girl may choose to become a truant. Anything is better than the environment they just left, juvenile court or no. One can not however hide under a wharf forever, and soon activity of a questionable nature is usually indulged in. The boy is then "bad." He is a rebel and must be punished, despite the fact that it will surely do no good, and that on the contrary, since this behavior gives him a certain amount of attention he is prone to repeat the act.

Formerly the community, and the school after one such an offense waited with bated breath for him to repeat it, giving them an opportunity to say "Well I said that Jones youngster was a bad one." Of course Tommy Jones might have been like the Buster in "Children of the Crossroad." Buster was faced with no affection and security in the home of a "mean" sister-in-law so he chose to go away to the small town of Galway which at one time had given him happiness. After an unfortunate placing Buster was

taken in by a Doctor and his wife, his expenses being paid by a "brighten the Corner club". He made splendid progress until one night, whether it was being alone in the big silent house, or his desire to try his own wings or homesickness for his brother who had visited him recently, Buster took a dilapidated bicycle and started out. The bicycle was not his to take either. Remorse and sorrow was great when Buster returned to the cellar of his sister-in-law, for "keeps--he couldn't expect anyone to help him now." Nonetheless he was given the opportunity to return to Galway, and though tongues were wagging there the Visiting Teacher and Buster's friend out-talked them all. He was again happily accepted into the community, this time to stay.

In the mental world, escape may vary from psychopathic personalities with no response to affliction of the special senses and symptoms of serious illnesses. The Individual is unaware, usually of the device he is using or why he is using it. Cure "miraculously" results from remedying the conflicting situation--and by instituting some sort of suggestion therapy. College during the first year may prove too much of an adjustment for an immature personality to make, so she develops symptoms necessitating her return to a comfortable and less demanding situation. This is one of the most common



reactions of the civilized human being to situations which seem beyond their capacity. One wonders whether this happened in the primitive tribe; possibly that is where the "bewitched" comes in, on the other hand one is doubtful if the tribe allowed any of its members to be a "dead weight". Certainly the individual did not have quite as many adjustments to make.

"The stress of meeting a life situation is determined by two things: One's preparedness for meeting it, and the nature of the situation itself. An individual may, for example, have acquired that degree of maturity which would have prepared him to meet, adequately, any of the stressful situations in life had they occurred singly, or perhaps all of them, had they been scattered through the life cycle; but if an unhappy marriage were followed by severe financial reverses and the death of a much-loved parent, all in rapid succession, he may well find the situation in its totality too stressful,----"

"There is a breaking point in the stability of every individual. Fortunately most people are never subjected to the physical and mental strain which determines this point. When it is reached, however, the organism fails to function and only the most mature and adequate can successfully meet the task of reintegration." \*

It is impossible to cover the various kinds of reactions the adolescent may make to these stresses. I have pointed out that physical and mental escape are usually the

modes takes to adjust or rather avoid intolerable situations. If tension develops there will be an outlet whether it be in the realm of social approval or not depends entirely upon the situation.

A very fine investigation into the field of delinquency was made by Dr. Healy and Bronner. I am including an analyzation of their findings for two reasons: The public health nurse must consider delinquency deviation from normal for the individual so much so as some disease she is very interested in--it may be far more debilitating. This is a recent and comprehensive survey of the field, which clarifies many of the controversial points made in the past, inasmuch as twins and siblings are used.

"It finally appears that no less than 91% of the delinquents gave clear evidence of being or having been very unhappy and discontented in their life circumstances or extremely disturbed because of emotion provoking situations or experiences. In great contradistinction we found similar evidences of inner stresses at the most in only 13% of the controls.

"Now what have we discovered to be the nature and types of these inner stresses and their causes? with all the variations in causes of unhappiness and emotional discomfort there is some difficulty in classifying them, but modern psychiatric concepts are extremely helpful for organization of data concerning emotional life.

Healy, Bronner, "New Light on Delinquency and Its Treatment. "

"Heally and Bronner give the following causes:

1. Feeling keenly either rejected, deprived, insecure, not understood in affectional relationships, unloved or that love has been withdrawn.
2. Deep feeling of being thwarted other than affectionally either: a. in normal impulses or desires for self-expression, or other self-satisfactions. (b) in unusual desires because earlier spoiled, or (c) in adolescent urges and desires--even when (as in 5 cases) desire for emancipation had been blocked only by the individual's counterative pleasure in remaining childishly attached.
3. Feeling strongly either real or fancied inadequacies or inferiorities in the home life, in school, or in relation to companionship or to sports.
4. Intense feeling of discomfort about family disharmonies, parental misconduct, the conditions of family life or parental errors in management or discipline.
5. Bitter feelings of jealousy toward one or more siblings or feelings of being markedly discriminated against because another in the family circle more favored.
6. Feeling of confused unhappiness due to some deep-seated, often repressed, internal mental conflict, expressed in various kinds of delinquent acts which often are seemingly unreasonable.
7. Conscious or unconscious sense of guilt about earlier delinquencies or about behavior which technically was not delinquency; the guilt sense directly or indirectly activating delinquency through the individual's feeling of punishment.

The types of reactions represented by delinquency follows:

1. Attempt to avoid, even as a temporary measure the unpleasant situation by escape or flight from it.
2. Attempt to achieve substitutive compensatory satisfactions through delinquent activities. These satisfaction include the thrill of delinquent adventure and the gratification at obtaining special recognition or attention, perhaps even notoriety as a delinquent. In some instances material gains figure as compensation for deprivation.
3. Attempt to strengthen or bolster up the ego wounded by feelings of inadequacy or inferiority. The aim then is to obtain recognition and status



with the delinquent crowd; or, if the offender is more solitary in tendencies, by the individual proving to himself that he is really is courageous and can in some way play a spirited role. This "masculine protest" we found to be a not uncommon reaction with some previously effeminate or feminized boys.

3. Attempt to get certain ego-satisfaction through direct and conscious or even unconscious expression of revenge attitudes--perhaps through a hidden desire to punish parents or others by conduct that will make life difficult for them
4. Attempt to gain a maximum of self-satisfaction, to inflate the ego, by generally aggressive, anti-social attitudes, that is by the exhibitions of definite hostilities and antagonisms to authority.
5. Response to instinctual urges felt to be thwarted. While this response may be exhibited in sexual misbehavior, the more notable of our delinquents we have discovered the attempt to satisfy the urge for independence and emancipation which normally flares up as an adolescent phenomenon.
6. The wish for punishment was clearly discernible in a few instances and suspected in others. This seeking punishment delinquent behavior possibly offering an opportunity for being punished--was always a response to a conscious or unconscious feeling of guilt.

"Delinquency is a symptom, a symptom of some personal or social maladjustment, and its reational treatment should be analogous to therapy in medical science. Such a symptom as fever is regarded as evidence of some pathological process which requires diagnosis and is to be treated according to the special reactions exhibited by the patient."



### What the Public Health Nurse Could Do.

In the first place the Public Health nurse must realize her limitations. She must realize that her background of training is only general; that for diagnosis of an adolescent problem she needs the leadership of a psychiatrist. True, she may provide this psychiatrist with the facts which will enable him to make a much more intelligent diagnosis and plan of treatment; but it is not her premise to state behavior "whys". It is indeed her function to educate the community in the principles of behavior.

"Much of our work as nurses and social workers, is to help people to see farther than they could without our special knowledge, and to plan ahead rather than taking the comfortable immediate solution which seems good to them at the time. Foreseeing no consequences it is easy to neglect minor physical defects and to avoid facing really difficult issues. One of the most fruitful ideas for human application to the human situations which ....we meet every day is the concept that people's behavior always serves some need connected with their adaptation to life."

"....the greatest problems now facing social work, and I suspect, nursing also are problems in the application of what we already know. Especially is this true of the understanding of human behavior. We need to be constantly

alert to avoid falling into the pitfalls as practiced by the communities which we work. We want to understand what need people are trying to satisfy by the behavior that seems to us annoying. If we do understand, we will deal more intelligently with difficult patients and secure more real cooperation than we could ever win by advice or scolding."\*

How she is to do this depends of course on the community. Teaching by individual face-to-face conferences with mothers, mothers-to-be, and fathers will be a positive factor, as each of these in turn contacts other neighbors. Group discussions or conferences are worthwhile providing the leader is able to preserve peace between the positive Mrs. Jones who believes in "larraping" to the sweet but equally as positive Mrs. Smith who believes in "free expression of children. The general public in the rural counties have not had the practice in permitting opposite views to be expressed without immediate emotional outbursts from the others. It behooves the nurse to consider this before introducing or permitting to be introduced a highly emotional topic for discussion. Reading circles on this subject, too must be carefully guided, or the young people will become objects of continuous scrutiny and erroneous interpretation. If a Parent Teachers Association or some other group persist in desiring to read on this topic Lita Hollingsworth's "Psychology of the Adolescent" would be a fairly safe book to choose.

\*Bertha Reynolds "Applying What We know in Mental Hygiene"  
Public Health Nursing Oct. 36

The time to begin "training for adolescents" is in the pre-natal period. A good physical endowment will be starting the child to a flying start. A balanced routine in which the child may develop in security and affection will eliminate the most of adolescent problems. A developing human being does not don an entirely new personality at a certain age anymore than physical features change overnight.

It is well for the public health nurse to seriously consider the five points made by Mrs. Vierling Kiersey \* State Superintendent of Public Instruction, California. The adult must face the tremendously extended period of youth which less than a score of years, "armed with an 8th grade diploma" was taking its place in the world, it must face the lessening number of young people and the tendencies of families to hold onto them--to the youths disadvantage. Education is placing value on three spheres (not necessarily the formal education of school more likely outside of school) which are desired for security, consciousness of health and of Recreation. Inasmuch as we have encouraged the youth toward these trends it is also our responsibility to encourage them to make a plan. The public must provide constructive interests to fill the time of these individuals having boundless energy.

\*Journal of Juvenile Research July 1936 Vol XX No 3

The community resources which the nurse may utilize are scarce in the less populated areas. Many times conscious provision of recreation for young people is missing, and the movies and the public dance hall are their only diversion. Character building agencies are invaluable in some cases in which the delinquency is caused by insufficient avenues for interest. The Boy Scouts' program is primarily leisure time activity in the fields which capture the average boy's fancy. Camping, signalling, trailing and whole field of hobbies are offered to him under leadership and supervision. The Hi Y an organization of the Y.M.C.A. may be of interest to older boys.

The organized groups permit the youth to identify himself with his associates through his own special interests, in a more or less permanent situation. The girls too have organizations, the Scouts which are developed along similar lines to the Boys, the Campfire Girls who have more ceremony of dress, and the Girl Reserves, of the Y.W.C.A. Public health nurses should not feel her problem solved after an adolescent has joined such a group. Financial considerations, clothing or personality defects may prevent adjustment. Assistance for schooling may be obtained through the N.Y.A. in some cases.

The nurse should encourage community effort for pro-



viding centers of interest for the young people of the community. It might be well to emulate the effort of a certain Catholic society which provided card-games for the parents and older children, supervised play for the younger children and after lunch, the rugs were rolled up and dancing began. The entire family unit had an opportunity for a refreshing evening of activity.

Parents of the future will no doubt hear a great deal of talk on the preparation for raising children; no longer will the belief that physical motherhood miraculously bring the knowledge of how to "raise them." With this background the adolescent, we trust, will not have as many difficulties. As John Wanamaker has said "Save a man, you save one person; save a boy and you save a whole multiplication table.."

The public health nurse is just one person in this field who must help the community to understand, and she must cooperate with the Social worker and teacher. She is an educator, and in her program for good health, she must plan a part for the youth. She must realize that these will become better parents, and too will recognize the value of her program.

"Will ye say, O foolish men! that the skill of ordering One's life well is not to be taught, but to come of its own accord, without reason and without art? Plutarch. (frontpiece Lita Hollingsworth "Psych of Adolescent."

The End

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