

# I REFUSED A CAREER

ILLUSTRATED BY  
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FACING me on my desk are five small square silver frames. The one in the middle pictures a well-set-up young chap, tall and dark and straight, with a bag of clubs slung across his shoulder and an all's-well-with-the-world grin set upon his features. It is Brian Winthrop. And he is my husband.

This picture is flanked on either side with two others, each of which looks down at me with an identical spread-mouth smile which has been inherited from their father. They are my four children. And for these five people, after calm and cool and logical deliberation, I resolutely abandoned what promised to be a brilliantly successful career. In my very soul I am sure that I decided rightly.

It would be easy to make this a story replete with moral posturings and sentimental melodrama. It is not my purpose to do either. But I would like to tell simply and with as much convincingness as I can why I have found a greater happiness in being known as Brian Winthrop's wife than I could ever have found in that fame which would have made my husband known as the man who was married to Ruth Winthrop. Of course, the very nature of this narrative makes it imperative that fictitious names be used.

## A Child Writer

SO OFTEN, spread upon the pages of the newspapers and magazines in these days, one finds photographs of women—beautiful women, brilliant women who have, through some route in this era of opportunity, won fame and fortune. And, often, there is a line of print which goes on to say that the celebrity is also a successful wife and the mother of one or more children.

I am always impatient of this assertion. For I know that if a woman has attained financial success through her own personal and indefatigable endeavor, then she cannot look into her own heart and substantiate that claim of successful wifehood and motherhood. It is not humanly possible to give oneself wholeheartedly to two or more separate and distinct callings. Always there must be a choice. Here is the story of mine. Perhaps it is not unique. I hope it is not. But one hears so much about the successful professional woman and so little about those of us who have chosen the other part.

I have thought at times that instead of being born with the proverbial silver spoon in my mouth, I must instead have been born with a stubby, sharply pointed pencil in my hand. I shall never know whether this pencil was silver. I do know that I have been writing with it for as long as I can remember.

The earliest of my efforts which has been preserved was a short story written when I was seven years of age. Oddly, it was the story of the struggle which a young mother made to keep her baby from dying of croup. I remember that my own mother cried when she read it, and to this day it reposes in solemn preservation between the pages of the family Bible. And, young as I was, I can very well recall the fascination with which I regarded this power whereby I could call forth emotion through a combination of my own thoughts and unemotional lead.

Long before I was ten years old my work appeared in print in the local newspapers—poems and little essays—and later such prizes as were offered in the city schools for literary endeavors of one kind and another fell into my eager writing fingers like ripe plums from a plum tree.

When I graduated from high school I was the proud author of the class poem and also the class

song. Six months after this I was married. I was eighteen years old; my husband was twenty-two. He was working as odd-job boy for a manufacturing concern and his salary was six dollars a week. And, as must be evident, we were very much in love.

## My First Check

HOW we managed to live comfortably on that six dollars a week would make a book in itself. I did all my own housework, including the washing and ironing and scrubbing, and still could not keep busy for all the long hours which my young husband worked. He was employed at a factory three miles out of town, and he left home shortly after six o'clock in the morning. The company maintained business offices in the city, and, several times a week, Brian must work until late at these town offices, checking over the cars of product which had gone out on that day.

To give myself occupation during these long hours, I started to write a story. And when it was done, I mailed it secretly and on impulse to the editor of a well-established magazine which was catering to the interests of the small-town woman. And this very first story which I had ever written or offered was promptly

accepted by the editor of that first magazine. With his check came a friendly note and the request for more stories. He did not know that the budding author was exactly nineteen years old. The story had been written in the first person from the viewpoint of a woman of seventy.

I distinctly remember that I was on my knees wiping up the linoleum of my kitchen floor when this letter arrived. And I shall never forget that moment of breathless exaltation. Money! And I had earned it. The fever for writing that was in my blood burned hotly at this juncture. Brian came in and without words, I handed him the letter.

He read it hurriedly. Then he turned to me—elation fairly shining from his face. "Why, Ruth, honey, I had no idea you could do anything like this." And then all the questions. "When did you write it? And how? And do you have ideas for more? Gee, but this is great. Why, dear, I hardly know what to think of you or to say to you. You are wonderful!"

And excited and thrilled, I basked blissfully for a brief period in the warmth of his generous approval and his pride. We made many plans for my writing. And, young innocents that we were, trying to live on a few dollars a week, we considered only the additional income which my stories might mean for us.

But all that happy day something vague and indefinable bothered me. The clouds upon which I trod



He Has Always Been  
Ready to Load the Tribe  
Into His Car and Carry  
Them Off for an Outing



somehow did not seem quite so buoyant as I wanted. The lightness which lifted my spirit was penetrated by a chill draft whose source I could not locate. And it was not until long after I was in bed that night, lying awake in the dark, that a swiftly swooping memory brought understanding.

A short time before, Brian's salary had been increased from six to eight dollars a week, and he had come bursting home to take me in his arms as he told me about it. And his love for me as he laid his offering at my feet had been as visible as a radiance. But it had not been just like that today. Tender, sympathetic, proud—all of these Brian had been. But he had also been hesitant. He had not put his arms around me and he was not flushed with love because I had earned money. A reserve, of which I am sure he was not conscious, had momentarily lifted a menacing head between us. I shivered at the thought.

And to this day, Brian does not know that long after he was asleep that night, I turned over and put my arms around him and promised myself that no career of mine should ever supersede my wifehood, or the motherhood which I hoped was coming to me.

#### Baking "Happy Cakes" for My Little Boys

I HAVE since learned that making a decision is by no means the end of it. Temptation seems to take a special delight in tormenting folks who make decisions. It has always seemed to me that the devil is particularly busy with his interference in the Lord's own institutions. And I was reared in an old-fashioned family to the belief that marriage is a divine ordinance and not merely a human arrangement. For despite the modern madnesses which have been thrown like some grotesque cloak over this religious and civil contract, woman still holds fast in her own

heart to that belief in marriage which was originated in Eden, and which was God's own idea of completeness. Nothing else satisfies. She may delude herself for a brief time that she is holding precious fruit in her hands, but eventually she finds that anything less than legal wedlock is rotten at the core and housing a canker of regret. I speak only of those women who have loved and voluntarily taken upon themselves the carrying out of the beatitudes of love. I cast no shadow upon that vast army of fine professional women who are free to lay the wreath of independence and financial success at the foot of womankind.

And so, on the day that I sold my first story, I decided that my writing was to be like a piece of hand-crocheted lace, upon which I could work at will, picking it up or laying it down as more important occasions demanded. An avocation. A spare-time hobby which must never overshadow the essential duties of my household.

Thus casually did I attempt to dispose of a thing as insidious as a pernicious anemia. For years henceforth the persistent urge to write was to struggle to annihilate my decision in favor of domesticity. I am grateful that I did not fully realize the seriousness of the condition until after I was cured. Because of this fact, there followed ten years of happy history.

Reader, I lived. My life was so full of real duties that I had little time to consider romantic ideals. If one cannot have his head in the stars while his feet are on the earth, then he can at least choose which he prefers. And I must admit that I thoroughly enjoyed having my feet upon mundane soil. It was fortunate for me that I had this tendency in my disposition; and each day strengthened my belief that genuine happiness is dependent on prosaic conditions.

I believe that I have had a full share of the experiences which are commonly accepted as enjoyable;

but I think of no thing which has given me more pleasure than standing at the kitchen table over a huge yellow mixing bowl, my spirit as light as the batter I beat, watching the expression and listening to the chatter of the three eager little boys who were waiting for the resulting cup cakes. It is pure entertainment to hear Jerry, the baby, confidently tell his brothers that I am making "happy cakes"; and to discover that this is his childish combination of happy birthday and birthday cake.

#### Four Masterpieces and Many Short Stories

AND I am just as certain that receiving a magnificent bouquet at a public ovation could not carry as great a thrill of exultant appreciation as sweeps over me when Bill, the oldest boy, stops from his play to run into the house and thrust a grimy fist full of dandelion blooms at the acknowledged lady of his choice.

But to get back to the story. Within these ten years' time I saw my husband advance from odd-job boy, at a salary of six dollars a week, to vice president of the same company, which is the largest manufacturing concern of its kind in the world. And he was yet only thirty-two years of age.

Also, four times from out the fog of ether, I have heard the kindly voice of my family physician boom, "Mrs. Winthrop, your baby is here." And the first time they laid in my arms a precious little daughter, and the next three times three sturdy little sons.

Easily, my lace making had lengthened into a fairly sizable strand. Over two hundred short stories and articles evolved themselves into the pattern from out of my spare minutes. I served no arduous apprenticeship. Everything which I found time to write was purchased by the magazine which had bought my very first story. I never saw a rejection

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His Salary Was Six Dollars a Week, and We Were Very Much in Love



## I REFUSED A CAREER

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slip. I earned no extravagant moneys, but what I did earn went into a joint bank account which my husband had established when we were married.

And then opportunity came knocking. The editor of one of the most important monthly magazines published suggested that if I would give myself seriously to the task of creating a writing career I could achieve distinction. The editor's opinion was corroborated by one of the foremost critics and literary agents of the day. A try-out story received favorable comment from three very important editors, and was sold to first-grade magazines both here and in England. Intensive, personal help was offered me by these kindly gentlemen. And I have failed them intentionally.

"What shall I do?" I asked Brian when the opportunity was unfolded before us. "What do you want me to do? This may mean wealth. But it will also mean that henceforth the writing must come ahead of all other things."

And even as I asked these questions, I knew what I should do. And also, even as I knew what my decision must be, out of the perversity of my feminine nature I wanted to hear Brian tell me to go ahead and carve the career. And I knew that he would tell me that. He did—promptly, eagerly and with as clear an understanding of what this step would mean in our household, as any man could hold. This was one of the big moments which have compensated me for the fame which perhaps I have denied.

Behind me were ten years of experience of the toll which even occasional writing must take from a woman's strength. Looking back over it, I could draw up a sort of mental debit-and-credit sheet. There are about writing many things which nobody but a person born with this strange creative mixture in his blood can understand.

As I see it, the real writer must actually live his characters—experience their adventures and feel their emotions. A mechanical writer produces mechanical work in which nobody is interested. Readers are only influenced by a pervading air of reality. And this cannot be attained by a writer who does not feel every emotion he describes.

*The Way to Happiness*

I have drooped at my own typewriter with tears actually running down my face over the trials and tribulations of some man or woman who had no being whatsoever except in the figment of my brain. Imagine living a more or less constant life of such emotional strain and yet having sufficient vitality left to minister to the imperative needs of four precious, clamoring children; and a husband who, by the very nature of his love and understanding, merited every good thing from marriage which marriage could have to offer.

I wish I could make you feel what a regular human being Brian Winthrop is. But it is difficult to do this, because the intimacy between us naturally colors any delineation of his character which I might attempt. He is clean and decent and honest. From the moment that I first laid eyes on him I sensed that he had unusual ability. His keen business judgment is an instinct. He is fair and square, and although firm in his decisions, always amenable to reason. Men and women and children like him.

I can think of no worse crime than a woman who loved such a man could commit against him, than to rob him of his birthright. And the inalienable birthright of this type male is the opportunity to cut the channel of life for himself and for his family. No amount of money, accrued in any way other than through his own efforts, could compensate Brian for not fulfilling his particular destiny.

Knowing him, I know that riches could never make him rich. Only achievement could do that. And achievement is doing it—not for his own sake, but for mine and the children's. We are quite dependent upon him and so he exerts himself to the limits of his energy and increasing ability, to provide for us. And this sort of wealth carries his happiness along with it—and incidentally augments his love for us. It is a sly law of nature that men love most the thing they work for.

There have been times when it has been necessary for me to steady the waverings of doubt which have taken possession of me regarding the wisdom of my decision against a career. But there is a never-failing anodyne in my personal definition of happiness. What is it, after all, except a satisfactory adjustment of human relationships?

*They Also Serve—*

While there have been no words between us on the subject, I am sure that Brian realizes, perhaps in a vague way, that my love for him surmounts everything else in the world. Our mutual affection is a palace in the air, but it has its foundation in commonplace earth, resting on hard honest rock.

I like to remember that I did not choose to have this strange writing humor in my veins. I did choose to become Brian Winthrop's wife. And if there is one spot on earth for which the Lord holds a woman responsible, certainly it is that home which she voluntarily creates. Eve was made for the primary purpose of being a companion to Adam and the mother of his children. She was not made for the fundamental end of writing books or painting pictures.

Nature has not changed. The vital elements are just as they were at the beginning of time. One man and one woman. Love and reproduction. That is the formula; the natural, original prescription for human happiness and content. Experimentation, the injection of other stimulating or depressing ingredients, gives only a cheap adulteration.

Somebody, divinely wise, has ordained that genuine happiness is aborted by artifice. For a woman who loves, and is loved, a career is artifice. For a man who loves, and is loved, a career is the natural. He must go forth and sweat—and glory in the sweat—and with it earn bread. And the woman must be at home to receive the bread and to slice it nicely and lay it out upon a clean table beside the strawberry jam which she has cooked to go with it.

I take a great pride in the fact that Brian has never had even a slight attack of indigestion. Recently, when he was applying for insurance, the doctor admiringly pronounced him in perfect physical condition. Approbation for a story has always humbled me, but I

fairly and brazenly gloated over this indication of my prowess. For a good digestion, the first requisite of health, is never an accident. It is not purchased at a delicatessen nor built up by food faddists. It is brought about by interested hours spent in a sanitary kitchen working with fresh fruits and meats and vegetables. I am firmly of the opinion that many heart estrangements begin at the table.

There is beauty in a dish of orange-colored carrots surrounded by green peas; or the pale and perfect tints of a luscious lemon pie. And in all honesty I claim to have received as great a meed of satisfaction from pulling a plank of golden-brown stuffed potatoes out of my oven as I have received from pulling a thin pink check out of a long slim envelope.

I am not what the world calls a good housekeeper. There is a better word. It is homemaker. I do not spend my days digging for dirt which may or may not be there. My home is reasonably clean at all times and I like to have lovely things about me. But it is, first of all, a place for comfort. It is, in fact, Brian Winthrop's kingdom. I am a beloved queen. My four subjects are adoring and adorable. My sacred interests are within its walls. I shall not be guilty of treason.

"Sentimental drivel!" I hear somebody snort. And I grant you that it is partly true. For any woman who has preferred domesticity to a career is bound to be a creature fairly reeking with sentiment. She has to be so sentimental in fact that she would rather change baby diapers than typewriter ribbons; and thrill to the warmth of one devoted man's kiss upon her lips instead of the vicarious romances of many mental men who would possess exactly the characteristics with which her pen wished to endow them. Meekly, I assert that it is the same sentiment from which all good and enduring things have sprung since Genesis was written.

I have told you that making a decision does not end it. Just the sight of a pencil or untouched pages makes my fingers itch to scratch the hieroglyphics of my mind down in black and white. This desire is something beyond me. I cannot get rid of the desire, but I have learned to control it. And this control is not a simple matter of saying "I shall do thus and so." And then doing exactly thus and so. I have had some bitter lessons.

*Starting My First Serial*

When Bill, my oldest son, was four months old, he contracted whooping cough. He was very ill, and for some days his life was in doubt. Eventually he was convalescent, but still a sick baby. From Washington came a wire offering me the opportunity to do a serial for the magazine which had been buying my intermittent short stories. But—I must come to Washington at once for a conference with the editor in order that I might thoroughly understand the ideas which he wanted incorporated into the story. And I learned about temptation from this.

It could easily be seen what a considerable length this first serial would add to my lace-making. And it could be lace-making—done in such spare time as I had, with no date set for its completion. The only consideration at the moment seemed to be the sick baby.

Brian looked at the situation through my longing eyes. The temptation was powerful as well as unexpected. If it had come upon me a little more slowly, perhaps I should have withstood it. Together we talked with the doctor.

He said, "Go, by all means, Mrs. Winthrop. Your baby is out of danger. We'll get an expert baby nurse to look after him for the few days that you will need to be away. I'll look in on them twice a day, and be within five minutes' call at any time. It is foolish for you to miss this opportunity." And the good doctor was entirely conscientious in his advice.

So I muffled the still, small voice in my heart with a jubilant recollection of the money I was to receive for the serial. Brian had recently purchased a home for the family, and I coveted the money to buy some small luxuries in the way of furnishings, which my otherwise frugal managing would prompt me to get along without.

*Putting the Family First*

I kissed my sick baby and went to Washington, where I had a successful conference with the editor. I came home to find that the expert baby nurse had, during my absence, drugged the plaintive whimpers of my little son until he was set far back on the road to recovery. I cite only facts. Such a thing might not happen once in many thousands of times. But it put the iron of responsibility into my soul. I know it will never happen to me again.

Many times during these years my friends have complained to me, "Ruth, it does seem as if you could find a housekeeper who would take care of the children and leave you free for your writing."

And I could, of course, do this very easily. But I believe that the poorest, most untrained mother can give to her own flesh and blood a solicitude which no other woman can bestow. Heaven sets a high price upon children. Ask any woman who has travailed. But out of this fiery furnace comes an influence which no amount of money can ever buy. And out of the same fiery furnace comes a joy of ministering to her own babies which may not be lightly relinquished. If so, there comes, sooner or later, a boomerang of bitter hours filled with a regret and longing which no other earthly pleasure can mitigate.

"With a talent like yours, my dear, you can go far." From the time my first school-teacher said it until the same utterance came from the lips of a white-haired banker recently, this sentence has consistently haunted me. There is no element of braggadocio in this. I record it for the one purpose of strengthening my statement that a career was alluringly indicated.

Just like the poison which carries its own cure, however, there is, in the last word of that statement above, the element which is an antidote. For I always wonder, "How far?" And my heart answers me, "So far that your husband will forget that you know how to play with him and look after his physical well-being and laugh at his jokes and entertain his friends. So far that he will grow undemonstrative, fearing to be warm and affectionate with a celebrity who gives the best of her vitality to the public, and has only fatigue to offer him. So far that you

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may stunt Brian's accomplishments. For no man ever develops to the full extent of his ability if he is kept in a woman's shadow."

I did, however, at the time of Bill's illness, get a girl to come in and help with the housework. This would have happened as a result of our improved economic status, irrespective of whether I was writing or not. And from that day to this I have been fortunate in the type of help which has been about me. In the section of the country where I have my home, it is possible to get a good grade of clean, honest American women to do housework. Women to be trusted and relied upon. And yet whether my babies have been well or ill, I have held myself personally accountable for them. It is my job.

Truly, this job has been the joy of my life. My children have taught me far more than I have taught them. And if I have labored to bring happiness into their lives, the delights which they have made possible for me certainly surpass the small pleasures which I have provided for them.

My mind skips about among the years. For a womanly woman there is no purer ecstasy than that derived from ministering to a tiny bit of newborn humanity. Somehow I think especially of Danny, my second son, who was, from the very first days of his infancy on, a perfect miniature of Brian. A dark-eyed, dark-haired darling with a deeply indented dimple in his chin. How my heart thrilled over this perfect little likeness as he lay snuggled in the crook of my arm.

Louise, the first child and the only girl, has by reason of her sex been an especial joy to her mother. She is the satisfaction of a yearning which every woman knows. She is lovely to look upon. Her voice is melodious and her character is gentle. She has a delicious sense of humor and grasps facts so swiftly that she often amazes me. I like to see her playing with dolls. And when she steps forth with her golden hair brushed to a shining glory in a frock which I have perhaps fashioned for her with my own fingers, I simply glow in the warmth of my feeling. For Louise is the fulfillment of my own playing with dolls.

#### Living With Literary Material

Bill, the first-born boy, whom Brian and I affectionately call the crown prince, is a sturdy live wire who keeps the entire household atingle. He is a strapping fellow, strong and straight and kind. Brian had been anxious that this second child should be a boy. And one of my highly lighted mental pictures is the delighted gratification which shone in the father's eyes when his first son was introduced to him.

Jerry, the fourth child and the baby of the family, has his own special niche in my heart because I believe he is more like me than the other three children. And I shamelessly assert that for this same reason he is also the indulged darling of his father. A tempestuous, spoiled, adorable little despot. He is two years old. Danny is four, Bill is eight and Louise is fourteen.

Looking back over the years, I find that rearing a family is an unending repetition of the thing for which fiction writers struggle—the surprise plot. And interest never lags—nor does action or dramatic incident. Life becomes a story of memorable firsts. First cries, first smiles, first teeth, first steps, and so on and on and on. Memories which Brian and I have shared, and therefore

doubly dear and far more precious than any I could have stored from wandering abroad in the land searching for material for the literary mill.

I have not forgotten that this is a true recital. And I admit freely that being the mother of a family is not all poetry. My children are not rosy cherubs sprouting wings. I believe them to be an A-1 grade of average, normal American youth. I have never indulged in that fascinating science which a great many modern mothers talk about—the analysis of the child.

Frankly I admit my ignorance on the subject of inhibitions and neuroses. I would not recognize a complex if I met it face to face. I have been too busy straining spinach to occupy myself straining and examining the natural thoughts which my children pour forth. I have provided them with simple food and old-fashioned discipline and steady religious training and unadulterated love; and, up to the present moment, the results have been satisfying.

#### Why Schedules Go Wrong

Personally, I believe that if all children could be environed in an atmosphere of peace and comfort and happiness, the professional neurologist would need to take down his shingle. Recently I read a statement by a very eminent gentleman of this overworked branch of science, wherein he said that practically all cases of nervous collapse during adult life could be traced to an unhappy or high-tensioned childhood.

In fairness to Brian, I must chronicle that he has taken a generous share in this business of parenthood. Tedious times have found him always at hand to carry a large share of responsibility. And he has always been as ready to walk the floor with a cross, crying child as he has been to load the tribe into his car and carry them off for an outing. Children are imitative little animals, and I am confident that a large portion of the homage and respect which are poured upon my humble head is directly attributable to the attitude of my children's father toward his wife.

I heard of one successful woman writer who said that she devoted her mornings to her writing, her afternoons to her children, and her evenings to her husband. And I was filled with a vast wonderment. If such an arrangement is possible then there must be some system of life wholly different from any I have been able to uncover.

Not long ago when Danny indulged a perverted notion to take a drink from a bottle of black ink and needed first aid, it was in the middle of the morning—when, under the above schedule, Danny's mother would have been writing. And more often than not, it would happen that if Brian desired to clinch an important business contact, and bring aforesaid contact home to dinner, it would completely disrupt the afternoon which I would be supposed to devote to the children. Equally as puzzling would have been my dilemma the night when Louise fell over the terrace and broke her arm. The essential trip to the hospital for setting the fractured member would have been a distracting interruption of my tête-à-tête with Brian.

Do I hear somebody speculate if these are not the exceptions which prove the rule? No. Because it is always the unexpected that is happening, especially with children. And things happen with a terrifying swiftness. And so many of them are things which require prompt attention.

Only a few weeks ago, setting out on a little trot of not more than ten feet across the living-room floor, Jerry stumbled and fell, cutting his head just above the eye, on the iron leg of a coffee table. It necessitated a doctor and the painful procedure of surgical stitching, in order that a grown man some day may not carry a disfiguring scar upon his face. Had I been secluded somewhere, pondering plots, the result might not have been so happy.

And it is not only these definite little accidents that come along. I am morally certain that in a great many instances I have been able to avert minor illnesses for my brood. Mothers who are in daily and intimate contact with their children have a peculiar instinct of some sort which warns of the approach of illness to their offspring. Even the lowest type of mammal manifests this power. And any mother will corroborate it. Many times I have known, at least twenty-four hours in advance, of the hovering shadow of sickness. And I believe that preventive measures have saved my children many hours of discomfort. But one must be in a natural and close communion with a child to feel this—an hour-by-hour communion which runs a complete circle of fourteen hundred and forty minutes.

Temptation was not quiescent during these busy years of combating measles and tonsillitis and putting ammonia on bee stings. The first serial had been a decided success. So much so that one of the characters in it had taken a determined hold on the fancy of the magazine's readers. And it was decided to inaugurate a monthly column under the name of this fictional character, to continue expounding the philosophy which had been a prominent feature of the serial. I knew that this work could very well be made to fit into the casual pattern of my lace-making, and so I welcomed it. I might add that this column is still running today.

#### Second Son or Second Serial?

However, when a second wire arrived, asking me to meet the editor in New York for the purpose of discussing a second serial, it was necessary for me to go through the by-now-familiar process of fortifying my decision to subdue ambition and keep the family welfare paramount. This was in the months when I awaited the arrival of Danny. Writing a serial at this time would have taken a considerable measure of vitality. Unavoidably, this vitality would have been diverted from the child I was expecting. Also there was a one-thousandth part element of danger in a trip by train to the city. Today, looking at Danny's rugged, sun-tanned little face, I have no regret for that second serial which I did not write.

I have had veiled thrusts directed at me to the effect that I was too indolent to work hard enough for a literary career. There are at least two classes of people who would join me in opposing this idea.

Any mother of children who is also eager to be a successful wife will tell you that her job is complete and full to the running-over point. There is little leisure. No more perhaps than for an occasional game of bridge.

Any outstanding writer will tell you that to accomplish distinction in literary endeavors, one must give oneself up to an absorbing drudgery. Famous authors do not write for money, although this usually follows—they

write for the pure love of writing. Nevertheless, it can easily lead to exhaustion. And there is little leisure. No more perhaps than for an occasional game of golf.

The two jobs simply will not combine. Always there must be a choice. I do not play bridge or golf. Instead, I write a little. It is my diversion and my entertainment. And even such abstemious writing as I do brings me a great many letters from women who want to be authors. And I could weep over some of these intense and urgent epistles.

I have reached the stage in my life when I can look with pity upon the woman who mistakenly believes that she can uncover wealth with a pen point, and who really has no farther to look for it than in a baby's eyes. Unfortunately, there are no glasses which will straighten a crossed perspective. And when once the real and the ideal become separate things, it is difficult to clear up the resulting confusion. From out a sixteen-year test period I have found nothing better to suggest than that old Russian proverb which advises a man to measure his cloth ten times because he can cut it only once. And it pays to remember that this cloth which is life is never measured out but once. Cut and ruined, it cannot be replaced.

#### The Rewards of Sacrifice

It is these ambitious women, often the cherished wives of harassed husbands, to whom I would open my experience. Not infrequently Brian looks at me and I read perplexity in his eyes. I do not believe he has ever quite understood the reasonings of the contradictory creature who is his wife. But I am sure that he is positive of my happiness.

This is the happiness of the ordinary woman. But it has proved to be an enduring kind. My marriage has outlasted any trial stage. I am in love with my husband. I am proud of my children. I like the prefix Mrs. in front of my name. I have a home and a car and a yard where I can plant flowers. I have kindly neighbors.

Once when Bill had a sudden convulsion, the entire street on which I live was ransacked of the mustard in its cupboards within five minutes' time—and I was not aware that it was known the child was ill. I do not believe that celebrities taste much of this milk of human kindness. The warm humanity which flows from ordinary heart to ordinary heart does not so readily reach the level of that one who is above and apart.

Not long ago, a man who has tried patiently to encourage me into a literary career looked up at me with a desperate resignation in his voice. "I don't understand you," he said. "You just don't seem to know what it is all about."

Maybe I do not. In spare moments I am still making lace. It grows slowly, but that is all right; because I am making it for no particular purpose. I am not interested either in elaborating the pattern or acquiring a lengthy yardage.

And if my personal defense of my decision against a career lacks conviction, I need only remind the world at large of that one day which has been set apart—in which an entire nation does homage to an obscure, home-keeping woman. Mother! And so far as I am able to learn, there has never been such a day designated to honor celebrities.