

CONFESSIONS OF A WIFE

ENVIRONMENT RULES OUR LIVES

"It is strange, Margie," said Paula, how quickly we adjust ourselves to different ways of living.

"It had been less than a year since I had been jerked up by the roots from my beautiful home in the midst of loving friends, and yet here I was settled down into the life of an actress. And the queer part of it all, Margie, was that my other care-free existence seemed but a dream.

"No one could have loved her parents more than I did, and yet I could hardly realize that I had ever had parents. There is something about the absolute finality of death which makes itself felt in the consciousness of even the tenderest and most sympathetic mind.

"I believe, Margie, only those who have lost by death some one who is very dear to them can understand what I mean. The old saying, 'While there is life there is hope,' is very true; and its antithesis, when there is no life there is no hope, is quite as true.

"Your mind refuses to think about it any more. Yes, you have the loneliness, a loneliness that sometimes seems to smother your very lungs so that you cannot breathe—a feeling of the utter futility of living and struggling and fighting for something which is meaningless in the end.

"What I want to convey to you, Margie, is the fact of quick adjustment which the mind makes.

"At this time it almost seemed as though I had never been that care-free, happy girl whose whole interest was centered on whether she would make the 'daisy chain,' and so be proclaimed one of the prettiest girls of the year at Vassar.

"Here I was opening my eyes in my little suite in the boarding house in a strange city at about 11 o'clock in the morning, as though I had been

doing it all my life, and, strange to say, my little old brain accepted the changed conditions as a matter of course.

"This sounds rather vague, does it not, Margie? What I am endeavoring to bring out is the peculiar way in which nature copes with the irrevocableness of death and the way we poor mortals accept anything that comes, Margie, when we have to.

"Do you think I am preachy, dear? I don't mean to be. I only wish all those girls who are working away and trying to do their best would understand that the mind can only stand about so much joy or grief, pleasure or pain. These can only be experienced by one's capacity, and even before we will own it to ourselves our minds understand that the decree admits of no repeal.

"Until I left by father's house I had always risen before 8 o'clock, taken a cold shower and my athletic exercises, breakfasted simply but rather bountifully and then started in on the affairs of the day.

"Now my day never begins before 11 and I usually have my coffee in bed. Usually the moment my eyes popped open I began to think of my dancing lesson, my fencing lesson or my French lesson. I always tried to get in a five-mile walk, and, although the play was exceptionally successful, we averaged a rehearsal a week to keep us up to key.

"I seldom ate much until after theater at night, when Earnest and I usually ate together at some restaurant. If I might be allowed the paradox, I was living rather irregularly in a most regular way.

"My whole existence at this time was bound up in that of Earnest Lawton. It never entered my mind that he was not as completely interested in me as I in him. I do think, Margie, that at that time Earnest Lawton was as deeply in love with