

Presentation to the Wellington Medical History Society
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The information available to the public on sexual health matters was virtually nonexistent in 1914 when a woman of 34 years was wondering why her marriage was not as happy as she had wished for.

What was available was limited and mainly written in French and German, which the woman read.

The main source of information in English was a book, of some six volumes, on *The Psychology of Sex*, written by Havelock Ellis and published in the late 1890s, but this dealt mainly with sexual abnormalities and he himself was a rather odd character.

Nationally there was a move to educate boys on the dangers of sex and to encourage them to remain pure. The National Council on Public Morals (formed in 1899 to combat vice and indecency) recommended in 1911 that Nature Study be introduced into the school curriculum as an introduction to the facts of life. This was to combat the rise of venereal disease and assaults on women.

Her reading led her to believe that her marriage was not consummated, and, on those grounds, she obtained a divorce from her first husband. Then, true to her scientific background, she began to record her own emotional and sexual sensations. These she used to write the book which would shock and delight the public in England three years later, **Married Love**.

The author was Dr Marie Stopes.

The book was dedicated to “Young Husbands and all those who are betrothed in love”.

This was a letter of commendation from Professor Ernest Starling, a physiologist, who was famous for- among other things- discovering the existence of hormones.

In her preface, Marie stated that she had paid a terrible price in her first marriage because of her ignorance of sexual matters, and she now wished to present information on sex in an easily understandable form for the ordinary untrained reader. She aimed it specifically for married educated people of the middle and upper classes.

Marie’s wish was to promote good sexual relationships within marriage and to show that woman’s sexuality was natural and not shameful. In language described by some as “flowery” she combined an idealistic and mystical approach with a clinically detailed description of the act of union and how to enjoy it, with implied rapture afterwards.

For these reasons it escaped being banned for indecency, as was the fate of DH Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, published 10 years later.

The information imparted here is impressive. The book contains a full description of male and female genitalia, the menstrual rhythm, the function of hormones -only recently discovered by Starling- and the act of sexual union, which was never described as intercourse. Marie introduced The Law of Periodicity of Recurrence of Desire, describing it as a women's sex-tide. This is fortnightly periods of intense sexual desire in a woman which can be adversely affected by work or fatigue.

It was stated that a woman's sexual urge was stronger just before menstruation or a week or so after it. During the act of union, the importance of the woman being sexually aroused was stressed, as was the experience of orgasm, in order to achieve the full benefits of spiritual as well as physical union. In her opinion," along with coitus, orgasm promoted good sleep. Failure in this regard could cause a woman to become angry and bitter and have a deleterious effect upon her marriage."

Marie postulated the idea that there was value to the woman in receiving the secretions which accompany the sperm as they were absorbed into her body and affected her whole organism. The man profited in a similar fashion too.

The author had definite ideas on the importance of the mother's health, both physical and mental, during pregnancy and that this could be endangered by having too many babies. There was brief contraceptive advice offered, coitus interruptus, or using a douche of vinegar and water or quinine. The use of a prostitute by the husband was definitely not recommended as the author felt this "soiled" him for his marriage.

The prose throughout was described as "jeweled" and "flowery". To give you an example, here is the last paragraph of Married Love under the chapter entitled "The Glorious Unfolding".

The underlying aim of this book was to ensure that a race of healthy people was produced.

Heady stuff indeed for 1918!

So, who was Dr Marie Stopes and how did she succeed in her endeavors?

Marie Charlotte Carmichael Stopes was born in Edinburgh on 15th October 1880 to parents Henry and Charlotte Stopes. Henry was an architect by profession and a brewer but was really more interested in fossils and fostered this interest in Marie. He amassed the largest private collection of fossils and lithic artefacts in Britain.

Charlotte was ten years older than her husband, a suffragette activist, a Shakespearean scholar, and a writer. Throughout Marie's childhood Charlotte was often away lecturing or speaking at various public meetings.

I like one of her **quotes**:

“The plight of women in the 19th century was caused because lawyers have decided that the word “man” always includes “woman” when there is a penalty to be incurred, but never when there is privilege to be conferred.”

A younger sister, Winnie, was born three and a half years later. She was always considered to be of delicate health, and Marie and she were never really close. Her parents’ marriage was not a happy one. Charlotte came from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland so neither work nor play was permitted on a Sunday.

Both girls were home schooled by Charlotte, then they were sent to a boarding school in Edinburgh- Charlotte’s home city – then to the progressive North London Collegiate for Girls. It was there that Marie developed a schoolgirl crush on one of her teachers, which involved many passionate letters exchanged between the two on the enigma of life. It had an enduring effect on Marie, who developed an exalted view of love and romance.

The only instruction she ever received about sexual relations was from her father, who told her that to kiss a boy before marriage was impure and no girl from a decent home could consider marriage before the age of 25.

During the school holidays Marie accompanied her father on digs and developed a great interest in fossils. She enrolled at the Science Faculty of the University of London where she thrived, excelling in her studies and gaining in self-confidence as she outshone the men in her classes. In November 1902 she gained her degree B.Sc. with double Honours, a First in Botany and a Third in Geology. All the men in her class failed.

Her father died at the age of 50 years in 1903. Marie’s reaction was to immerse herself in her studies and work.

She pursued further studies in Munich, obtaining her Ph.D. in Botany with Honours. It was here that she also developed her sense of feminine dress which was to prove very useful to her in later years.

Marie was the first woman to be appointed as Assistant Lecturer in Botany in Owen’s College Manchester and found that she had the knack of making highly technical subjects easily understood and enjoyable.

She also developed an interest in coalmines and the fossil fern specimens found there. This work attracted international interest. In 1905 she was the youngest Doctor of Science in the country and the following year wrote her first book *The Study of Plant Life for Young People* and undertook a journey to the Arctic Circle.

Then in 1907- at age 27 years- she persuaded the Royal Society to sponsor her on a trip to Japan, hunting for fossils, but really to be near a married Japanese professor with whom she had fallen in love. Her stay there made her realise that she could never fit into Japanese society. His ardour cooled too, and she returned home in 1909,

disillusioned. However, she put the experience to good use, writing a novel based on their affair, as well as providing her report to Royal Society.

Marie returned to a new post at Manchester University, Lecturer in Fossil Botany and was much in demand as a speaker. Her feminine ways and dress, as well as her ability to gauge the mood and receptiveness of her audience and adjust her delivery accordingly were great assets.

In the spirit of adventure and belief in the value of her paleobotanic studies to society, she offered to join Captain Scott on his journey to the Antarctic, but he politely declined, a boon as it turned out.

Marie did support the Suffragette movement – in which her mother was actively involved- but disliked their militant methods and was keen not to do anything that might hinder her career.

She did have plenty of admirers, but she had set high standards for the perfect mate. On a speaking tour of Canada in 1910, she met Reginald Gates, an academic in the new field of genetics, who was two years her junior. She was 30. He seemed to fit her criteria. They got married in Montreal in March 1911 then returned to England. Marie insisted on keeping her own name, which was a surprise to her husband, one of many he was to encounter in their short marriage.

Her career in paleobotany progressed, while he had difficulty in gaining a suitable post in a university. Furthermore, he apparently was impotent. After her reading of the available literature on sexual theory and practice, Marie consulted her doctor, who provided her with a certificate of qualified virginity. (There is evidence from the condition of the hymen that there has not been penetration by a normal male organ), With this she managed to obtain an annulment in 1916 on the grounds of non- consummation. This too was news to him!

Reginald returned to Canada and remarried but had no children. In testimony deposited in the British Library after his death in 1962, he stated that Marie was “super sexed to a degree which was almost pathological”. She had also insisted that he use a condom while she used “pessaries”. He felt that they were having normal sexual intercourse but that she no longer wanted a child by him.

Her marriage break-up took its toll on her emotionally and financially and for a while she was homeless and in 1914 camped out on a Northumberland beach. She decided to use her research into sexual matters to write a book. Married Love was the fruit of these endeavors. Her stated aim, as I mentioned before, was to put “the knowledge she had gained at such a cost to the service of humanity.”In the book she also asserted that the more spiritual and intellectual type of woman did not develop full sexual feelings until her 30s, a statement now considered to be autobiographical.

In July 1915 she heard **Margaret Sanger** speak at Fabian Hall about her fight to introduce birth control to the public in New York and met up with her afterwards. Margaret showed her the birth control devices she was using in her clinics. However, she had run foul of the Comstock Law in the USA and faced criminal charges.

Marie got up a petition which included many famous people, such as HG Wells and wrote an impassioned letter to President Wilson on Margaret's behalf, requesting him to drop the charges and this, together with a petition in America, proved to be successful.

During all this time Marie had been working on her book, but no publisher would touch it for fear of being prosecuted for obscenity. But Marie did not give up easily.

She persuaded a friendly clergyman who was secretary of the Malthusian League and whom she knew favoured contraception on economic grounds, to write a forward for her book. (This, however, does not appear in my 21st edition.) Through this contact she met Humphrey Roe, a 39-year-old wealthy businessman who supported the feminist movement. He provided funds to publish the book through a small firm, Fifiield and soon after the book was launched, she married him, after disentangling him from his previous fiancée!

Married Love was published eight months before the end of WW1. The place of women in society was changing and there were more opportunities for men and women to meet. It was also a month after the enfranchisement of women and new attitudes to marriage were being sought.

Marie's high ideals for marriage included "allowing the women as much intellectual freedom and freedom of opportunity within it as do their partners" but not sharing the same bedroom, as this removed the aura of mystery and romance between the spouses. Sadly, her recipe did not include two ingredients that most would consider to be vital, a sense of humour and an ability to compromise, neither of which Marie possessed.

The reactions to her book were overwhelming, especially to the small firm of her publisher. It sold 2,000 copies in the first fortnight and ran through 6 editions in the first year. Mr Fifiield was inundated with thousands of letters from grateful women and men, with one woman writing that she was "delighted that a book like this was clearing away the old evil conspiracy of secrecy which has ruined so many women's lives."

Opposing views were trenchant but small in comparison.

Dr CP Blacker, a distinguished psychiatrist and member of the Eugenics Society stated "this could be regarded as a practical handbook of prostitution"

One woman was disgusted that men should be discussing their marital relations with a woman.

Another woman stated that Marie's writing was filthy and that methods of contraception were already widely known.

Marie described the reaction of an elderly Lord X to her:

"What have you done" he exclaimed." You have broken up the home; you have let women know about things which only prostitutes ought to know; once you give women a taste for these things, they become vampires, and you have let loose vampires into decent men's homes. When we men want that sort of thing- a woman who knows how to enjoy herself in sex life- we go to prostitutes at our own times when we feel like it. We do not want that sort of thing in our own homes. The wife should be the housekeeper and make the home a place of calm comfort for a man. Instead of that you have made my home a hell; I cannot meet the demands of my wife now she knows. If you create these vampire women, you will rear a race of effeminate men."

Despite this opposition, Marie became an informal advisor on matters of sexual and emotional problems and was much in demand as a speaker up and down the country.

One such request was from a young man asking for her advice about impotence and premature ejaculation. His own doctor's advice was to spend a night with a prostitute! She provided practical advice as well as a list of the ingredients for a lotion to apply to the glans penis to reduce its sensitivity.

Her advice to a soldier about how to control his urge to masturbate, was
to" run a bath full of the hottest water you can stand and soak in it up to the neck."

In response to such requests, another book soon followed in late 1918, **Wise Parenthood**, which dealt with Birth Control.

For contraceptive advice it was recommended to use a small well-fitting rubber cervical cap together with a soluble quinine pessary or a small wet sponge filled with powdered soap, or a pad of cotton wool smeared with Vaseline. Marie thought- at that time- that the condom was harmful, that withdrawal was detrimental to both sexes, and that using douching or the "safe period" were unreliable methods.

Again, this book was aimed at the educated woman, not the lower classes, of which she did not have a good opinion.

Marie also advocated for recognition of "sexual union as an act of supreme value in itself, as distinct from its value as a basis for the procreation of children". In this she was taking on the Established Churches.

She was invited to give sex education to schoolchildren by the Welsh Educational Board. The Oxford University Press invited her to write a book on the subject for medical practitioners and she was appointed a member of the National Birth Rate Commission- a government body set up to study and address the declining birth rate. Interestingly,

while the members of this commission favoured limiting the birth rate- of the poor- they opposed contraception on “medical grounds”. When Marie asked them for evidence to support this view, none was provided.

Meantime Mr Fifield, her publisher, was overwhelmed- again- this time with requests from young girls for copies of *Wise Parenthood* to be sent to them in plain wrapping and he declined to publish any more of Marie’s books.

Marie also realised that while her books had been aimed at the educated upper and middle classes, the main aim of the birth control campaign was to help poor women limit their families. So, she changed tack and wrote a 16-page pamphlet entitled “**A Letter to Working Mothers on How To Have Healthy Children and Avoid Weakening Pregnancies**”. She and Humphrey funded the publication themselves.

In 1919, Marie was overjoyed to become pregnant. Sadly, the baby boy was stillborn. Marie was distraught and blamed the doctor in charge of the Nursing Home for not allowing her to give birth in the squatting or kneeling position. In this she was surely ahead of her time. The letter she wrote to the doctor resulted in a response from the Medical Protection Society, threatening legal action if she did not apologise. She never did, nor was any legal action taken. I hope that they finally understood her reaction was due to grief.

Undaunted, Marie soon returned to giving her own lectures on paleobotany, her research into coal, giving advice on sexual matters and writing to the press.

The next big national health issue was the rise in VD after the War. There was debate between the National Society for the Prevention of VD, who advocated for the supply of condoms and self-disinfectant equipment, and the National Society for Combatting VD which declared that “making unchastity safe was a blow to the nations morals”. Marie was asked to write a booklet on the prevention of VD and met up with New Zealander **Ettie Rout** who was secretary of the NZ Volunteer Sisters. The booklet “The Truth About VD” priced at 1/6d was widely distributed. Again, the backlash was impressive!

The Federation of Medical Women – no less- warned in 1920 that if condoms were made available then “promiscuous intercourse would be looked on as free from the risk of infection and, to a great extent, from the risk of conception. This would introduce a phase of society as vicious and degenerate as any of which history has a record. The very foundations of society would rot with moral degeneration and sex excesses”

Over this time Marie was honing her views on race. Her studies into the evolution of plants and her membership of the Eugenics Society – where she came into contact with the ideas of Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin- led her to espousing the belief

that only the beautiful and best should survive. She thought that Darwin's view of natural selection argued for the creation of a super breed of human.

In 1919 she told the National Birthrate Commission that the simplest way to deal with chronic cases of inherent disease, drunkenness or bad character was to sterilize the parents!

At that time, the notion that, by suppressing weaker members of the next generation, it would reduce the need for prisons and hospitals, and thereby relieve the burden on taxpayers, was attractive to many of the wealthier classes.

These ideas appeared in her next book **Radiant Motherhood** in 1920, now published by Putnams, a larger firm than Fifiield. It was dedicated to "Young Husbands and All Who are Creating the Future."

This book was written -again- for middle- and upper-class women, whom she exhorted to have a good diet in the prenatal period and avoid any stress. In the post-natal period, it was imperative to rest up for at least 6 weeks, while doing exercises to regain their figures, as it was their duty to remain beautiful.

She recommended **Dr Truby King's** Feeding and Care of the Baby and, interestingly, that mothers should begin to impart knowledge of sexual function to their children from the age of 2 years. Her eugenic ideas were very obvious.

That same year, Margaret Sanger returned to London, this time wanting to open a birth control clinic. She had been arrested again for opening a clinic in Brooklyn and could no longer work there. However, Marie and Humphrey informed her that they were planning to open such a clinic, and she abandoned her plan. Marie brooked no rivals!

Marie's zeal in promoting her message knew no bounds. The Anglican Bishops were holding their Conference at Lambeth Palace in the summer of 1920. She claimed to have received a message from God one afternoon in late June, while sitting under a tree in her garden. As a result, she sent each of the 267 bishops a letter, stating that she was a prophet of God, who had instructed her to tell them of the mysteries of sexual union between men and women, that it was not solely designed for the purpose of creating children and that God commanded that couples should use the best means of birth control placed at man's service by science.

Understandably the bishops paid this no heed and instead emphasized in their report the grave physical, moral and spiritual perils incurred by the use of contraception. They also condemned the idea of sexual union as an end in itself.

In furtherance of her goal to promote family planning, she sent two of her books to Prime Minister Lloyd George, who was known to be sympathetic to eugenics.

Finally, the clinic that she and Humphrey wished to establish was opened on 17 March 1921 at No 61 Marlborough Road Holloway, an impoverished area in North London.

It was called **The Mother's Clinic**, and the aims were:

To help the poor with free advice

To test out the attitude of the working class to birth control

To obtain firsthand data about contraception in practice

To collect scientific data on the sex life of women.

The clinic was made as friendly and welcoming as possible, with the interior painted blue and white and a vase of fresh flowers placed on a table inside.

It was staffed by a qualified midwife, Nurse Hebbes, who would examine the woman, then fit her with a pessary- the Cap- and show her how to use it. Marie did not approve of the Dutch Cap.

This device had actually been designed by a German, Dr Mensinge, and was used in the first contraceptive clinic opened in Amsterdam in 1882 by Dr Aletta Henrietta Jacobs, who was the first woman to qualify in medicine in the Netherlands, hence it's name The Dutch Cap. It had a watch spring rim which Marie considered stretched the vagina and instead she designed a high domed rubber cervical cap.

A Harley St doctor Jane Lorrimer Hawthorne acted as consultant. In that first year an average of 3 women per day attended the clinic. The only charge was for the contraceptive device sold at cost price. The running costs were 1100 pounds, which Marie and Humphrey covered from their own funds and by running various charitable events.

Marie also took on the medical profession, asking women who had been declined contraceptive advice by their doctors to write to her and she would "fight their battles".

She received thousands of letters requesting advice every week and made great efforts to reply to them all. She had to employ secretaries to help her.

Opposition to her clinic soon emerged, from the Liverpool Women's Christian Association, The Catholic Women's Suffrage Society and a prominent professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the Royal Free Hospital **Professor Anna Louise McIlroy**, an Ulsterwoman from my area in North Antrim!

She had an impressive career herself, being the first woman to graduate in medicine from Glasgow University, which she did with commendation, she held several hospital posts in Scotland, then served as surgeon in charge of a mobile hospital in France during WW1. She became the first female medical professor in England and the first

professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at London University. So, a woman of influence.

At a meeting of the Medico-Legal Society on 7th July 1920 in Chandos St, Professor Mcllroy extolled the joy of the Irish peasants with their large families and stated that “the most harmful method of which I have experience is the use of the pessary”. Pessary and cap described the same device.

Two years later, the periodical John Bull published a two-page broadside at Marie entitled The Bunkum of Birth Control, calling Marie “the high priestess of birth control” and stating -amongst other things that “whole tendency of this raging tearing propaganda is profoundly mischievous. The practical effect so far as I am able to judge, is to impart a knowledge of birth control methods to people who ought to have no use for them.” and repeated the opinion of Professor Mcllroy.

A Catholic doctor- Halliday Gibson Sutherland- then produced a book called **Birth Control**, in which he stated that” she (Marie) was among those perverting the ordinary decent instincts of the lower classes and exposing the poor to experiment.” He also stated that her clinic was using a method of birth control previously described by Professor Mcllroy as “the most harmful method of which she had experience.”

Marie sued him for libel. During the court case – held in February 1923- Professor Mcllroy was called as his witness. During cross examination of her statement, it emerged that she had never treated a woman who had a cervical cap, so her opinion was discredited.

The result of this court case was startling. The jury found that Marie had been defamed and awarded her 100 pounds sterling. The judge however, who had made no secret of his dislike of birth control, overruled this verdict and entered judgement for the defendant with costs.

The Daily News was amazed at such a miscarriage of justice. Marie won her appeal, only to have it overturned on Dr Sutherland’s appeal to the House of Lords in November 1924. He was funded in this by the Catholic Church. She ended up having to repay her original award and the costs associated with all three cases. However, the case won her and her cause much publicity and sympathy. George Bernard Shaw even wrote a note of sympathy to her.

Just as the first trial ended, Marie’s sister Winnie died. Winnie had been unwell for most of her life and despite not being close, Marie had supported her financially. Their mother Charlotte was unable to contribute.

Four years later, Marie learnt that Professor Mcllroy was herself fitting women with the vaginal caps at the Royal Free Hospital. She decided to investigate and went to her clinic disguised as a charwoman. There, Marie contended that “Prof Mcllroy did not

examine her labia or vaginal orifice for discharge or examine her for venereal or other germs.” Marie left the clinic with a cap then wrote to the Royal Free Hospital demanding an apology from the professor. The hospital replied that she had abused the privileges of the Hospital by obtaining advice under false pretences and no apology was ever received.

After the trial Marie became very well-known, and a ditty emerged among school children:

Jeannie Jeannie full of hopes

Read a book by Marie Stopes

But to judge by her condition

She must have read the wrong edition.

During these years other changes had occurred.

In 1921, The Society for Constructive Birth Control was inaugurated, with Marie as its President, HG Wells as one of the Vice presidents and her husband Humphrey was Secretary. Its motto was “Babies in the Right Place”. Marie was at pains to point out that the Society was promoting having healthy children as well as preventing the unhealthy.

She went on a speaking tour in America at the invitation of a league set up in opposition to that of Margaret Sanger’s and the two previous friends fell out.

That same year -1921- other Voluntary Birth Control clinics began to emerge. The Malthusian League, alarmed by Marie’s takeover of the birth control movement opened a clinic in Walworth, called the Walworth Women’s Welfare Centre. All women were seen by a gynaecologist.

However, it suffered from attacks on the building from protestors.

Marie’s Mother’s Clinic was spared such treatment. She wanted to be the legitimate voice in the birth control movement and resigned from the Malthusian League. Marie lost friends too in other Birth Control movements for not supporting them in legal battles in 1922.

Opposition to her was ever present.

In 1923 The Practitioner devoted a special issue to contraception. One of the contributors was again Professor Louise Mclroy who described the clinics

as “rubber shops” which were a grave moral danger and called for their closure.

Other prominent medical professionals wrote that contraception would produce sterility and even madness, would destroy the glamour and romance of marriage, and would lead to race degeneration, among other things.

In March 1924 Marie gave birth to her son Harry Vardon Stopes-Roe and later in June she achieved another goal of being presented at Court.

The Mothers' Clinic was doing well, having seen over 5,000 women and Marie as a true scientist – published a report on the First Five Thousand.

The following year – 1925- the clinic moved from Holloway to Whitfield St in Central London where it remains today.

Marie set up a caravan appropriately staffed to travel around other places. It was found better to place it in towns, rather than villages, where there was little privacy.

Marie began to train nurses and to hold demonstrations of fitting birth control appliances for medical students and doctors

In 1924, the Walworth Women's Welfare Clinic adopted the name The Society for The Provision of Birth Control Clinics. Marie refused to cooperate with them.

Marie was a prolific writer- not only about contraception but also fairy tales – written under a pen name Erica Fay- which sold better than her other writings. While she was wealthy, she also had ongoing expenses, especially her clinic. She embroiled herself in another libel case against a newspaper The Morning Post and lost.

In 1926 Marie decided that her son needed a companion and advertised to adopt a boy of similar age. She got one in 1928. This did not work out well. Her notions of rearing a child were strange. She wanted to whip the first boy for his bad behaviour and threatened to thrash another for wetting his pants.

Her own son Harry had to endure being dressed in kilts so as to avoid any pressure on his genitalia. He was also not permitted to read books, as his mother believed that this encouraged second-hand minds. Instead, he was told plenty of stories and encouraged to write.

She had other problems too. Her mobile clinic was attacked in November 1928 by a 34-year-old Catholic spinster who believed that she was obeying God's law by trying to set fire to it. One week later she succeeded in doing so, causing 200 pounds worth of damage.

In response, Marie wrote in her regular newsletter -Birth Control News- that "Catholics were resorting to the good old medieval practice of burning, instead of enlightening, the enemy"!

Her book **Enduring Passion** was published in 1928, the result of gathering evidence from many correspondents and was designed as further new contributions to the solution of Sex difficulties.

It was "Dedicated to all who are, might be, or should be, married lovers"

In this book, Marie was aware of the need to balance body, mind and spirit. She recommended various glandular extracts for anxiety about sexual performance, regarded male masturbation as a perversion, and the best aphrodisiac was “bright sunshine in the mountain air”.

In 1929 her mother Charlotte died.

Her own married life was encountering difficulties. Humphrey had always been her faithful supporter but now he no longer provided her with sexual satisfaction, as he had become impotent, possibly caused by an old spinal injury from an aircraft crash during WW1. As well, his financial situation had been affected by the Depression and some unwise investments. Furthermore, she was devoted to their son Harry, preferring his company to that of her husband. Humphrey apparently gave her permission to take a lover, so long as they could stay together.

She did so, a much younger man.

Meantime Dr Sutherland – her antagonist in the previous libel case – crossed her path again. He had founded The League of National Life. Marie attacked him in one of her newsletters and he sued her for libel, this time losing both his case and appeal. Subsequently she wrote a book Roman Catholic methods of Birth Control and in order to boost its poor sales she chained a copy of it to the foot of the baptismal font at Westminster Cathedral!

In 1930, many of the voluntary clinics decided to unite to form the National Birth Control Council. Marie proposed the resolution to establish the Council but her dictatorial attitude did not endear her to other Council members, and she resigned from it in 1933.

The National Council changed its name in 1931 to the National Birth Control Association and in 1939 it changed its name again to the **Family Planning Association**, because in future it would help women to have wanted children, in the same spirit as it would help them to avoid having unwanted children, which was Marie's aim back in 1921.

In April that same year -1930- Marie wrote to Pope Pius XI asking for his help in promoting contraception, stating that they were both on the same side, opposed to the evil practice of murderous abortion and both dedicated to the service of humanity.

The result was the first papal encyclical on marriage for 50 years, Casti Conubii, which reinforced the Catholic position that the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for begetting children and that “those who deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious.”

The family moved to a new home, Norbury Park, in 1932 hoping that this would provide a better life for the family.

In the years that followed, Marie established more Mother's Clinics throughout the country, including one in Belfast. Apparently, she was invited by the wife of a consultant in the Royal Victoria Hospital to a dinner party where her sole topic of conversation was contraception, and she produced a vaginal cap from her handbag and passed it around the astonished guests!

Clinics were also opened in South Africa, Australis and New Zealand.

She attacked Gandhi's scruples about birth control – he too thought that it led to imbecility and nervous prostration. However, in 1952 she sent a trained nurse to open a clinic in Bombay and there are still clinics there named after her.

In 1935, **Married Love** was listed by a group of American academics as number **16 out of 25** most influential books of the previous 50 years, ahead of Einsteins' Relativity, Freud's Interpretation of Dreams and Hitler's Mein Kampf.

As her influence on the birth control movement waned, she decided to pursue a career in writing prose, plays and poetry.

She enjoyed entertaining at her house, inviting a wide variety of people, especially famous ones, and giving out her views, freely and unasked for, on health and education.

In 1939 shortly before WW 2 broke out, she sent Hitler a copy of her volume of poetry **Love Songs for Young Lovers**, with a note asking him to allow the young people of his nation to have them as advice. She hoped he might find something useful in them too!

During the war, her house was bombed, soldiers were encamped in the grounds, and her clinic was also bombed. She exhorted her nurse to continue fitting devices until the sounds of actual gunfire or bombs were very near, then they could evacuate the premises!

Humphry had rejoined the Air Force Volunteers Reserve, and her young lover had joined the Army and became engaged to a girl his own age.

Her son Harry got married to a young woman Mary, to whom Marie had taken a dislike, regarding her as being plain and socially dreary. Mary was also short sighted and wore glasses, which Marie maintained would be a burden to future children. She did not attend their wedding, and the mother- son relationship became strained, eased somewhat with the arrival of her grandson Jonathan. Two more girls followed, with whom she had little contact.

Humphrey died in 1949. He had been a faithful supporter of Marie for all their years of marriage.

At age 72 she was still energetic and- true to form- had a lover of 39 years. She believed in her own excellence in every field and courted younger men. She took part in an Oxford Union debate in January 1955 debating the motion that

The World Would be a Better Place without the Political Power and Influence of the Roman Catholic Church, wearing furs, jewels and brocaded slippers. I do not know the outcome!

In the spring of 1957, she was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer and died the following year on 2nd October at her home.

She had cut Harry out of her will- though he was left the 13 volume Greater Oxford English Dictionary- and she left nothing of note to her two granddaughters. The bulk of her estate went to the Royal Society of Literature, her Mother's Clinic to the Eugenics Society and a generous bequest to the British Museum. Jonathan, her grandson, was left a house in Surrey.

However, In July 1958, four months before she died, Marie's view of marriage was vindicated by the Anglican Bishops at their Lambeth Conference. They acknowledged the need for birth control and stated that procreation is not the sole purpose of Christian marriage. "Implicit within the bond of husband and wife is the relationship of love with its sacramental expression in physical union."

Her legacy lives on, though in the light of Marie's view on Eugenics, the Charity Marie Stopes International changed its name in 2020 to MSI Reproductive Choice.

Her clinics are to be found worldwide. Access to them is still free and MSI, as a charity, is funded by donors, philanthropists, foundations and governments.

I hope that you will agree with me that Dr Marie Stopes was indeed a woman of note.

References: Marie Stopes and The Sexual Revolution by June Rose