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## DILEMMA

THE lot of the modern woman is hard. On the one hand there is the appeal to her by Sir Stafford Cripps to re-enter the offices and factories as a recruit in the export drive; on the other there is the declaration—by Birmingham and other justices—that in the interests of the children Woman's place is in the home.

This is the post-war dilemma. Is it more important that the country, through the working efforts of every citizen, should regain solvency, or that the children of the nation should have the parental care necessary for the rearing of good citizens?

We need in industry every woman who has no more urgent claims upon her time—the childless woman, the woman whose children have been boarded out in public schools, the woman whose children have grown up.

But as a nation we cannot afford to spare from the family the women with growing children. Most parents can rear children better than impersonal agencies.

Proof of that statement lies in the fact that since the war, when mothers of immense numbers patriotically ditched their bit in the factories, juvenile delinquency

Yes, it is a woman's place—if she is the mother of growing children—is definitely in the home.

The rearing of good and civic-minded citizens is a major task. Though it may not be quite true that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, it is certainly undeniable that the mothers of Britain have the monopoly of the most influential character in their control.

The horns of the dilemma, therefore, are clearly defined. Women must consult their conscience whether their way lies through industry or the home.

## TEN MEN'S LIVES IN ONE

WILLIAM L. DAWE, of 55, Cannon Hill-road, Birmingham, spends his working days answering telephone calls at a Birmingham Corporation Permanent Way depot.

His leisure hours are spent with his wife and three young children.

On the surface he is one of the tens of thousands of ordinary folk in Birmingham, but—

The sun burnt deep into his forehead in the never-never land of Australasia, on the South American pampas and in the desert wastes of Africa.

His hair recedes now, a reminder that at 39 he has lived ten men's lives in one . . . an alligator-hunter, pearl diver, gold prospector, explorer, seaman, cat-man, and a fortune fighter in four wars, and a fishing "pirate."

Wherever life offered a thrill, William Dawe was there. Now, prevented by wounds from further tempting Fate, he has taken up the pen to describe 20 years of real-life adventure for Sunday Mercury readers.

LOOKING back on my life I wonder what gave me the itch to roam around the world and risk my neck in places where no sensible man would have been. My father was a steady type. He kept to his little station in North-West Australia and there is no record of a wanderlust on my mother's side either.

Yes, I would like to reflect on my Scandinavian ancestry I think I may be a throwback to the Vikings, in temperament, at any rate, if not in physique.

I was like most other Aussies as a kid. I got into scrapes at school at Subiaco near Perth and at Nunorcia University I was no better than the rest of my generation.

Then I returned to the cattle station at Broome one day feeling a bit bored. I decided to have a crack at pearl-diving and signed on before I could get my head down at the station that started me on my life of adventure.

Diving off 60 miles of

Today he leads a quiet Birmingham existence, but he's been

## HUMAN WRECKAGE

beach skirting the Indian Ocean in the packet "Clarry-ann." I felt that at last life really meant something.

The first time I was lowered down into the sea bed I had a horrible feeling that I would never see a surface again. Everything that I would feel unreal and other-worldish through the eyepieces of the wetsuit. The queerest things imaginable were looming towards me and whisking all over the place.

I believe that was the time I came up on the giant clam, I "sprung" him with my axe, for the first time I was allowed to tread on those open "jaws" would have meant eternity and knew that was a man I met in the Divers Yaid (cemetery) off Broome as a result of a mistake apart from an odd shark and a wandering swordfish I wasn't given too many palpitations on that first sea dive. I discovered on surfacing that there wasn't a single pearl in my stomach.

Talking of sharks, they seldom give any trouble to divers. There's only one danger. The rubber suits are used for shallow diving (about 25 fathoms) leave the hands bare at the wrist and there is always the risk of cutting the hand on rock, stone or the rest of the debris which



"Never again" is a phrase used many times by William L. Dawe, now living a quiet life in Birmingham, Sunday Mercury Picture.

Now sharks have an extraordinary sense of smell and the slightest cut which draws blood is enough to bring them swarming around for a kill.

It wouldn't even matter if you cut yourself shaving before diving, for a shark can smell blood through a rubber suit, and there isn't much chance against them when they're on the warpath, particularly the battle-swept type. Of course, when you're working at great depths in steel suits the body is completely covered and then neither shark, swordfish nor giant clam can do any harm.

Sometimes for days we could

do no diving. Cyclones, hurricanes, monsoons and typhoons rocked that barren coastline, and never since have I seen Nature in such a tigerish fury. Then the storms would abate the sun come out in all its fierce splendour, and we would continue the search for the elusive oyster.

## DIVED IN PAIRS

We moved into waters where the octopus lurked and according to the custom dived in pairs. I remember seeing one of these squids and realising the danger warned my companion. We both signalled on the danger line.

I must have surfaced too rapidly. I came out of the water, suffering from the "bends," unconscious and bleeding from the nose and ears, and had to go into the decompression chamber before coming round.

That sort of thing doesn't happen often, but if there were no decompression chambers on pearls then without a doubt the population of Divers Yaid would be larger than it is.

How does it feel in the decompression chamber? I should liken it to coming round from an anaesthetic. The chamber is sealed, and the air pressure on entering is equal to that experienced by the diver while working under the sea. The pressure is gradually lifted, and when it is equivalent to that outside the doors automatically open for the diver to emerge.

I made about £400 on that trip. Of course the success of pearling always depends on what the weather says—Dame Fortune. Sometimes it was all mother-of-pearl and nothing else, and then we would collect half-a-dozen pearls in one 20-minute dive.

I spent several months of 1927 cruising off the Java Seas doing

a bit of pearl-pirating in Dutch waters. The Dutch weren't peering in these parts for some reason or other, and my skipper was game for a gamble. We did very well, but how we missed capture by Dutch gunboats I never knew, for at times we were almost under their noses.

After that trip I made for the Kalgoorlie goldmines. It was hard graft rifling the quartz, and while I was there I earned every penny of the fourteen pounds I picked up weekly.

Apart from the fact that we worked diagonally, instead of downwards, mining the quartz from which the gold is extracted is a situation similar to coalmining methods in the Midlands and certainly as back-breaking.

The consequence was that when we finished a day's work the money was thrown away on the most ephemeral pleasures, and it was nothing unusual to see a man taking on a game of pitch-and-toss.

## DOWN UNDER

I cleared out after six months and made for Alice Springs in Central Australia—one store, a state trooper, station and shacks, or about one-sixth the size of Tamworth. Here my cobber, "Snowy" White, and I packed stores for a gold prospecting trip to the Peiermann Ranges.

We trekked across tracts of arid wasteland where civilised man had never been before, and along age-old water-courses we were among great rivers we saw the petrified bones of long-extinct animals. It seemed to us as we gazed on these scenes in awe that we might well be looking at the finale of the human race, as it happened, it nearly became our burial ground.

[Another instalment next week]