

HENRY WAS 32 when he married. For ten years he had been more than welcome in our home; we looked on him almost as one of the family. He gave every indication of thoroughly enjoying our children, and they fought to sit beside him at meals or go with him on errands. He captured them completely, just as he captured my wife and me. He was affable, charming, an accomplished storyteller, and a generous, understanding friend.

We were delighted when he married a girl five years younger whom he had known for several years at his office. They had been keeping company for six months, and had been in our home many times. They appeared completely devoted to each other.

That's why it was such a shock when his wife, Jane, phoned us late one night—about a year after they were married—and asked if she might come over and see us. She was crying and obviously distressed.

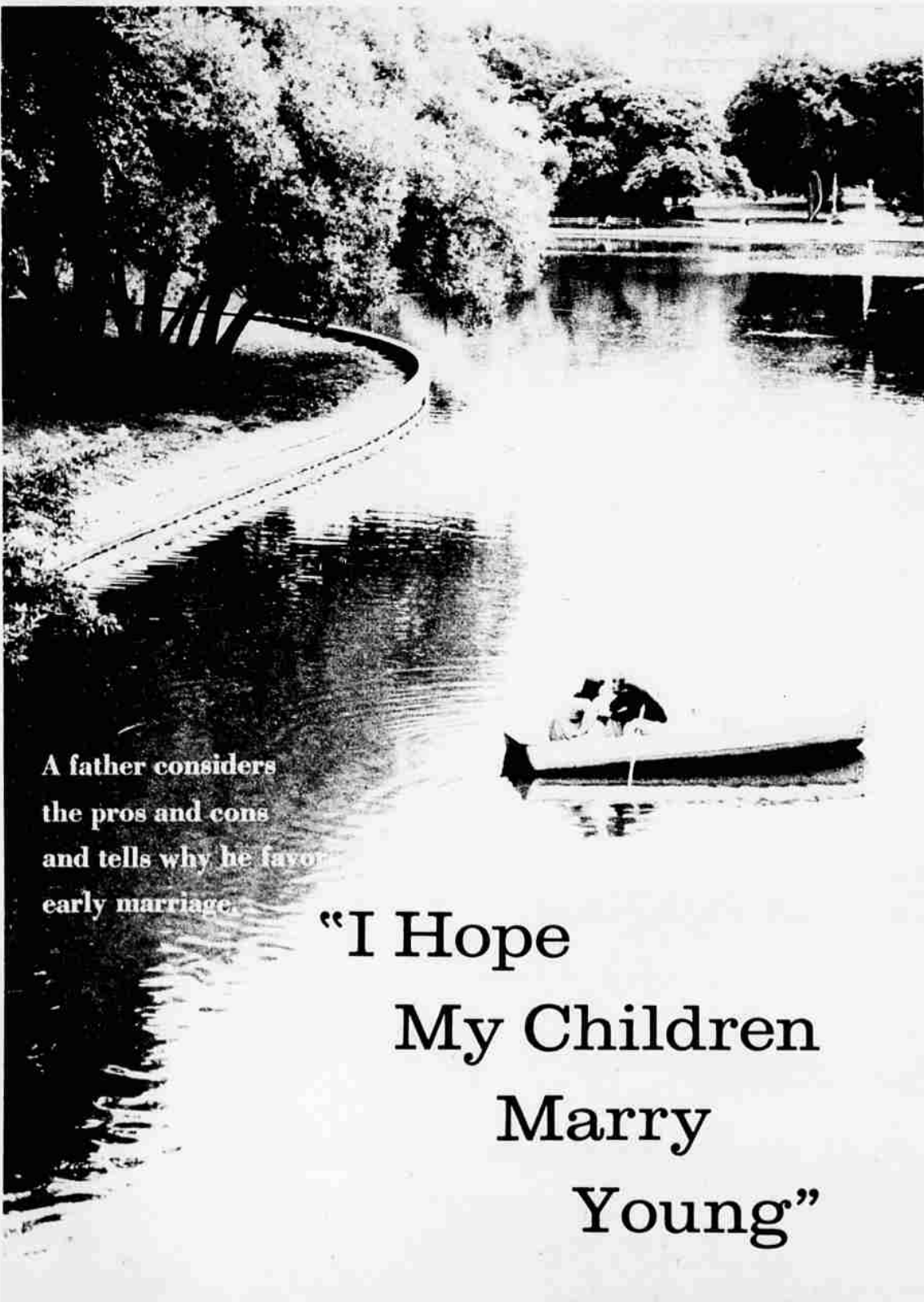
Her story was incredible. It was the story of an arrogant, opinionated, hard-headed, selfish man who was making no concessions to marriage and had no intention of changing. As long as things were done his way, he was his old charming self; but when he was crossed, he was a different person. My wife and I were bewildered. Could this be the same Henry—our warm friend for so many years?

Oddly enough, it was the same Henry. The difference was in the point of view. Jane saw him as a husband, while we saw him as a friend. He was a fine friend—and a bad husband. In retrospect, it's easy to diagnose his trouble: he had simply waited too long to get married. When he finally did, mental rigor mortis had set in. As a result, in any difference of opinion on family problems, Henry was completely immovable. He wouldn't argue; he simply stated his position and refused to move from it. It was unthinkable to him that any other valid opinion could exist.

Henry and Jane live in a sort of uneasy truce. Jane had to decide whether the marriage meant enough to her to make the repeated concessions necessary to get along with Henry in anything other than a perpetually distressed atmosphere. She decided it was, finally, and there the matter rests for the moment.

Whatever the conclusion, it's a decidedly shaky foundation for a marriage. Yet, Henry is no isolated case. I know dozens of others like him—both men and women. And inevitably the basic cause of their difficulties in adjusting to marriage is the fact that they didn't marry young enough.

I hope I've learned a lesson from watching these experiences unfold. This may come back to haunt me in a few years, but I hope my children—now approaching their teens—marry young. I think that the benefits of a youthful marriage far outweigh the difficulties. Among the people we



A father considers
the pros and cons
and tells why he favors
early marriage.

"I Hope My Children Marry Young"