

SEX KNOWLEDGE.

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SEX KNOWLEDGE

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INTRODUCTION

IN these days of frank journalism, the subject of sex is so freely ventilated, and in some ways represented with such undue prominence, that it would seem well that people who have not access to scientific literature should have the plain scientific facts of sex, in so far as they are known, put before them. Plain and simple language is needed. With such knowledge they may be able to base their opinions and their judgments upon sound facts instead of upon tradition, superstition, and such promiscuous ideas as most people gather in the course of their lives. Misinformation and ignorance, together with unfortunate and unfortifying experience, lead to positive unhappiness, or to that lack of happiness and ecstasy in life which falls to the lot of most people. There are remarkably few really happy marriages, marriages, that is to say, in which life-long fidelity of each to each is the joyful, voluntary choice, in which parenthood is welcomed, in which comradeship exists between husband and wife, in which a wise understanding of the emotional needs of each leads to entirely satisfactory marital relationships; unions in which, through love, strength is given to meet serenely all the many trials which domestic life, for most families, is bound to hold. The number of divorce cases, which seems to have increased so greatly during recent years, represents but a tithe of the unsuccessful marriages

which never come to the divorce court for solution. The number of divorces may, in itself, be a sign that men and women realise that there is something deep and significant in love, and that they are questioning whether it is right to prolong such an intimate partnership as marriage without the harmonising influence of love. Yet the question of the children comes in. Obviously, such problems require that the well-being of all be considered in their solution.

Unhappy marriages are not by any means the only unfortunate condition in social life connected with sex. Of recent years, public attention has been drawn to the great prevalence of venereal diseases and to the increasing numbers of children born out of wedlock. It would seem well that we should go to the root of things and discover, if we can, whether they need be or not. If one is to accept as a guide, statements of government and medical authorities regarding the prevalence of venereal disease and regarding the numbers of children of unmarried parents, irregularity would seem to be very common; these statements would, indeed, seem to indicate that many persons in this country do not abide by the social tradition of chastity and fidelity. It would be well, we say again, to go down to root causes, to discover the reasons why some people do not, it may even be cannot, adjust their behaviour to the requirements of society. Does the fault lie with the individual or with society itself, or is it a combination of both?

The day has come when men and women, youths and girls are educated so that they no longer take things entirely for granted; they are less inclined to be ruled by tradition and convention than they used to be a

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quarter of a generation ago; each is much inclined to be a law unto himself. Only an intelligent understanding and a great inspiration may insure that his law unto himself will harmonise with the law society has laid down for him to obey.

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERY OF SEX

FOR most of us at some time or other, sex has been, perhaps still is, among the great mysteries of life, among the things of which we are aware but cannot understand. When we were very young we pondered over the origin of new life, particularly of human life. When we grew older, passing into youth, life became full of new romantic interests. New experiences came to the body as well as to the mind. When we became still older—grown up, indeed—some of the mystery was made clear to us, but not all. We were still left to ponder over the big personal and social problems of sex, understanding but little of their inwardness.

Some have been harmed by their ignorance; some, perhaps not positively harmed, have been bereft of the spiritual uplift which wise understanding can give. From many minds comes the cry for knowledge.

Sex, the mysterious, is yet a master force in life. Its purpose is far-reaching, beneficent; its powers great, for good or for evil. These powers of sex rightly used, rightly directed, bodily, mentally, spiritually, make for the great good of human life and human society, but mismanaged, misdirected, they may make for equally great harm. We can only appreciate and direct aright that which we understand; we must, therefore, understand sex and probe into its mystery to discover the real nature of this master force.

Human life is not a thing apart. A simple study of plant and animal life soon reveals the fact that the same great laws govern all life. Every individual, whether it be a plant individual, an animal or a human one, is endeavouring, by every means in its power, primarily to preserve its own life. It is striving for the absolute necessities of life—for food of the right kind and right quantity; for the life-giving part of the air, oxygen; striving, too, to rid its body of those waste materials which are the constant associate with bodily growth and work. Plants, animals, and human individuals alike have some mode of excretion, as the process of getting rid of waste materials is called, by which the body is kept in healthy living order. Further, for its more complete self-protection, the individual must be able to adjust itself satisfactorily to changes which occur in its surroundings, not merely to the gross changes as shown in threatening disaster, accident or catastrophe, but to the minor but none the less testing changes which constantly occur—changes such as sudden or gradual alteration of temperature, of the amount of moisture in the air, alteration of the nature of the food supply available, and so forth. For this reason it is sensitive, possessing some form or other of nervous system and power of response. Every plant, every animal, every human being must achieve these aims in order to survive.

This great urge towards self-preservation is the central fact of life; it constitutes the foundation of much of our human behaviour which otherwise may seem inexplicable. Strong life-preserving impulses, having their origin in far-back ages in the world's

history, deeply rooted and active in each individual life, are often altered in their actual manifestation in human life, may be masked, may be suppressed or regulated, but they never lose their power, nor do they get separated from their purpose, though we may not be aware of either power or purpose. The man, for example, regardless of other groups in society, endeavouring to secure higher wages, the boy jostling his way through a crowd, never caring whom he hurts in his progress, the woman pushing her way through the crowd of customers to be served first—we may think such actions to be impolite, selfish, anti-social, or even worse, and yet the mainspring of it all is the unconscious urge, "*My life, my life, my life to be preserved, my life to be satisfied.*"

Man, it is true, through the ages has gradually learned, mainly in the interests of others, to curb his primitive desires. His impulses have become regulated somewhat, or at any rate his gratification of his impulses has been more or less regulated according to the custom of the group in which he lives. In the plant life the needs of its body are satisfied by the food secured according as the plant sends its roots through the soil and its leaves through the air. In animals, when the body requires repairing and upbuilding, the strong impulse of hunger arises and is satisfied by the mere process of hunting for the right food in sufficient quantity according to the animal's own desires. But in man the story is different. The infant tends to behave in a primitive fashion, just as any wild animal may do; when it is hungry it turns to the breast for food. But soon that primitive hunger impulse comes up against the rule of law and order.

Modern nurses put a baby on a regular routine—food every three or three-and-a-half-hours and none during the night. Thus, the hunger impulse experiences the curb—a curb which is steadily enforced as the years go on by family custom of regular stated meal times, by hours of school work, of labour and so forth. Moreover, the child early in life is taught to put the claims of others before itself, at table to share its good food with others—a further imposition upon the primitive hunger impulse with which it began life. Such is life's experience. The well-brought-up man or woman is hardly aware that there is such a force in his or her life as a simple hunger impulse, yet it is there, and when any real test comes along, may show itself. How many of us have said, and meant it, "I'm so hungry I could eat anything and everything I could get."

Other primitive instincts have in human life also been subdued, regulated and altered. The instinct of pugnacity, for example, which prompts many animals to attack and to fight with others which endanger their safety or their success in life, is a very strong force in human life, but it, too, in adult life at any rate, is usually much altered. The little child when annoyed will put up a fight like any wild animal will do; he will strike even his mother when she offends him. So the instinct of pugnacity, of combativeness, shows itself characteristically in the young. But the ordinary customs of family life, of school life, and of social life, forbid any expression of the desire to fight which may lead to the actual physical injury of the opponent. It is not done. And the youngster is left to bottle up his desires or to secure an outlet for them in some disguised

form. Thus, ultimately, the would-be fighter becomes argumentative, or the keen antagonist in games, the hard worker wrestling with his task, the hard thinker wrestling with his problems. He is, in consequence, less of a wild animal in his behaviour and more of a human kind. There are, however, times and circumstances under which this transformation of impulse may fail to take place; witness the fights in the playground, street brawls, and the greater example of the late war, when the real primitive force at the back of behaviour comes to the forefront.

Mankind, it will thus be seen, has been builded upon the animal kind; his powers are primarily as theirs; his peculiar, special and wonderful abilities, which distinguish him from the animals, are really derived from that which he inherits from his animal ancestors and shares with the animals to-day. The instinct of pugnacity, to take again an illustration, if manifested in a primitive fashion by physical fighting, places man almost on a level with the animals, but transmuted into power of debate, into stubborn wrestling with difficulties, into firm adherence to a cause and so forth, becomes among those forces which give man his peculiarly human powers and carries him beyond the animals in evolution.

I have dwelt somewhat upon this force of primitive instinct in life, and upon the nature of its conversion in human life, because it bears very close relation to the problem of sex in human life.

Every individual—plant, animal or human—is living its life towards two great aims. One has already been indicated—that of self-preservation. Life, however,

in the individual can be preserved only for a certain period, long or short, according to the type; sooner or later, through old age, through accident, strain, disease, or catastrophe, the individual ceases to be. Nature, however, has safeguarded against the possibility of life, through continued death of individuals, disappearing from the earth. Every individual, in addition to possessing the power of preserving its own life, may, further, produce new life. Each is, in short, the trustee of life for future generations. Sex is the device whereby, in the great majority of organisms, this new life is brought forth.

New lives, whether plant, or animal, or human, are very delicate; they are easily damaged by strain, by disease, by unpropitious circumstances. Consequently, for their successful survival in the struggle for existence, provision must be made to safeguard them from the risks attendant upon immaturity. Plants not only produce their seeds, but provide some measure of protection for them in the form of pod and seed-coat; a supply of food suitable for a young plant life to feed upon is also to be found in every seed. Parental care belongs not to man alone, but is shown in various ways throughout the whole of nature. The lower, the simpler plants, and the lower animals show it less than do those which are more complex, more highly evolved, as the scientific saying goes. They produce more young and take less care of them. The more highly evolved animals produce fewer young but safeguard them more effectively from the risks attendant upon infancy. The birds, for example, not only provide nourishment in the form of "yolk" and "white" of

the egg for the young life—the embryo, as it is called—within the yolk, but provide a shell for its protection and build a nest wherein the eggs may, with more or less safety, achieve their early growth. When the nestling has come forth from the egg, parental care must continue. The young are to be fed while they are unable to fend for themselves; they are to be protected from possible enemies while still unable to fight for themselves; they have to be trained in the habits of their kind in order that they may become sturdy members of their race. Parental care, which reaches its highest possibilities of expression in man, is almost universal.

Just as there are certain mental forces at work, impelling the individual to preserve its own life, so are there similar forces impelling each towards reproduction. Self-preservation and race-preservation are the two main objects of all life.

The instincts of hunger, of pugnacity, of flight and so forth, constitute the self-preserving group of forces; the instinct of sex and its associate, the parental instinct, constitute the race-preserving forces. It is with the study of the sex instinct and of the parental instinct that we are particularly concerned in this little volume.

CHAPTER II

THE SEX INSTINCT

IN the development and the manifestations of the sex instinct man parts company with the animals. In animals, while the self-preserving and the self-regarding impulses are always at work, the race-preserving impulses operate just at certain periods; never at all till the animal has reached maturity, and after that stage is reached, only at certain times in the year does the sex instinct—the impulse towards reproduction—become active. During the rest of the year it is quiescent, dormant.

With man it is different. The sex instinct is an active force during the whole of his life. Man here, as we have already said, parts company with the animals; he does not have a definite breeding season. It may be well to observe at this point that when, in the biological sense, we speak of man, we include woman also in the term.

Let us look further into the matter. Modern study of the mind in its workings has thrown considerable light upon the problem of sex activity. The urge towards self-preservation is, as we have already seen, very deep, very powerful and very prolonged; so, too, is the urge towards race-preservation. Nature has a wonderful way of preparing beforehand. Long before a child is born, the parts of its body which are going to endow it with the power of parenthood are very well,

nearly completely, formed; that is to say, long before they are called upon to undertake the work of race-preservation they are being constructed towards that end. So, too, in the realm of the mind. Long before the sex instinct is required by Nature for purposes of preserving the human type, that instinct has originated in the mind, in the mind of even the little child; indeed many psychologists hold, even, that the infantile mind are the beginnings of sex impulses to be recognised. But these modern psychologists are careful, when making this assertion, to make clear also the fact that the sex instinct is really something very different from what ordinary people have thought it to be. It is not merely concerned with those impulses which attract man to woman and woman to man for the sole purpose of consummating bodily sex relationships. It is much more than that. It is now represented by the psychologists—and the time has come when all should know—to be a mental force originating very early in life, capable of undergoing many transformations in the course of experience, and through these contributing greatly towards man's mental efficiency besides, making, in devious ways, very greatly for his happiness. That which promotes *real* happiness—by which we mean a spiritual joy—is a positive force for good.

We have seen in the previous chapter how some of the self-preserving instincts have, in the course of man's life, been altered, in some cases by being regulated according to family and social laws and customs, and in some cases by conversion into other forms of mental activity. We have also seen that these transformations of mental energy from a primitive or crude form to a

cultivated form (as, for example, the instinct of pugnacity into intellectual struggle with problems), have been and are a great source of human power and progress. It now remains for us to understand how similar processes affect the sex instinct.

It is the experience of each one of us that matters connected with sex have been very much taboo. Family customs and ideas, social customs, religious life, all have conspired to impose a ban upon sex, with the result that the sex interests do not get free play. They are, to a great extent, suppressed as it were, away from the thoughts. The little child, asking where babies come from, a question which manifests a sex interest, has been, usually, snubbed, evaded, or even punished for asking the question—a question which really is perfectly natural and justifiable. Any interest shown by a child in sexual matters is, if it comes to the knowledge of its guardians, parents, or others, usually thwarted. And so it goes on along life's journey. Society, in this country, has set up a code regarding sex which it expects each individual to obey, a code that expects the sex impulses to be perfectly controlled till marriage and to be disciplined within marriage towards fidelity. We will not pause here to discuss the extent to which the code is obeyed. For the moment it is enough to recognise its existence. This very code imposes a further discipline upon the sex impulses which, be it noted, undergo great changes at the beginning of youth, changes which we shall discuss more fully later.

The result of the various impositions upon the primitive sex impulses is that they have been very con-

siderably affected, in a similar way to that in which the primitive self-preserving impulses have been affected. They have been, by pressure of experience, as it were, converted into other channels of mental interest, constituting a source from which man has acquired much power of creative and intellectual effort, power of æsthetic and emotional appreciation, of social and civic service. A noted novelist, poet and litterateur, discussing certain questions of sex psychology, said, "I regard every book I have written as a child"—recognising that he got his power of creative work from transformed sex energy. Each of us, to a greater or less extent, benefits intellectually, in this way, from the casual transmutation of sex energy, a mental process, however, which goes on without our being aware of it at the time, and only subsequently in some degree is evident to the individual who can, with psychological insight, understand somewhat of his own mind.

There is another aspect of the matter. In addition to working along these hidden channels in the mind, yielding forth fruits in the shape of mental ability and activity, sex finds other channels of expression—channels associated with more specially sexual avenues of experience. These will be appreciated more after we have discussed the mental development of the sex life. In the meantime, it must suffice to indicate that all those emotional interests which attract one sex to the other sex, which unfold in such wealth in youth, and which reach their highest expression in the love which man can bear for woman and woman for man, and each for children of their own, constitute the conscious side of sex in life. It is this power of love which is and has

been through ignorance so gravely imperilled and impoverished, that we would endeavour, through knowledge, to safeguard from evil and towards the perfect unfolding.

CHAPTER III

THE GROWTH OF THE MIND IN REGARD TO SEX

IT is well to understand, in a simple fashion, the stages through which the mind in its growth passes in regard to sex.

The infant is in the initial stage of development in every way. Mentally, it is conscious chiefly of itself, its own sensations; it discriminates merely between that which is itself and that which is not itself. Beyond that at first it does not go. Then, as the days and the weeks pass, and as life unfolds for the infant, its powers of discrimination unfold likewise and its mind grows, becoming able to assimilate experiences of a more complex order than at first.

As a result of this infantile mental condition, all the first interests centre round its own sensations and impressions. And it is so in connection with sex. The first appreciations of sexual feeling which the infant has are those directly or indirectly concerned with its own body. Most infants, for example, by casual experience it may be, or it may be by unfortunate experience

through mishandling by ignorant or vicious nursemaids or other persons in charge of them, discover pleasurable sensations associated with the sex-organs themselves. In other ways, which it is beyond the scope of this little account of sex to discuss, early infantile experiences connected with sex, centre round its own feelings and the pleasure therefrom derived. Throughout life similar interests tend to persist. For example, in youth and later life, many people—if not all—at one time or another get pleasure from reverie, day-dreaming upon subjects of a sexual—perhaps romantically sexual—nature. There is no external cause giving them pleasure, but just the internal cause of their inner thoughts. This phase of sexual interest, where the real pleasure is secured in self-centred experiences, is known as the auto-erotic phase, and though it is held normally to arise in infancy, and is typical of infancy, for various reasons it may persist more or less intermittently and more or less intensely, along with the subsequent phases of development.

The second stage to which the individual's development progresses, after achieving the auto-erotic, is that in which the erotic desires, the love interests of later life, relate themselves to some personal object, to an individual or individuals of the same sex. It is a stage through which most women have passed as school-girls, when they conceived a more or less violent affection of a sentimental nature for a woman teacher or for a school-girl, frequently older than themselves. And likewise, most men can remember having passed through the stage in early and later boyhood, when their romantic love or their sentimental affection were tem-

porarily directed towards a man or boy among their associates. Some individuals, grown up to-day, can look back into their lives and identify their passage through this stage of "homosexual interest," as it is called. Others are unaware of their having passed through it, partly perhaps because they happened to pass through it very quickly and proceed to adult development, and partly perhaps because it has been associated with experiences conceived in themselves, or by their consequences, to be so unpleasant that they have been thrust away from the memory, that is, forgotten; while yet others can, looking into their own lives, realise that they are still experiencing homosexual interests. It may be that development has never gone beyond this stage, that, in short, the individual has never properly "grown up," or it may be that the stage has, as the auto-erotic phase may do, tended to persist, alongside of the next, the adult stage of development which we may now proceed to discuss.

This, the third stage of mental growth in regard to sex, is known as the heterosexual. It is the stage in which all the interests which may be directly or indirectly connected with sex tend to associate themselves with the opposite sex. This stage begins to arise in late childhood, but develops very rapidly during the transition from childhood to youth. This period of transition is known as the period of puberty, and leads the way to youth or adolescence. The condition of the body at this time is described in another chapter, but so far as the mind is concerned, we may remind our readers that puberty is a period of great change and great stress. It is a period of excitability and of instability.

It is one during which the mind is rapidly developing new powers, powers of intellect, of reasoning, of imagination, of romantic endeavour and aspiration. It is also a period during which social life is claiming the adolescent for its own. At this stage the girl and the boy are each ready to enter into the responsibilities of group or social life, and to recognise the restrictions which membership with a group imposes. But naturally each fits in best and most agreeably with the group that he himself and his peers have formed—with the games team, the scout patrol, the gang. Each, naturally, is less ready to fit into the exigencies of society as adults have ordained it; such adaptation to adult requirements is naturally of a later date. The result of this gradual unfolding of the social sense is that while the young girl and the young boy fit in admirably with their own groups, being entirely peaceful and orthodox members thereof, each is less inclined to harmonise his or her behaviour with society as a whole, and temporarily passes through a stage of life in which rebellion against the restrictions of home and social life is more or less characteristic. Much of the waywardness of young girls, and the rowdiness of youths, which in relation to the sex problem are often so great a cause of social evil, is nothing more or less than an indication of particular difficulty which is being experienced in achieving a reconciliation between the claims of the individual for self-assertion and the subjugation of the individual to the laws of the group. It is worthy of note that in these days of modern industry, with its many specialised departments, when droves of young folk pass into days of monotonous employment, the

reaction tends to be even greater than it used to be. Society owes much to the social workers among boys and girls, who, by their various efforts, boy scouts, girl guides, camp fire girls, and so forth, provide a channel whereby a cramped and dislocated spirit may find harmony and peace.

It is of interest and significant to note that each of these stages of mental sex development is characterised by its own type of day-dreams. The child of three, for example, dreams about incidents and circumstances in which other children of the same age—who do in the dream much that the child itself would take pleasure in doing—play conspicuous *roles*; the boy of ten in his day-dreams pictures himself leading his team of boys victoriously, playing his game of cricket, football, leading his boy companions as pirates, and so on; at fifteen or sixteen he dreams still of his own sex to some extent, but there is also some girl or woman usually in his dreams towards whom he acts a heroic part, rescues from fire, from danger, and so on. The dreams of three show the interest in self; they are auto-erotic: the dreams of ten show interest in other individuals of the same sex; they indicate homosexual interest: the dreams of fifteen or sixteen show the transference towards the heterosexual interest. Mr. G. H. Green has given a very lucid and attractive account of day-dreams, to which those who would like to follow up the subject are referred.*

Such is, briefly, an account of the sexual development of the mind. Adolescence is a period rich in

* "Psychanalysis in the Classroom." By G. H. Green, B.Sc. B.Litt. Published by London University Press, 1921. Price 7s. 6d.

experience and in expansion. It is a period during which childish interests are giving place to those of mature life. Romance, lofty ideas and ideals, imagination, all contribute to enrich the mind and to complicate the emotions. Sex, in every sphere, bodily, mental and spiritual, gains great importance. The conscious critical faculties and the unconscious critical interests gain acuteness. While, at one time, many men might each present a certain attraction to a girl, and likewise many girls each attract a boy, the critical faculties tend to be increasingly selective, till ultimately the love choice falls on one, the desired mate.

During adolescence the conscious interests in sex unfold very rapidly. After a temporary period of what looks like estrangement from one another, boys and girls each take pleasure in and seek for the company of the other sex. This they do as part of their normal mental development, a fact which the Americans recognise much more fully in their educational system, and in the general provisions they make for young people, than we in this country as yet do. It is through such contact that each begins to know, to understand and appreciate the other, and, even more important, to understand themselves. Each has to become accustomed to new sensations, new impressions, where the other sex is concerned. A hand-clasp, a kiss, some other caress, even a glance, may give rise to the desire for the closer physical contact of bodily union. Some there are who know the significance of these feelings. Others there are who are mystified.

Sex attraction is a very great force in Nature. Through it, through all time, animal and human life, by sexual

reproduction, have been continued. A force so deep-rooted in the past biological history is no small force in human life, and its workings are full of mystery to youth and even to early maturity. Once the chaotic changes of puberty have been accomplished, both body and mind proceed through succeeding years to stabilise themselves, girls reaching maturity about two years earlier than boys do.

Through the mazes of emotional experiences the adolescent boy and the adolescent girl make their way towards manhood and womanhood, when, if nothing has happened to spoil the emotional balance, each may find their sex interests concentrated towards one; those sex interests are not, in human life, as has already been explained, merely connected with desire for physical union, but are associated with the great social and the great idealistic interests of life. From the great complex emerges the love choice.

The psychology of sex attraction is somewhat difficult to explain within the limits of a short chapter. It acts in many devious ways. The sex impulses tend to be more localised in man than in woman, so that a stimulus which may give rise to the desire for sexual intercourse would in man show its effect much more quickly and directly than in woman. It may be appreciation of this fact that leads so many moralists to throw more responsibility for the moral stability of society upon woman than upon man. The inclination of man and woman to take pleasure in the society of one another is in itself a force of tremendous social value, a force which we have not as yet put to the whole benefit of society.

CHAPTER IV

HOW SEX AFFECTS THE BODY

LET us turn to the bodily aspects of sex. Just as the laws governing the growth of the mind are similar in animals and in human-kind, so do we, on study, find the laws of the body similar in both groups of life. Further, in so far as the bodily processes are concerned, plants as well as animals and human creatures are essentially similar in their function.

It is well to take a brief review of the body as a whole, as only then can we see the function of sex in its right perspective and in its relations to the rest of the bodily activities. In the past most of us have suffered through ignorance of this master function; we must not now run the risk of over-emphasis or lack of proportion.

Every individual organism, plant, animal, and human is, as has already been emphasised, striving to preserve its own life. Towards that end it must secure the necessaries for life preservation and must convert those necessaries into bodily tissues, and from them derive the energy of life, whether it be heat or work. The first necessities of life are food (including water) and oxygen. Food must be the right kind and in the right quantity. Oxygen, the life-giving part of the air, must be in the right quantity and in the right form. Both food and oxygen must be rendered available for the bodily uses. By means of the process of digestion, carried out by what is known as the digestive system

(in the higher animals consisting primarily of the gullet or food-pipe, stomach, small intestines, colon, and various glands, the work of which is to reduce the food in the digestive system to a liquid form), the food is converted into liquid form, absorbed by the blood and carried round the body by the blood stream. In its passage round the body, each part of the body extracts from the blood what it requires for growth, for repair, and for the production of heat and work. The wind-pipe and lungs are, in the higher animals, the means whereby oxygen is secured for the bodily uses. These organs carry on what is known as respiration, in which process air is inhaled into the lungs, and the blood vessels in the lungs extract from that inhaled air a certain amount of the oxygen therein. This oxygen also is carried round the body by the ever-moving blood stream and is extracted therefrom by the various parts of the body requiring it.

In the course of living, growing and working, the organism produces waste matters, which accumulate in the blood in its endless journey, but as it passes through certain organs, the lungs, the skin, and the kidneys, chiefly, these waste materials are extracted and ultimately are discharged from the body. Waste, undigested food leaves the body by the rectum. In this way, by regular removal of waste material, the body maintains its efficiency and health.

The various activities of the body are harmonised and co-ordinated by means of the nervous system (brain, spinal cord, and their branches the nerves). This is a kind of telegraphic system, by means of which one part of the body is linked up in communication

with another part of the body, and by means of which also the body is brought into responsive contact with the outside world. The nervous system is the seat of sensation, and sensation, feeling, is the medium by which the body appreciates its environment.

There is, in addition, another co-ordinating system to regard, one about which modern scientists have much to tell us. They have not yet probed all of its mysteries, but are constantly revealing new and further ones. This system is known as the endocrine system, and consists of the ductless glands. These glands are wonderful organs, situated in various parts of the body, and each is engaged in some special work, contributing towards the growth, the efficiency and the well-being of the body. Each produces its own special materials, which it sends into the blood stream and which act as chemical messengers (they are called hormones), stimulating one part of the body and another part to growth and to activity. These hormones, or messengers, are very remarkable in that they serve to keep one part of the body in touch with another part; to maintain, as it were, sympathy between the various parts of the body. They seem particularly to be under the dominion of the emotions, and alter considerably according to the state of mind. When one is angry, for example, certain hormones are produced in great quantity, and may provide the stimulant to great activity as a result of the anger. Some of these ductless glands seem to be particularly concerned with the promotion of growth. The thyroid gland in the neck is one of these. Should a child be born deficient in thyroid gland, it does not, unless it has treatment to

make good the deficiency, grow up to normal youth and maturity. Among the ductless glands, in addition to the thyroid which has already been picked out for special mention, are the ovaries (in the female) and the testicles (in the male). They have very important work to do in connection with the growth and well-being of the body.

Besides the ceaseless endeavour to preserve its own life, every organism is endeavouring to preserve the life of its race. This takes place by two methods, one known as the asexual, the other the sexual method.

The asexual method is only possible to the very simplest organisms. Many plants reproduce by this method, though not only by this one, and a few simple animals do. The asexual method of reproduction is that in which the individual gives off a part, a bud as it were, of itself, and this separated part is capable of growing into a new individual. Jelly-fishes, for example, give off jelly-fish "buds," which grow into perfect jelly-fishes; crocuses make crocus buds underground (they are curious swollen buds called corms), and each corm can become a new crocus individual. So, too, do hyacinths and other bulbous plants produce bulbs which are merely buds of the parent hyacinth, that is to say, they are asexual in origin.

Further, some of the very simplest plants and animals, of a type so small that they can only be seen with the aid of a strong microscope, and so simple that they consist solely of one isolated mass of living material, called a cell, reproduce asexually. In this case each individual cell merely splits into two, and each half is a

complete reproduction of the parent cell and capable of living an independent life.

It is, however, after all, the few, and those of the simplest organisms, that can reproduce by this asexual method. The great bulk of individuals make their contribution to the new generation by what is known as the sexual method. In this process, when the individual—be it plant, animal, or human—has reached maturity, it liberates from its body certain minute specially modified living particles, each of which, should it join with another similarly modified living particle from the same kind of individual, is capable of growing into a new life resembling the parents from which it came. It takes, as a small boy once put it, "two specks of life to make a new life."

We may make an easy acquaintance with this method of reproduction in the study of a flower, the poppy, for example. In the centre of the red flower-cup stands a large green knob. This is the ovary and contains small white "ovules," in each of which resides an "ovum" or "egg," one of the powerful specks of life. Round this ovary stand many stamens, each having at its upper end a small knob, the anther or pollen-box. When the anther is mature, it opens to shed fine grains of pollen dust. Each grain of pollen dust contains a "sperm," another powerful "speck of life." There are two kinds of life-producing cells. One kind is known as the ovum or egg; it is the female contribution to the new life: the other kind is called the sperm, and is the male contribution to the new life. When an egg and a sperm fuse together a new life is launched. In the poppy, and in most flowers, the ovaries and the anthers

mature at slightly different times, hence for seeds to be made, sperms (in pollen grains) have to be carried from one poppy to another poppy and deposited on the top of the ovary. In some flowers insects, visiting the flower in search of nectar, happen to transfer pollen from one flower to another of the same kind; in others the wind is the agent which blows pollen from one flower to another.

Once a pollen grain has landed on the top of the ovary, it grows down into the interior of the ovary, finds its way to an ovule. Then the sperm within the pollen grain and the egg (ovum) within the ovule unite; a new poppy life is started and the ovule begins to grow into a seed. Seeds, as any little child at school will say, are plant babies.

And so it is throughout life; an egg (the female contribution) and a sperm (the male contribution) must join together to start a new life. What the quality of the new life will be, and what its kind will be, depend upon the qualities and the kind of the parents which produce the eggs and sperms respectively. The eggs and the sperms are, in short, the bearers of inherited qualities from parent to offspring, a very important point to observe in connection with human life and parenthood.

In animal life the sexual method of reproduction is the same as in plants, save for the fact that as animals have the power of movement (which plants do not, as a rule, possess), they do not need the assistance of an external agent, like the wind and insects, to bring the eggs and sperms towards one another. They can seek and approach their mates themselves. In some animals,

which live in water, males and females select one another; the female deposits the eggs in the water and the male deposits the sperms near or over the eggs. A curious attraction, in all cases, draws sperms towards unfertilised eggs. Thus, a fusion of egg and sperm takes place and a new life is started. In other animals some process of bodily union is necessary to bring the sperms within reach of the eggs. Particularly is this so in the case of those animals in which the first stages of growth of the young take place within the maternal body. In some animals, indeed, in all, from reptiles onwards up to man, parental care has developed to a high degree, and necessitates certain bodily provision for the safety and nutrition of the young life being made. In this case, fertilisation (*i.e.*, fusion of the egg and the sperm) must take place before the egg leaves the body of the female. Hence, the sperms have to be introduced into the body of the female by the male, a process which is achieved in different ways in the various kinds of animals.

In birds, after fertilisation has taken place, the "yolk" and the "white," both consisting of appropriate nutritive substances, are added to the product of fertilisation; the whole is then enveloped in a silken sheath and further enveloped in a shell—all this before the egg is discharged from the body into the nest which has been constructed for its reception. Within the shell, under proper conditions of warmth, which usually the mother bird provides by sitting on the eggs, the fertilised portion, feeding upon the nourishment surrounding it, develops into a birdling.

In the next highest group of animals, the mammals,

to which man himself belongs, additional provision is made for the safe development of the young life. On fertilisation it does not at once leave the female's body, but is retained for a period, longer or shorter according to the type, during which it achieves its first stages of growth. This early growth takes place within a special chamber, the uterus or womb, on the wall of which the fertilised ovum fixes itself, and, first by a process of absorption, later by a definite system of blood vessels which develops, it derives its nourishment from the maternal body. The point of fixation is called the placenta. Not only is it dependent for its nourishment in this way upon its mother, but all the other necessities of life, respiration and excretion as well as nutrition, are accomplished in the same manner. It is obvious that such an arrangement provides very great protection for the young life during its precarious early stages. It is equally obvious that the welfare of the young life thus unfolding will be greatly dependent upon the well-being of the mother, an observation which has special importance in human life. It is well that the nation should take care of its mothers-to-be.

After a certain stage of development has been accomplished the young life is discharged from the uterus, thus leaving the body. This is the process of birth or parturition, a process which is fraught with a certain amount of risk naturally to both mother and offspring.

Though it is entirely dependent upon the maternal body for its necessities of life in this way, it must not be thought that the offspring is parasitic upon its mother. That would be a very bad preparation for an inde-

pendent life! It has been shown by scientific folk that while the mother gives much to the offspring, the offspring in turn produces energising substances which are given over to the maternal blood stream and thus benefit the mother, so that she does not feel to any detrimental extent the strain of sustaining two or more lives instead of one. In human motherhood this scientific fact also holds good, and serves to explain why it is that a perfectly healthy woman feels and is so well during the period of expectant motherhood.

When birth has taken place the mother mammal is not yet freed, for the mammary glands shortly after birth produce the milk—the process is known as lactation—upon which the young ones are nourished till they are grown enough to fend for themselves. The breast milk of an animal is always appropriate to the needs of her young, and is only entirely appropriate to *her* young, which throws light upon the matter of common knowledge in human life that breast-fed babies do not die so easily as bottle-fed babies do. The human mother who does not endeavour to breast-feed her child is depriving that child of its natural birthright. There may, of course, be some exceptional cases where, for reasons of health, it may be inadvisable for a mother to breast-feed her baby, but these are very few. The mother who, for the sake of her own convenience, refuses to breast-feed her baby, is not merely selfish; in the opinion of many she verges on being criminal.

Maternity, it will thus be realised, means very much more than fatherhood does. It entails much more strain upon the body, and, in human life, much more strain upon the mind. So greatly is this biological fact

being appreciated at the present day, that there is a strong tendency towards the voluntary control of parenthood, the high social and national ideal behind this tendency being that motherhood should be voluntary, that is to say, undertaken joyfully, with a full appreciation of all the responsibilities entailed upon it. Joyless motherhood, enforced motherhood, should never, it is felt by many, be inflicted upon a woman, and each child-life requires so much care, sustenance and training to see it on towards healthy, happy, efficient maturity and citizenship, that many people hold that it is wrong for parents to bring more children into the world than they can adequately provide for. To this subject we will return in a later chapter.

A brief account of human sex physiology should serve to complete this chapter. Nature shows wonderful foresight. Before the child is born the sexual organs are already very well formed. At birth they are so well developed that they do not need to grow very much more till the child is about nine years of age. This early development is accounted for in two respects, one relative to the individual and the other relative to the racial life. The essential reproductive organs, the testicles in the male and the ovaries in the female, are glands, as has already been explained; in this capacity they contribute what are known as internal secretions to the blood stream, and these secretions are greatly concerned with provoking growth and also with the development of what are known to scientists as the "secondary sexual characters," namely, all those bodily and mental characteristics which distinguish one sex from the other. On the racial count, the ovaries and

the testicles produce the life-transmitting elements, the eggs and the sperms respectively. These life-giving units are formed, but dormant, long before birth, the rudiments of many thousands of ova and many millions of sperms being present from the beginning. They remain dormant till the end of childhood, when the body embarks upon the period of rapid and exuberant growth known as puberty. Many external signs—altering of the pitch of the voice, particularly in boys, in both sexes rapid increase in height and weight, rounding of bodily contours in girls, in both sexes development of hair in the arm-pits and between the hips, and so forth, indicate that the period of change is approaching. Internally, the sex glands are becoming racially active and liberate the reproductive elements, an ovum every four weeks in the case of the ovaries, and in the case of the testicles, quantities of sperms which, together with certain fluids from adjacent glands, go to form the milky fluid, the "semen." The seminal fluid accumulates in two seminal reservoirs (small sacs within the lower part of the abdomen), and appears to be gradually partly absorbed into the body. Any excess is discharged from the body in the form of a seminal emission, brought about by the spasmodic erection of the male organ in an involuntary orgasm usually during sleep.

In the case of ovulation—the term given to the release of an ovum from the ovary—it has to be remembered that each ovum is a potential new human life; that if it were joined by a sperm it would not leave the body, but would remain within the uterus (womb) and begin its first stages of growth into a new human being. Consequently the uterus has to be ready to receive a

possible new human life every four weeks. This it prepares for by steadily accumulating towards its walls a supply of blood, which, except in the case of conception having occurred, is not required and is consequently discharged from the body. This periodic discharge is the function of menstruation, and is a perfectly natural way of the body getting rid of material which is not required.

These pubertal changes take place in the healthy boy and in the healthy girl without any marked disturbance of life; but young people of both sexes ought to be forewarned of their occurrence in order that they may meet them serenely and in knowledge of their significance. Once they are established, growth proceeds fairly steadily, till at the age of about twenty-three in girls and twenty-five in boys, maturity is reached. Then, and then only, is the body completely fit to undertake the work of parenthood.



CHAPTER V

ON PSYCHO-PHYSIOLOGIC RELATION- SHIPS

WE are more and more coming to realise the close connection there is between body and mind in their actions; more particularly so in recent years, since scientific study of the endocrine glands (which we have already described) has given us more information about

the way in which the body and mind are associated in their effects. The body is very much under the domination of the mind, and, in circular fashion of argument, the mind is very much under the rule of the body. An illustration may serve to make this clear. Suppose the body is unhealthy, suffering, say from a fit of indigestion. Its machinery is, as it were, put out of order thereby. Discomforts of one kind and another are set up. A headache may follow, a prejudiced way of looking at things, bad temper, irritability, and so forth; that is to say, we may have conditions of mental ill-health resulting from an original condition of bodily ill-health. So it is also in the reverse direction. Supposing, to take another example, an individual is suffering from business worries, is paying undue attention to them and is becoming mentally strained, so that as a result his body feels weary. He does not digest his food well. The body consequently becomes ill-nourished and, it may be, some definite disease is set up. In this case the body is affected by the condition of the mind. Further, to take a positive example, something constructive, it is a well-known observation by physicians that food which is taken under conditions of pleasure and happiness and contentment of mind, tends to be better digested and better put to the uses of the body than food taken under unhappy, unpleasant mental conditions. Happiness in short is a clear road to health. We are more and more coming to understand how the emotions react upon the body. Particularly do they react upon the glands. In the corner of the eyes are small glands known as the tear glands. They are engaged in keeping the surface of the eyeball moist.

It may be something seen, it may be something heard, something felt, or even something thought, that gives rise to certain feelings of pain, sorrow, distress, and behold, the message passes from the brain to the nerves of these little glands, so that more blood is supplied to them and they work more vigorously, so rapidly, in fact, that the fluid they usually produce is produced in excessive quantities and tears overflow. Or again, to take another example, it may be something seen, or even thought, or heard, which gives rise to feelings of terror, of fear, and a curious reaction is seen in the skin. Every little muscle in the skin crinkles up, and every little hair stands on end.

These examples will serve to show what we mean when we say that the condition of the mind, that the emotions particularly, affect the body and cause curious reactions therein. This is particularly true in connection with sex. The sex organs and the area round about them are particularly richly supplied with nerves and are very sensitive in their reactions to emotional and physical experiences; bodily sensations are easily set up, sensations which may culminate in a strong impulse to secure bodily union, sexual intercourse as it is called. It may be something heard, or thought, or seen, or felt, or in some other way sensed by the nerves and brain, which results in sexual desires of this kind.

These close relations between experiences, impressions, and sexual desires should be clearly understood. They throw great light upon social questions connected with sex and connected with morality. They help us to understand why every now and again we find an outcry that women should dress more modestly, that they

should be less provocative in their behaviour, for by unwisdom in these directions they may impose great temptation and strain upon men. It is very frequently stated that men are more conscious of sex impulses than women are, but I doubt whether this is a justifiable statement. Certainly women have been more conventionalised in regard to sex than men have been, less frank in their understanding of it, and in consequence would be more loath to acknowledge their real feelings in the matter. Further, because of the cramped nature of women's training, they have been more subject to repressions which have curbed the natural development of sex interests, but in these days which are leading us towards emancipated girlhood and womanhood, a greater freedom of development has been experienced, and the difference between the two sexes in this way, it would seem, is much less pronounced than it used to be, if indeed it exists at all.

Every impulse, with whatever it may be concerned—hunger, flight, fighting, sex, whatever it may be—creates a condition of mental discomfort—a mental “hunger”—a condition which continues till release of desire has been obtained by some form of action. When this release has been achieved, mental satisfaction, *i.e.*, pleasure, follows—succeeded by a pleasant calm. The pleasure is most easily obtained naturally, when the desire is promptly and quickly satisfied in a primitive way. But should social custom, training, or education forbid this primitive satisfaction of a desire, self-control is exercised and the mental tension is only released when the energy involved has been transferred to other channels of outlet. This transference of mental energy from one plane of

interest to another plane, resulting in behaviour which is humanly and socially of value, is known as sublimation. A good example of sublimation is seen in connection with the maternal instinct in childless women. Many such women have great power of executive, great power of work, of one kind and another, particularly work that concerns the care of human beings or of animals, and they get this power from maternal energy which is not being used up in motherhood and all that motherhood implies. It is being converted, sublimated, into other channels of expression. Every woman possesses maternal energy whether she be mother or not.

It may happen that owing to some unfortunate experiences, usually experiences in early life, the possibility of sublimating energy cannot arise in respect of certain instincts, and behaviour may result which must be regarded as abnormal or perverted, and which is antagonistic to the well-being of the individual and to the well-being of society. The sex interests in life are very strong, and, as we have already indicated, have not been subjugated to systematic, wise training, but have been left to haphazard and promiscuous influences, and as a result have become very liable to misdirection, to perversion. An instance of perverted maternal energy may serve to make this clear. When a childless woman directs her motherhood interests to an infatuated care of cats, lap-dogs, and canaries, she is much more to be pitied than to be blamed, for her peculiarity is the result of unsatisfied desires, probably unconscious ones, and of faulty training in childhood. The late war which provided many avenues of work for childless

women, resulted in the correction of many such perversions, and life to these women became a different thing from what it had been in the past.

The pleasures of sex are among the greatest pleasures in life. Wild, undisciplined seeking after pleasure, however, is gluttony and gives no real satisfaction or ultimate benefit, in the long run, to the individual who so seeks, nor does it benefit the society to which he belongs. Control leads partly to sublimation, that is to improved mentality, and partly to intenser appreciation of justifiable pleasures. The libertine is in no sense an ideally happy person, but rather an unhappy unfortunate, obsessed by the search for pleasures which never suffice. The pleasures of bodily love are an integral part of love itself—and a very important part. Sex, it is very clear, is not merely an affair of the body, but an affair of the mind and of the soul. The highest love is that love in which body, mind and spirit unite to bring happiness.

CHAPTER VI

ON BIRTH CONTROL

WE have, it would seem, made a sufficient survey of the real nature of sex in life to enable us to consider another question which is much before the public at the present time, the question of birth control.

In animal life the production of offspring is regulated by the fact that reproductive activity arises at certain

times of the year only, the regular breeding season ; at other times the sex impulse dies down. The size of the family brought forth at each reproductive period depends upon the racial characteristics in this respect. Each pair of oysters, it is said, produces a million, at least, fertilised eggs—potential offspring ; the struggle for existence for these young lives, and the many risks that encircle them, however, are so great that one or two only of this great family manage to survive to maturity. The family of a pair of garden spiders may be two hundred in number, of a pair of frogs as many as a thousand. On passing, however, to the higher animals, the birds, the reptiles, and the mammals, the number of offspring is very much smaller. At the same time it is observed that the parents, usually the mother animal, take more care of their young. Every race, plant, animal and human, depends for its success as a race upon the way in which the numbers are maintained. As each generation dies off there must be a sufficient number of individuals of the new generation arising to make good, at least, the decrease in numbers caused by the old generation dying off, and for actual increase in numbers there must be a greater number of young ones assured towards maturity.

This problem of adequate survival may be solved by large numbers of offspring being produced, with possibly a high mortality among them, leading to a sufficient survival of life to continue the race, or else by a fewer number of young lives being launched and greater care being taken of them to ensure their survival. The higher animals, it seems, exercise more parental care than do those lower in the scale of life, while in

the power of parental care is most highly developed of all. The more highly developed an animal is in the scale of life the more prolonged is the infancy of each individual, and this necessitates greater and more prolonged parental care.

Man differs essentially from the animal kind, as has already been indicated, in that his sexual desires and his power of reproduction are not limited to certain periods only. They are more or less active during the whole of his mature life. His ability to reproduce is, in a sense, only limited by the fact that conception in a woman is followed by a period of nine months pregnancy, during which another conception cannot take place. To some extent, though not so invincibly, lactation also prescribes a limit.

In regard to the physiology of sex, it has already been pointed out that Nature is very prolific in her preparations for the future. The seminal fluid contains millions of sperms, each one of which is capable of union with an ovum. The ovaries liberate an ovum every four weeks. It will thus be seen that from the practical point of view, except for the limits imposed by pregnancy, and to some extent by lactation, every act of sex intercourse may possibly result in a child's life being started.

Modern study of inheritance has indicated that certain qualities, bodily and mental, in human kind tend to be passed on to their children by parents who possess them. I have discussed elsewhere somewhat fully the questions of eugenics and of parenthood,* and here must

* See "Towards Racial Health," by Norah March, B.Sc. Published by Routledge, London, and E. P. Dutton, New York.

allow it to suffice that I state briefly the main idea that emerges from this modern study of eugenics. From it we learn that certain weaknesses are of a transmissible kind, that is to say, they pass from parents to children. In some cases these weaknesses actually characterise the children, in others it is the grandchildren who are affected, the weakness having been transmitted, without appearance in the children, to the grandchildren. Most forms of mental deficiency, the tendency to insanity, most forms of epilepsy, the tendency to tuberculosis, and some peculiar and rare conditions of malformation, are among those weaknesses which affected parents are likely to transmit to their children.

There is, thanks to the way in which this knowledge has been finding its way to the general public during the last ten years, a growing feeling among men and women in regard to the responsibility of parenthood. Many people, among them an increasing number of those affected with transmissible weaknesses, are now holding the view that it is wrong to bring unfit children into the world.

Further, men and women are realising how greatly a child's welfare and good upbringing depend upon the care the parents are able to give it. They are realising, too, how greatly a child's ultimate progress in life depends upon the education and the preparation for vocation they are able to provide for it. As a result there are many people who hold that it is not justifiable to bring more children into the world than they can do justice to, according to their circumstances and position in life, although there are others who do not subscribe to this view of parental responsibility. The present

economic situation makes it very difficult for parents to provide all they feel they ought to provide for their children. The high cost of living, great cost of good education, heavy expenses of clothing, the high cost of holidays—all tend to make it very difficult to rear a large family and to do justice to them. So much for the child's welfare; there is, also, the welfare of woman to be considered. Doctors constantly draw attention to the fact that the effort of bringing a child into the world is a great strain upon a woman, and that after each child is born there should be a reasonable time elapsing, to allow of complete restoration of the mother, before another child is born unto her. Too frequent pregnancies make life an intolerable burden to a woman, and unwanted motherhood brings sorrow and trouble in its train, while voluntary motherhood is naught but a joy. The husband who truly loves his wife does not wish her to be exhausted with repeated child-bearing.

At the same time, of course the matter must be looked at from the national point of view. It is obvious that whatever be the pros and cons of increase, the population should not be allowed to decrease in numbers. Each married couple, it is held by many authorities, should therefore, in the interests of the nation, be prepared to support at least two and preferably three children. By this means the population would maintain its strength in numbers. If those who are physically and mentally unfit to contribute healthy citizens to the State refrain from parenthood, the *quality*—even more important than quantity—of the nation will through wise parentcraft also be maintained.

Passion is an integral part of love; no real love is

complete without it. In the highest love body, mind, and spirit unite. To some lovers the call of the body comes more powerfully than to others, and is, in consequence, more difficult to control. The daily and nightly companionship which married life implies, to the loving and emotional nature provides, naturally, many a stimulus to sex love far and away beyond the strain which ordinary companionship of men and women imposes. Sex intercourse is in itself an expression of love itself, apart altogether from the possibilities of parenthood following; the normal emotional reactions attendant upon it are beneficial to man and to woman alike. To limit this expression of love to accord with the number of children desired is, for most happily married couples, an impossibility, and by most held to be entirely undesirable, though there are others who hold that marital relations should be ruled by this dictum. All these things concerning married life are taking a clear position in social life to-day, with the result that limitation of the size of the family would seem, if one is to go by public and private utterances of those who are competent to judge, to be developing as a regular custom, at any rate among those who are educated enough to tackle the personal problem intelligently. From the racial point of view, it is regrettable that just those sections of the community who add to the derelicts are reproducing their kind without restraint.

At the recent Church Congress, Lord Dawson said that birth control had come to stay. By many thoughtful people it is regarded as a natural sign of our human evolution that man and woman should join to exercise

a conscious control over the number of human lives for which, by parenthood, they may become responsible.

The methods of birth control it is not my purpose to discuss, beyond indicating that herein, as in all departments of the sex life of man and woman, there is immense variability. All manner of personal questions are involved. Whether birth control is practised or not is itself a matter for husband and wife themselves to decide, as also the methods, if any, employed. It is a personal, a private matter concerning themselves and themselves only. None should lay down the law for others who are intelligent enough to be responsible for their own actions. For the irresponsible section of the community, society itself, when public opinion is more enlightened, will in the future decide.

There are those who fear for the morals of society as birth control methods become increasingly widely known. They fear that such knowledge may provide an easy pathway to immorality. Whether these fears are justified or not, it is obvious that it is not knowledge which may do harm, but the use which is made of knowledge. To those who have high ideals of sex in life, knowledge regarding birth control falls into its natural place as part of that knowledge by which the individual may be fitted to meet all the eventualities of life nobly and efficiently, and of which he may or may not make use, according as his own ideas of moral responsibility should direct.

For those whose lives are governed by the highest ideals of love, marriage and parenthood, immorality will find no place.

CHAPTER VII ON SEX EDUCATION

THERE is a very strong feeling abroad to-day that our policy of neglecting to instruct children on the facts of sex is no longer justifiable. Education—I use the word education in a very broad sense, including home influences, school influences, religious training, and social influences—may be regarded as preparation of the individual to meet all the eventualities of life nobly and efficiently. But education, again used in the broad sense, has altogether left out of account one great eventuality, the eventuality of sex and parenthood. Little or nothing has been done to prepare the individual to meet the eventualities of sex and parenthood nobly and efficiently. It is unreasonable, though many sufferers through ignorance have been inclined to do it, to turn round and blame our parents for this neglect, for they themselves were not taught. The scientific information which is at our disposal to-day was not within reach of them. Modern knowledge has given us its fruits. On this generation of parents and on other guardians of children therefore lies a new responsibility.

The preparation of the individual to meet the eventualities connected with sex and parenthood—sex education, as we may call it for short—is a lengthy process, and begins in very early life. Appropriate instruction, given at the right time and in the right fashion, is one part of it. By this may the individual

be safeguarded from the pitfalls of ignorance. Helpful training is another part of sex education, for by appropriate training the individual may become healthy in body and healthy in mind, and may be empowered to exercise that self-control which is essential in the interests of society, and to exercise it without any prejudice to personal efficiency and well-being. Thirdly, sex education includes all those indefinable influences which surround life, and yet which contribute very greatly towards the formation of character, influences such as those obtaining in home life and the mental attitude of those in whom the young place trust. It is difficult to describe briefly in detail the effect of this third phase of sex education, but perhaps an illustration may serve to make the point clear. The child reared in a home where husband and wife are happily in love with one another, where each regards the other as a co-equal partner in the success of home life, where candour, sympathy, great love and high ideals prevail, will cul from these mental surroundings impressions which are going to help it along life's way, help it to accomplish life's ideals. But the child in the other kind of home, where the father and mother live in disharmony with one another, is little likely to receive such uplifting impressions, but rather will be driven downwards.

It is not my purpose to enlarge here upon the question of sex instruction. That I have already dealt with fully elsewhere.* I must content myself with observing some general principles. It is a reasonable thing to follow a child's own indications as to what it

* See "Towards Racial Health," by Norah March, B.Sc. Published by Routledge, London, and E. P. Dutton, New York.

requires. When its mental development has reached that stage in which it is anxious to understand some of the mysteries of life, it will ask questions pertaining to sex. These should be answered simply and truthfully. Adults can only be helpful to children when they meet them on their own ground and become as little children. The inquirers should be told just what they want to know, but no more. Yet that little should be given in such a fashion as would lead the child to come to the same source for further information. Simple devices can safeguard against the possibility of chattering to playmates and others on these matters. The child's curiosity in regard to questions of sex is an invincible one, and if satisfaction does not come at first from those in whom the child has confidence, usually its parents, the child seeks the information elsewhere, often gathering that information from undesirable channels. But that is not necessarily the worst that happens; a breach is made thereby between parent and child. Confidence is lost.

Inquiry in connection with some hundreds of children has shown that the majority of early questions come somewhere between the ages of three-and-a-half and seven years, occasionally earlier and occasionally later. As time goes on further questions arise. These should be answered satisfactorily to the child's intelligence. An impersonal method of treatment is more satisfactory than a personal. Much illustration can be culled from and much explanation can be given by the use of flowers and the facts of animal life. When the main facts of human motherhood have been told, the fact of fatherhood can also be given at a suitable time, and the

note already sounded—two specks of life to make a new life—is the one to follow. Then, when the time comes, the growing girl and the growing boy can be appropriately forewarned in regard to the bodily changes that take place at puberty, those changes which herald the approach of youth. Many boys and many girls have become pitiable victims of ignorance in regard to these changes, which they have had to meet either unforeshadowed or misinformed as to their real significance.

Young girls and young boys, exposed as the majority of them are nowadays to temptation in social life, should know of the nature of the relationships of the sexes in marriage in order that they may not, through ignorance, be victims of evil suggestion. All this instruction, which is very briefly indicated here, can be given appropriately, helpfully and beautifully. Many young parents now-a-days are following this plan. They are eager to know how to do it, the words to use and the ideas to convey.

Obedience to the social code imposed upon sex—that code which expects continence till marriage and fidelity afterwards—implies severe self-discipline, a discipline which is only likely to be exercised in adult life if the way has been prepared for its exercise during the formative period of life, that is to say, during infancy, childhood, and youth. That the body and the mind are related to one another in their actions has already been expounded. The fact should be borne in mind in connection with the training of the young. The healthy body and the healthy mind should be the aim; the whole process of training, of education, should be governed by this conception. The foundations of

health of both body and mind are laid in infancy. The call, therefore, to the nation's mothers is very great and very deep. The healthy, well-exercised body is a great possession. Exercise not only helps to maintain physical health but helps also to maintain mental health, providing an outlet for many desires which have to achieve their outlet, owing to the exigencies of society, through sublimated channels. Exercise, too, implies discipline, a discipline joyfully undertaken.

Careful discrimination must be drawn between compulsory control and voluntary control. The one, compulsory control, is exercised at the expense of personality; with it a constant mental conflict is experienced—desire to do the thing, fear of consequences should it be done. Such a conflict is exhausting and prejudicial to the personality. Voluntary control, however, has quite a different effect. Control for the sake of an ideal involves a discipline with which the personality agrees, and leads to sublimation, to enrichment of the personality. Those who are concerned with the training of the young should see to it that their whole influence is directed towards the cultivation of voluntary self-control, a power which, when applied to sexual experiences, makes the possessor able to put the interests and well-being of the other first, even at cost to the self.

Many men and women to-day have had cause to regret their weakness. They have perhaps known what was the right thing to do, but have not had the power, when put to the test, to do it. Such power has its roots in infancy. They have been the victims of untrained childhood.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ETHICS OF SEX

IT is only after becoming acquainted with the main facts concerning sex that one may find oneself in a position to form opinions in regard to essential ethical questions, hence the reason why consideration of ethical questions has been left to the end of this little study of sex. It is not the way of modern youth, or of many grown men and women for that matter, to accept conventions blindly. Rather do they ignore or disobey those laws and customs of society which, should they hamper their claim for self-assertion unduly, do not seem to merit adherence. Education—the word is not here used in the narrowed sense of school education—has tended towards the cultivation of personal and of intellectual independence, but has, on the whole, lacked a sufficient civic bias to ensure a due consideration of the claims of others as against those of the self. Society is in a state of transition. Emancipation, particularly of women, has brought with it its price to be paid. The self for most, revelling in self-assertion, comes first. As years pass on, emancipation will proceed to a further stage of evolution. The individual will, of his own initiative, subjugate his desires in the interests of others. Obedience to a rigid code may yet be the

voluntary and the joyful choice of the many, instead of, as now, of the few.

Man does not live unto himself alone. As a member of society at large he has his neighbours to consider. The group to which he belongs lays down the rules of conduct which each member of that group should follow. Of society, the family is the central unit—father, mother and children, bound together by the marriage bond. Most of our laws and customs have been shown, by the students of sociology, to be directly or indirectly related to the family, and among those, most naturally, the social code relative to sex finds a conspicuous place. Marriage is the social custom by which the family is bound together. Through sexual intercourse children may be born. Hence the evolution of the social expectation that sexual intercourse shall take place only within the bond of matrimony. Continence till marriage, fidelity afterwards—such is the expectation. Such a code implies a control of natural impulses. Further, in face of the surplus of women over men in this country, it implies a total denial of sex experience and of motherhood for a large number of women.

Promiscuous sex intercourse carries with it many dangers. The great plague of venereal disease is spread chiefly by those men and women who indulge in irregular sex relationships. Venereal diseases, as is very well known to-day, are the cause of great suffering in those who are infected; sometimes lifelong damage to health is done thereby; sometimes the power of bearing healthy children is destroyed; sometimes a man or a woman may be rendered permanently

childless through having suffered from venereal diseases, for these diseases often destroy the organs of generation. Those who would avoid this danger should remain continent till marriage and faithful to the partner in marriage.

Unmarried motherhood, so often the consequence of irregular sex relationships, brings, usually, grave sorrow in its train—sorrow and suffering for the girl who has yielded her virtue, sorrow and suffering too, in an unjust world, often for the child born out of wedlock.

Considerations of this kind lead towards the question of continence and its relation to health and to happiness. From the modern study of the physiology of sex, it is apparent that the sex glands act in a two-fold manner; one side of their activity, the glandular, concerning the well-being of the individual, the other side, the reproductive, concerning the continuance of the race. Restriction of the reproductive activity, it would seem, does not impair the glandular function, and thus abstinence from sexual intercourse does not necessarily impair bodily health. On the mental side the matter is less easily disposed of. Sexual impulses are naturally with most people very strong, and require great self-control to curb them. Social life to-day is such as makes control not always easy. In the chapter devoted to the psychology of sex the mental processes were outlined by which controlled impulses may result in greater mental power and enriched personality. In no domain of mental life is this more true than in connection with the mental energy of sex. Self-control, healthily exercised, leads to sublimation, that is, increased mental power. Denied sex interests may by

this means, benefit, not impoverish, the mind and character.

In the realm of the mind, therefore, as well as in that of the body, it would seem that the continent life may, while admittedly the incomplete life, be entirely compatible with health and efficiency. But—and here lies the importance of self-knowledge—if control is associated with compulsion, with fears, with anxieties, if, in short, it is not the *voluntary* choice of the individual, it may be achieved at the cost of some mental serenity, efficiency, and of happiness. Yet even at that cost it is worth while, if, by its observance, the well-being of others is assured.

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the great secret of real happiness in the sexual life lies in self-mastery. The master force of sex must itself be mastered—*mastered*, not *extinguished*—an important distinction. In mastery the rich promise of sex is reaped. Through mastery, sublimation of sex energy gives greater force to the personality, greater power to the mind. Unbridled and flagrant yielding to passion, whether within or without the bond of matrimony, does not bring joy—only a loss of self-respect. Through mastery the pleasures of love are enhanced. But towards this mastery the whole of life's experience must lead. It is a question of character formation; and so we are back to the question of the little child. For the foundations of character are laid in infancy, in little childhood. Little acts of self-denial—even of that self-denial which may contain a degree of self-martyrdom, asceticism—count. But—and this is important from the psychological point of view—it is

voluntary self-discipline that couples self-mastery with efficiency. A discipline of behaviour enforced by external influences, fears, threats, and so forth, is attended by mental conflict which is rarely solved without prejudice to the personality.

In adult life, when the sexual emotions are in their full power, the need for self-mastery is at its greatest. In work lies the secret of power over self, work intellectual, creative, and physical. Through work is the great tide of sex energy directed into other channels than those of bodily sex interest. Many men and women who know themselves testify to the truth of this. Through work lies the way to happy, efficient celibacy, should celibacy be the lot which falls.

Another point, too, stands out for special mention. It is a matter of common knowledge to social workers that by far the greatest number of first lapses from virtue occur under the influence of alcohol. Strong drink inflames the passions, weakens self-control and casts a glamour over circumstances, acts, and their consequences. The practice of temperance in this direction aids the observance of temperance in others.

There are many aspects of the social problem of sex which present themselves to the mind for consideration—the problems of prostitution, of venereal diseases, of unmarried motherhood, to mention some outstanding ones. But it is beyond the scope of this little book to enter into detailed consideration of these. Rather has it been the endeavour of the author to present the scientific facts of sex in a simple fashion, as far as they are known to-day, in hope that they may provide a basis for an intelligent consideration of the personal,

the social and the racial problems of sex which present themselves for solution. Knowledge must supplant ignorance, self-discipline must supersede compulsion, lofty ideals must rule ere the kingdom of heaven shall come on earth.

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