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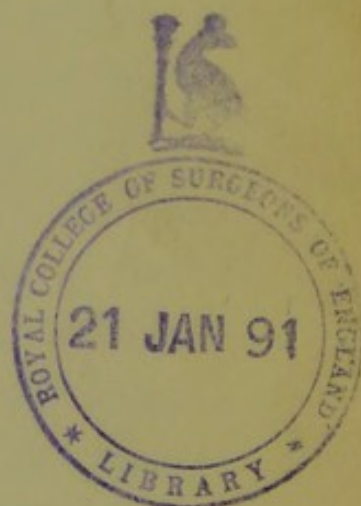
THE
HUMAN ELEMENT IN SEX.

A CONSIDERATION OF FACTS

IN RELATION TO THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ORGANISATION
OF MEN AND WOMEN;

ADDRESSED TO STUDENTS OF MEDICINE.

By DR. E. BLACKWELL.



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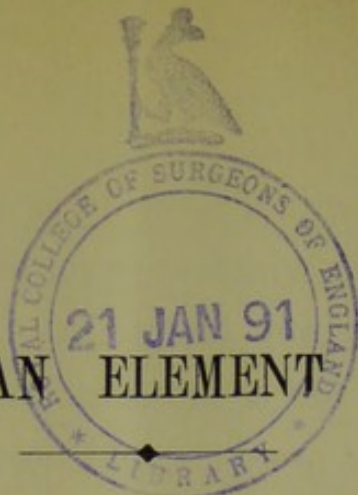
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As we proceed from the study of the simpler to the more complex faculties of the human body, we perceive that their physiology takes in a wider range of relationship, and that the wise guidance of these faculties in health and disease by the physician, demands a careful consideration of these relationships. The proper nourishment and exercise of the brain requires more extended physiological knowledge than the hygienic treatment of the skin ; so all the faculties which belong to the life of relationship involve a broader range of study than those which solely appertain to the vegetable functions of the body.

The portion of our organisation most difficult of study, and requiring the widest range of knowledge for its healthy guidance, is that double faculty which is not essential to individual existence, but is indispensable to the life of the race. The physiology of sex is the most difficult of study, not only on account of the marked difference between man and the lower animals, but also on account of the dual aspect of this faculty presented by its male and female forms.

The most striking distinction between sex in man and in the brute, is the existence in the human being

of a mental principle, showing itself as a sentiment of self-consciousness, which is never observed in the brute. If an animal is not frightened by human beings, it never hesitates for a moment in carrying on sexual congress in their presence, and neither before nor after, exhibits the smallest approach to shame in relation to it. In man, however, from the earliest dawn of the approaching faculty, self-consciousness is intense. It is not only observed in well-brought up boys and girls who shrink from indecency of word or action, but it is never entirely extinguished in the most corrupt man or woman ; and even the poor little waifs of our streets, blighted from earliest infancy, exhibit marked consciousness in their infantile depravity.

It is this mental sexual element, or moral aspect of the faculty, which fills the literature of every civilised country ; and our amusements and customs are largely moulded by it. As civilisation advances, and dense masses of human beings are crowded together, every variety of effort is made to appeal to stimulate and debase this mental principle or sentiment of sex, which furnishes an exhaustless field for corruptive speculation,

It is not the physical aspect of the reproductive powers, therefore, which is so remarkable in humanity—this is shared with the rest of the animal création—but the unique and powerful mental element in human sex, that principle that moulds and governs it, and produces such extraordinary results in the life of the

race. The mental or emotional element must therefore largely engage the attention of the physiologist, who studies the characteristics of human nature; for this exceptional character of human sex indicating so remarkable a difference from the rest of the animal creation, would render the simple exclusive study of physical phenomena—as representing human sex—as useless and unphilosophical a method of investigation as would be the study of music on dumb instruments.

The exceptional character of human sex must be taken as a guide in any inquiry into its structure, nature, distinctions, and uses, for the clue to a true knowledge of the functions of the bodily organs in man and woman, is found in this striking peculiarity of the human race, viz. : that these functions are largely dominated by the mental organisation, and that sex in the human being does not mean simply the action of the physical organs, but also the conjoined mental principle directing those organs. Sex, therefore, in the human race alone, rests upon a mental foundation, viz. that intellectual sentiment of keen self-consciousness, which is capable of great development towards good or towards evil; for as all simply material satisfaction soon reaches the limit which bounds matter, so mental or spiritual enjoyment is capable of indefinite growth. It is this mental sentiment peculiar to human sex which is capable of a two-fold development. It may grow into a noble sympathy, self-sacrifice,

reverence, and joy, thus enlarging, deepening, and intensifying the nature through the gradual expansion of the inborn mental elements of sex. It is also this intensity of the mental form and power of sex, possessed by mankind alone, which allows of the perversion and extreme degradation of sex observable in the human race ; and which, running riot in unchecked licence, converts men and women into selfish and cruel devils—monsters, quite without parallel in the brute creation.

This human mental element in sex strikes the keynote which governs the general physical arrangements of sex in man ; the structure and functions of the generative system being contrived in such a way as will support two great leading principles of existence. These fundamental principles are : First, the independence, freedom, and perfection of the individual ; second, the preservation of the race. These two objects are secured to a certain extent in all highly organised creatures ; but in the human race provision is made for individual freedom in a much more marked and perfect manner, in accordance with its superior rank in creation. The brute, both male and female, is at certain times blindly dominated by the physical impulse of sex. The impulse is a simple imperative instinct, unhesitatingly yielded to, with no preparation or after-thought, with no calculation, shame, triumph, or regret. It is very different with the human race,

as it grows from lower to higher states of society. Thoughts, feelings, and attractions, social ties, conscience, religious training, and the purposes of life, all work upon the distinctive mental element in human sex, changing its character to a very complex faculty, and intensifying the predominance of the mental element, a predominance strikingly shown in a perverted form by the frequent result of unhappy love, viz., suicide, or insanity.

The idea of chastity is a gradual growth of the human race. The men and the women of savage tribes are grossly unchaste. Chastity is not a primitive virtue. It only becomes a guiding principle in the higher races of men, as its fundamental influence on human progress is understood, and it is seen that the prevalence of mental and physical purity, is the most powerful method of creating a strong and enduring race.

It requires the larger intellectual vision gained by mankind, as their faculties unfold to the true human type, to understand the strength gained by the self-government of purity, and to observe the increasing degradation connected inevitably with licence. This sequence of degradation is constantly observed in the deterioration produced by corrupt sexual relationships ; first corruption between men and women, then between men and men, between women and women, &c. This descending scale of corruption with its results on

offspring is a very grave fact of both the past and the present. It should especially engage the attention of the medical profession.

The physiological structure of physical sex in man, corresponds to the demands made by this increasing complexity of the sentiment or mental sex. The two essential features of physical sex are ovulation and sperm-formation. These two important factors in the joint work of reproduction, are governed by a different rule in human and in brute life. In man they exist under the rule of continuity and of self-rectification, *i.e.*, these functions are always going on, and at the same time they are adjusting themselves to the needs of the economy. These two facts are distinctive marks of the human sex. In the female the constant formation of ova is subordinated to the needs of individual freedom, and to the power of mental self-government, by the function of menstruation, which in exhausting excess becomes menorrhœa. In the male the slow secretion of sperm is adapted to the same individual freedom and power of self-control, by the natural function of sperm-emission, which in exhausting excess, becomes spermatorrhœa.

As menstruation in the female is the means adopted by our organisation for securing both the permanent integrity of the various essential generative structures, and their relief from any excess of vitality, so sperm-emission is the natural relief and independent outlet

of that steady action of the generative organs in the male, which secures through adult life the constant aptitude for reproduction distinctive of the human race. The parallel in the two sexes is exact. Menstruation and sperm-emission are the natural healthy actions of self-balance, established by the economy for preserving the mastership of each individual over his or her own nature. At the same time the integrity of the structure is maintained by the steady action of these two functions of ovulation and spermatation. These natural functions only degenerate into states of disease through ignorance of physiological law, and faulty hygienic conditions on the one hand—or through impure thoughts and bad habits acting through the nervous system, on the other. When these natural functions are either injured or unduly stimulated through the brain and nervous system, then only they become diseased, producing menorrhœa or leucorrhœa in the female, and spermatorrhœa in the male.

The greater elaboration and complication of sexual structure belonging to the female is necessitated by the far more important share given to her in the great physical work of sex. The constant production of living germs (ova) which require only a passing act of stimulation by the male to enter into a state of active and astonishingly rapid growth; the unique change of the small uterus into an enormous and

powerful structure capable of containing a perfect child and sending it forth by tremendous efforts into the outer world ; the changes in all the surrounding organs and tissues necessitated by the accomplishment of such a remarkable work in the short space of nine months ; and the subjection of this great physical work to the law of individual freedom and perfection, are facts which show the superior complication and importance of the female sexual organisation. The more elaborate processes of menstruation as compared with the lesser work of sperm-emission show the greater complication of the organs to be kept in good working order in the female than in the male.

So extensive and important are the physical structures that must be kept in readiness for use in the mothers of the race, that their action is more withdrawn from the dominion of the will than is the case with men. In relation to the male it is well known that the secretion of semen is very much controlled by the mental condition of the individual. This is a fact to be carefully noted. Sufficient healthy action to ensure reproductive aptitude is always maintained in the secreting organs throughout adult life quite independently of the will. Nature never allows the male any more than the female to become impotent through abeyance of function. No such fear need ever disturb the mind. The utmost devotion to intellectual life, to lofty thought, to

beneficent action, never injures the procreative power, which always remains intact, capable of its special faculty throughout the virile age. But the active exercise of the intellectual and moral faculties has remarkable power of diminishing the formation of sperm and limiting the necessity of its natural removal, the demand for such relief becoming rarer under ennobling and healthy influences. As Dr. Acton remarks : “ Sexual distress affects particularly the *semi-continent*; those who see the better course and approve of it, but follow the worse; who, without the recklessness of the hardened or the strength of the pure, endure at once the sufferings of self-denial and the remorse of self-indulgence.”

This healthy limitation of physical secretion in men sets free a vast quantity of nervous force for employment in intellectual and active practical pursuits. The amount of nervous energy expended by the male in sexual congress is enormous; out of all apparent proportion to its physical results. In the fully matured and strong adult the nature is adapted to such occasional expenditure, but it is a serious evil to the growing or unconsolidated nature. Even in strong adult life there is great loss of social power through the squandering of adult energy, which results from any unnatural stimulus given to the passion of sex in the male. The barbarous custom of polygamy; the degrading habit of pro-

miscuous intercourse ; and all artificial excitements which give undue stimulus to the passion of sex, divert an immeasurable amount of mental and moral force from the great work of human advancement.

This control possessed so largely by the male, over the physical function of sperm-formation, is not possessed by the female over the corresponding function of ovulation. In the female, Nature cannot venture to subordinate the simple physical functions of sex to the will, to as great an extent as in the male. A more unyielding rule is needed in these physical activities, because the work to be accomplished for the race by the female is so much more elaborate and long-continued. A greater amount of varied action in the complicated organs is necessitated in order to maintain their adult aptitude. The function of ovulation (formation of ova) is not increased or diminished by the will, or by the dwelling of the mind upon sexual objects at all, to the same extent that spermatation (formation of sperm) may be affected by the same mental action. Ovulation, and its natural accompaniment menstruation, is much more of a necessary fixed quantity than spermatation, and its natural accompaniment sperm-emission.

The sexual functions are however, as naturally healthy and consistent with the freedom and perfection of individual growth in one sex as the other. The general outline of arrangement is the same in each,

viz., power of mental and physical self-balance, strictly guarded potency, and a certain degree of periodicity.

For lack of knowledge of these natural facts, young men are often terrified into a resort to quacks, who impose upon their ignorance ; or they are tempted into bad habits from being unacquainted with the evils and dangers of vicious indulgence. The unworthy implication (contained in the assertion of *necessary* fornication) that men are sexually inferior to women, because they do not possess the power of individual self-balance, but are dependent on another human being for the maintenance of personal health, is contradicted by physiological facts, as well as by social experience.

It would be equally untrue to infer (as is sometimes done) that women are more tyrannically dominated by physical sex, or more limited in their power of perfect human growth than men, on account of the greater proportion of work laid upon them in the reproduction of the race. This would undoubtedly be the case, were sex simply a physical function. The fact in human nature, which explains the sexual nature of women, is this very mental element which distinguishes human from brute sex, and which gradually expands under true Christian teaching into the ennobling power of love. This mental principle is as emphatically sex, as any physical instinct. It exists in major proportion large in women, and justifies the statement that the

compound faculty of sex is as strong in woman as in man. Those who deny sexual feeling to women, or consider it so light a thing as hardly to be taken into account in social arrangements, quite lose sight of this immense spiritual force of attraction, which is distinctly human sexual power, and which exists in so very large a proportion in the nature of women. The different form which physical sensation necessarily takes in the two sexes, and its intimate connection with, and development through, the mind (love) in women's nature, serve often to blind even thoughtful and painstaking men, as to the immense power of sexual passion in woman. Such one-sided views show a misconception of the meaning of human sex in its entirety.

It is well known that terror or pain in either sex will temporarily destroy even physical sensation. In married life, injury from child-birth, or brutal conjugal approaches, may cause unavoidable shrinking from sexual congress often wrongly attributed to absence of sexual passion. The severe and compound suffering experienced by widows who were strongly attached to their lost partners is well known. The prevalent fallacy that sexual passion is the almost exclusive attribute of men which exercises so disastrous an effect upon our social arrangements, arises from ignorance of the distinctive character of human sex, its mental element. A wretched girl, done to death by brutal

soldiery, may possess a stronger power of human sex than her destroyers.

Any attempt at a comparison of absolute power between the sexes would, of course, be utterly futile ; but on considering the mental, as well as physical elements, which go to form human sex, we are struck by the larger proportionate amount of thought and feeling as compared with the total vital force which we find given to the subject of sex by woman. All that concerns the mental aspect of sex, the attraction of interest, companionship, devotion, which draws one sex towards the other, is exhibited in greater proportionate force by women, is more steady and enduring, and occupies a larger proportion of thought and interest in women.

The power of sex possessed by women is strikingly shown in the enormous influence they exert upon men for evil, and in the immeasurable depth of degradation into which those women fall, whose sex is thoroughly debased, who have intensified the physical instincts of the brute by the evil mental powers of the human being. In social life we constantly observe the larger proportionate influence exerted by the sentiment of sex over women. Words spoken, slight courtesies rendered, excite a more permanent interest ; that which may be the passing thought or action of the man, at once forgotten by him, obliterated by a thousand other intellectual or practical interests in his

life, may often make a quite undue impression upon the woman, the incidents are thought over again and again, are supposed to mean much more than they do mean. Widespread unhappiness, social disturbance and degradation, arise from the power of human sex in women, unguarded, unguided, and unemployed.

In relation to our profession, the direct practical bearing of the foregoing truths is evident. The facts of our human organisation serve to guide the medical advice given in the consultation room ; they caution us respecting the methods to be adopted in dealing with the poor ; they suggest the direction in which national sanitary measures should proceed.

The immense power of this passion of sex in the human race must never be ignored in relation to either men or women. The beneficent control which the human mind can exercise over the passion, points out that item in the human *materia medica*, which more than any other the physician must strive to secure for the benefit of his patient, viz., force of will. He is bound to declare the sovereign efficacy of this natural specific, and enforce the methods of securing it. All physical and hygienic means must be called upon to develope and support that power of will, and that mental purity, which alone can govern wisely the human sexual nature.

There is another point which cannot be too strongly insisted on. The personal modesty of pa-

tients that elementary virtue in Christian civilisation must be carefully cherished by the physician who, more than any other, is acquainted with its influence on the sexual nature. The common resort to sexual examination is an evil grown up in medical practice of comparatively modern date. The use of the speculum should be strictly limited by absolute necessity. Its reckless use amongst the poor is a serious national injury. I know from thirty years' medical experience amongst the poor, as well as the rich, that this custom is a real and growing evil. It should be a last resort of medical necessity, and it is so regarded by thoughtful physicians. That it is frequently a necessity is unhappily true; and when a poor sufferer learns from her trusted adviser that such investigation is quite unavoidable, acceptance of such judgment is the part of wisdom and true modesty. But it is essential that the medical judgment thus rendered should be final—the result of age and special experience. The wise custom of many physicians to decline practice in which a very special training has not given them the positive knowledge of an expert, should be an universal rule. It is a social wrong when the serious character of this branch of medicine is not conscientiously acknowledged, I have known the natural sentiment of personal modesty seriously injured amongst respectable people by the resort to a succession of incompetent advisers. But a really

serious and national evil results from the thoughtless treatment of the poor. In dispensary and hospital, and wherever medical assistance is rendered to the exposed and helpless classes, the first duty of a Christian is to respect personal modesty, or to instil it if the habit has been lost. Every physician, man or woman, is bound to cherish with reverence, the great conservative principle of society, feminine modesty and self-respect. This is a point on which the medical practitioner cannot avoid a moral responsibility. Physicians are the special guardians of health from infancy onward. They possess the means of acquiring the fullest knowledge of the double elements of human nature—the inter-action of mind and body. From their culture, their social position, and the authority which they legitimately exercise, the weighty responsibility of rightly guarding the human faculties rests chiefly upon them. In all those points where the physical health of a nation is inseparably connected with its moral health, they are more responsible than any other class of the community, for the moral condition of their country.

All medical advice, and all medical measures must therefore be guided by the positive fact that human sex differs from brute sex, in the possession of a mental element which is capable of elevating and controlling it, and which must never be lost sight of in dealing with human beings.

As physicians we must recognise the following facts, viz., the unavoidable education of the great motive power of sex in evil or in good, through the direction of its human mental element to lust or to love; its greater physical dependence on the will in the male; the larger proportion of vital force necessarily engaged by it in the female; and the injurious increase of sensual tendencies in women as well as men through generations of hereditary influences. All these facts are more fully known to the medical profession than to any other class of the community. This knowledge places in their hands the greatest power of creating force of will, and lays upon them the responsibility of guarding the feeling of personal modesty, and of suggesting measures of legislation which shall favour the growth of the higher forces of human nature in both man and woman.

To the rising members of our noble profession I earnestly present the foregoing facts for their Christian and patriotic consideration, believing that when they fully realise these great truths they will embrace them with the generous enthusiasm of youth. Thus whilst guiding their future practice by sound principles in relation to the care of our human organisation, they will enforce these truths by the strongest of all arguments: the noble manliness of their own lives.



