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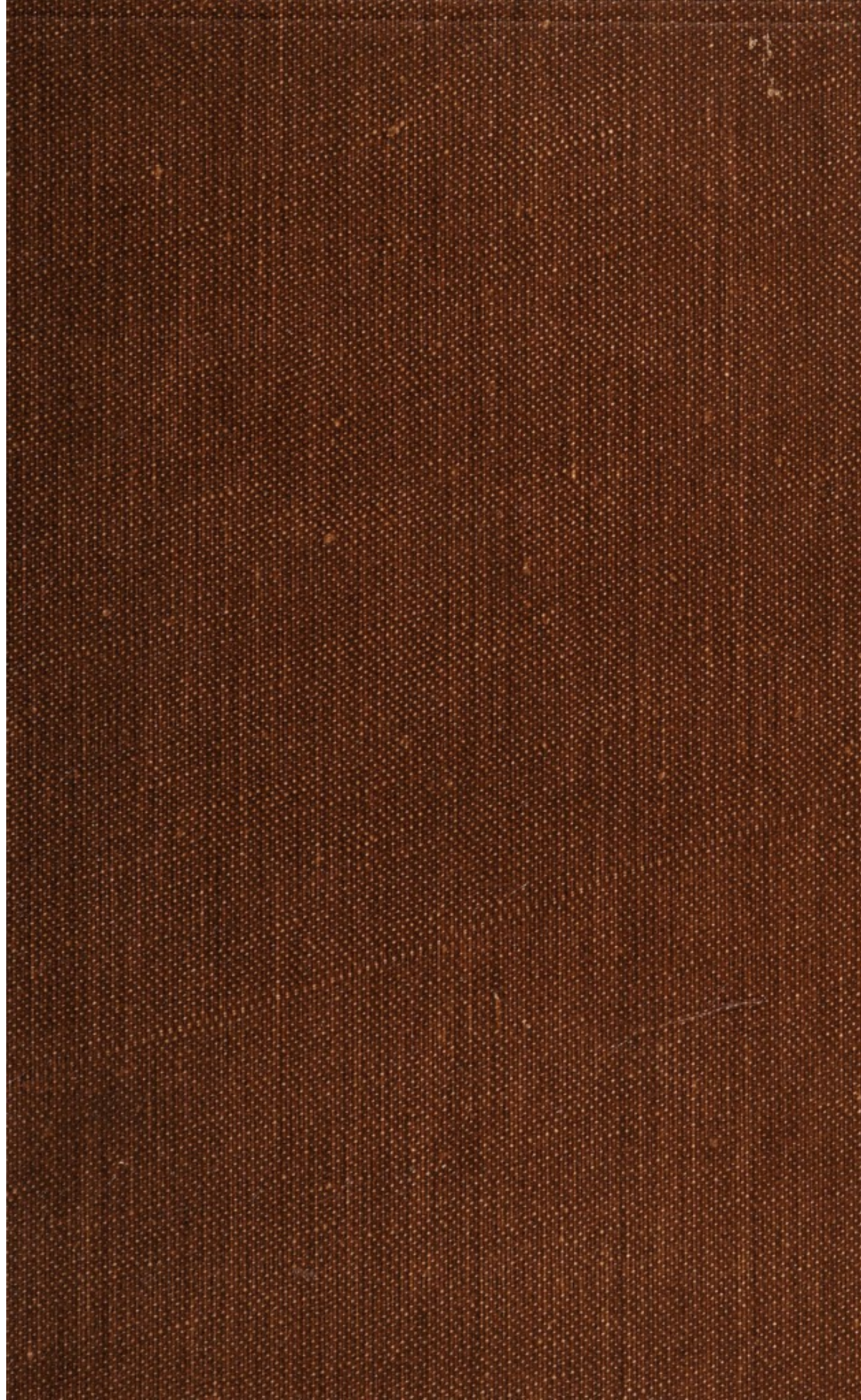
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SEX EDUCATION AND NATIONAL HEALTH



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(In collaboration with ARTHUR D. LEWIS)

SEX EDUCATION AND NATIONAL HEALTH

BY

C. GASQUOINE HARTLEY

LONDON
LEONARD PARSONS
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TO
MY DEAR SON

IT can be a surprise only to those to whom the history of evolution is unknown to find how few things there really are in human life which cannot be reduced in the last analysis to the instinct of pro-creation. It includes very nearly everything, I think, which is beloved and dear to us.

JUNG.

PREFACE

AFTER nearly eleven years as a Public School master, I find myself as far as ever from any solution of the moral difficulties that beset the young.

I began by treating rows about sexual vice as something too horrible to speak about : boys with whom I had been friendly, boys who were charming in their manners, popular with every one, successful both in work and games, suddenly disappeared : only the Headmaster and housemasters knew why officially : the rest of the staff were kept in ignorance, though every member of the school knew unofficially. If I ventured to indulge in plain speaking either in form or privately, some Housemaster would invariably call upon me and tell me that I was trespassing beyond my province : I was expected to cultivate the boys' brains, to teach " Divinity," and to participate actively in their games, but their morals must be left alone for God and themselves to deal with. In consequence of this sublime stupidity on the part of my elders and seniors, I find myself at the age of thirty-four completely incapable of tackling a problem which every right-minded teacher of either sex ought to be able to tackle as efficiently as any line in Homer or any algebraic equation.

One or two points have, however, suggested themselves to me which I give now in all humility tentatively.

First, I would remove as far as possible the barriers that now exist between the sexes in early youth: there are many sound arguments against co-education (that co-education is good for a girl and bad for a boy is one), but anything is better than the monastic system prevalent in boys' schools and the nunnery system commonly enforced in girls' schools.

Married teachers are a necessity, and boys should be encouraged to visit frequently the homes of their tutors where they may meet girls on equal terms freely. Girls in like manner should meet the husbands and male friends of their mistresses and make friends with them. This conspiracy of silence leads to unmentionable horrors; on the one hand in the theatre, in the daily papers, and in ordinary conversation the average adolescent hears or reads the facts of life presented in the baldest manner possible, while in the magazines which he reads he is served up with a mixture of slosh and sentiment, grotesquely inane and unlike life, which the editor is pleased to call "innocuous."

We do not want "innocuous" tushery these days: we want to know the truth.

It is for this reason that I would urge the necessity of every school in this country using this brave book of Mrs. Gasquoine Hartley as a text-book.

It is no good attempting to quash moral delinquencies by wholesale expulsions: you cannot make a nation sober by Act of Parliament: you do not advance the cause of morality by one jot or tittle by punishment. After the manner of Samuel Butler, expel a boy or girl

for criminal negligence or ignorance in getting influenza or measles or scarlet fever, but treat your moral offender with sympathy as a patient.

Unfortunately those who have tackled the problem of immorality and unnatural vice in schools have nearly always got a hive of bees in their bonnets about the subject: they can think in no other terms: they are Freudian in their concentration on the one aspect of sex.

Let it be granted that sex plays an incomparably important part in the life of each one of us: it certainly is not the whole of life, but it will continue to be magnified out of all proportion to its importance if we continue to preserve our miscalled delicacy of mind, which is really a cowardly silence about it.

Modern psychology dwells largely on repressions. What youth has to do is to dig down into its soul and bring out to the light of day whatever is retarding its progress, its sweetness, and its wholesomeness.

What actually happens is that most of us indulge in habits of which the better side of our nature is thoroughly ashamed, and we continue in our malpractices until they kill us or we are driven to confess our maladies to our doctors. Take the adolescent crimes of masturbation and what is called unnatural vice. Both those sexual malpractices are appallingly prevalent in all boys' schools: I know nothing whatever about girls' schools.

Either they matter or they don't matter. If masturbation does not harm a boy, for Heaven's sake tell him so: remove his shame: restore his self-respect; if masturbation does harm a boy, it is even more

imperative to tell him so, but don't exaggerate: let him know precisely where he stands.

Grown-up people are at last being acquainted freely with all the facts about venereal disease, and the excuse of ignorance shows signs of vanishing. In precisely the same way boys and girls must be told of the dangers incidental to self-abuse, not in a Divinity lesson or a moral pi-jaw, but definitely, in a period specially devoted to physiology. . . . I should like to see a time come when this subject is treated like any other in the school curriculum. After all, we give up an immense amount of time to physical training, and owing to a futile shamefacedness ignore a good deal of the body altogether: to ignore the reproductive organs in any system of physical training is sheer madness. To prove that this is so, I would ask you one question. How did you come by your knowledge of sex? Are you entirely free from prurience and prudery yourself? What is your idea of a funny story, a "dirty" one? Are not your thoughts of sex filled with impurity? Well, you may be lucky and I am in a minority of one, unlucky in my dirty-mindedness. For the well-being of the nation I would it were so. I shouldn't mind being the scapegoat of a nation, but I fear rather that I, and probably you, are normal in our unhealthy attitude towards sex. Delve a little into the aspirations of your unconscious or subconscious self and you soon see.

As Mrs. Hartley is at great pains to point out, the facts of sex are not ugly . . . they are not disillusioning: the ascetic in us is responsible for half the horrors that you and I are suffering from.

Again, Mrs. Hartley has put her finger on one of the

springs of all true education when she urges that it is the child who must be the guide all through. Children should only be told the truth about anything in exact proportion as their interest is aroused, as they want to know. On the other hand, nothing should be hidden from them: she would have boys and girls from their earliest days cognisant of the differences in each other's bodies

It is for this purpose I take it that I have been called to bear witness.

On the question of Sex Education I am simply ignorant, more than a little scared of the horrors that I have seen enter into the lives of happy families owing to this ignorance, and determined in my own mind that the next generation shall not be allowed to suffer for their sexual inhibitions as we have suffered.

On this side I am prepared to listen to all that Mrs. Hartley so frankly and simply says and to accept her arguments as true.

But on the side of Education about which I have tried to learn something I have something more to say. When Mrs. Hartley says that the emotional training of youth is of much greater importance than their intellectual training, and that actual book knowledge really matters very little one way or the other, I want to make every parent in the land seize upon that sentence and bear it branded in his or her heart. Nothing can be done in Education until everybody demands that the emotions are trained as scientifically as the body: the conspiracy of falsehood, shame, and indecencies on all matters connected with the real issues of character and of life is, as she says, absolute, and it is the fundamental curse of our education. Read Jung,

read Freud, read Mrs. Hartley with an open mind. Sex manifests itself in the very very young : we have got to make up our minds to that. Sex is not indecent : ascetism may very well be . . . platitudes about purity simply have no meaning for the young (how I wish I had known that eleven years ago) . . . we have first to purge ourselves of our own concealed attitude towards sex, find out how far we ourselves are stuck in the mud of our own repressions, and, having cleansed our own adult Augean stables, then turn to help the youth of to-morrow with our sympathy and our new hard-won knowledge.

As an educationist I wish that I could have read this book eleven years ago, as a citizen I would to Heaven I could have read it twenty years ago . . . as it is, with all the earnestness at my command, I commend it to all parents and teachers as a handbook for the future happiness of those under their care without a parallel.

S. P. B. MAIS.

May 1920.

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SEX EDUCATION AND NATIONAL HEALTH

CHAPTER I

THE CHILD AND ITS MOTHER

THE question of sexual hygiene, more particularly in its special aspect of sexual education, has begun to occupy the public mind, owing possibly to the heightened sense of moral responsibility that has been quickened by the war, but more certainly to the increased knowledge of the facts of life. The days of folded hands are happily over. It is becoming more and more widely felt that the risks of ignorance are too great, especially as regards our children. We want to save them from falling into the mistakes that we ourselves have made ; and although it must remain doubtful whether the knowledge we can impart will be able to do this, whether we can, or, indeed, ought to hold back the experimenting young, nevertheless is it our duty to give to them all the enlightenment that we can. We have come to feel that ignorant innocence is not merely too fragile a possession to be worth preservation, but that it is positively mischievous, since it not only involves the lack of the

possible safeguard of knowledge, but opens up, by means of curiosity, perhaps the most frequent ways to sexual mistakes and evil conduct. "It is little short of criminal," it has been wisely said, "to send young people into the midst of the excitements and temptations of modern life with no more preparation than if they were going to live in Paradise."¹

While, however, it is now wisely recognised that all youth is entitled to some initiation into the knowledge of the great central facts of sex, it cannot be said that this belief is widely put into practice. We are nervously anxious as to the right course to take up. There is much doubt in our thought and uncertainty in our actions. We are experimenting in fear. And the question, "What shall we teach our children?" is one to which we have found no certain answer.

It seems strange and incredible, unless, indeed, we know the deep and hidden causes, that the vast mass of women and, possibly to a less extent, the men, of this country are amazingly and perilously ignorant upon a subject that concerns so intimately the life of every individual—the whole race and our posterity. The tremendous influence and importance of the action of sex in the realm of the unconscious, where unknown, but disturbing, emotions are hidden, is only now coming to be recognised. There is an immense hidden life in each one of us—a world beneath our realised life—one of deeper significance wherein are active our unrealised wishes, desires, and strivings. And these concealed emotions cause an unceasing resistance between the inner and the outside life, none the less strong because few of us ever recognise its

¹ Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, vol. vi. p. 44.

existence ; so that always we are turning away from realities, seeking energy-dulling phantasies, refusing the tasks of life, and failing to find the fulfilments of our needs. So it is that this paramount force remains our master ; with its importance and far-reaching influences, so feared and yet so little reckoned with, that the vast masses of parents and teachers give no serious heed whatever to its meaning in the lives of the child or children in their care ; they ignore and deny its fateful power for good and ill. Prudery and prurience, arising out of these inward conflicts within us all, have driven the discussion of sex questions into the darkest, unwholesomest corners. Thus the huge majority of children, the future parents of the race, are actually permitted to grow up to the critical period of adolescence without any sane teaching upon the force latent within them. We instruct our children in regard to the digestive system and the skin, the nervous system and the muscles, but the reproductive system is tabooed. Even the long-used *Elementary Physiology* of so great, and in other respects so fearless, a teacher as Huxley, assumes that physiology is sexless !

How long is this conspiracy of silence to go on ? Why this fear ? And what does it entail ? Driven by prudery from the lap of knowledge, boys and girls in tens of thousands glean their first knowledge of sex from the vulgar, ignorant lips of the prurient. Nine children out of ten gain information upon the relations of the sexes in the worst possible manner. Fathers and mothers shirk and evade the natural inquiries and questions of their children. In some cases foolish fictions, that outrage a child's intelligence, are re-

peated, and falsehood piled upon falsehood. Very often no kind of answer is given to the child's search for the truth.

That we should thus leave our children to pick up their sexual information haphazard seems almost incredible. Can we allow them to learn first about the most powerful, the most sacred, the most profound and vital of human functions from the gutter? Can any mother accept this sullyng for her child? Yet this is what has been happening and still is happening to-day. Does it not certainly indicate the deeply rooted conflict within us; our own unbelief and the impurity of our own thoughts about sex? How, indeed, can we have purity from those who themselves have learnt of sex first from the lips of ignorance and vice? Fortunate is the boy or the girl, the man or the woman, who has escaped the contamination of ignorant indecency.

The question, then, arises, at what age is it desirable to try to instruct youth in the facts of sex? No one can wisely give a dogmatic answer to this question. Yet, I think we can come to a better understanding if we put out of our mind any idea of formal instruction, and focus our attention on the child.

Now, it is part of the popular belief about the sexual impulse that it is absent in childhood, and that it first appears in the period of life known as puberty. This is a serious error, and one that has been very harmful in its consequences to the child; it has been due to our almost complete ignorance, up to the last few years, of the fundamental principles of the sexual life. The remarkable work of Freud, of Jung, and

their followers, that has opened up a whole new field of inquiry, tends to prove that the sexual instinct is never absent in the normal child. "In reality," Freud states, "the newborn infant brings sexuality with it into the world, sexual sensations accompany it through the days of lactation and childhood, and very few children can fail to experience sexual activities and feelings before the period of puberty." In his work he found so many variations and manifestations of sexual activity even among young children that he realised that this activity was the normal, though entirely unconscious, expression of the child's developing life.¹

Possibly there is some exaggeration in this view, for the basis of our knowledge is still very narrow. Yet it seems certain, as any one may know for themselves by observation of any child, that Freud is right. Both he and his followers maintain that in very young children there is a more or less unconscious sex life, which, while not comparable to the adult sexuality, may nevertheless produce a very definite influence and effect on the child's life; while further, this infantile sexuality may be exaggerated, or worse, by any carelessness, neglect, or repression.² It is believed that certain manifestations of infantile activity, notably thumb-sucking, are of sexual causation. In normal children the sexuality of this infantile period, which lasts until the third or fourth year, passes into oblivion, and there is a happy play period of latent sex until puberty approaches. It is during this period of sexual

¹ See the Introduction to Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*.

² See also the valuable work of Dr. Ernest Jones on the unconscious and children.

latency that the psychic forces of the child first develop, which in later years may, and should, act as inhibitors on the sexual life, and narrow and direct its expression like dams. But in nervous children, badly brought up in too exciting surroundings, there is frequently sexual precocity, and this may be increased by the over-fondling of an ignorant and voluptuous mother, with very detrimental results. A wrong direction may most easily be given to the child's sexual development in its earliest years. Neurotic manifestations like hysteria and obsessions (psycho-neuroses) are traced back by Freud to the influence of the wrongly directed or repressed erotic experiences of childhood. It seems to be quite clear that repressions of the instinctive and unconscious infantile sexuality make for evil, and that the only safe line to follow is the culture of right expression. Freud goes the length of saying that obsessions are in every case transformed reproaches which have escaped from the attempted repression and are always connected with some pleasurable sexual arousal of childhood.

We are now in a better position to answer the question as to the age at which the sexual education of the child should begin. We have seen that the instincts and desires with which every child is born furnish desires or cravings which must be dealt with in some fashion. We know, too, that the form taken by the sex instincts in later life often depends, in part at least, on the peculiarities of the sexual life in infancy and early childhood ; while of paramount importance are the childish relationships in the home. It thus becomes plain that we cannot leave this matter to

chance, but that the sexual education of the child, if it is to be educated at all, must begin in the earliest years. The first teacher of the child must therefore be the mother, or the one who is most constantly with the child, tending him, in washing, in dressing, and in all the daily needs of his little body. It is the mother who ought to be the child's supreme trainer. All our growing knowledge tends to show that the child's sexual nature and after-development are built up and dependent on the care taken by the mother in the early years of childhood when care counts for most. An ignorant and voluptuous mother, even a too loving mother, as also an uncontrolled or careless mother, a vicious nurse or a too precocious playmate, may give a twist to a child's sexual life even in its earliest years.

The parents of the child have the greatest responsibility; no watchfulness on the mother's part can, in my opinion, be sufficient, if she is content to leave the early care of her little ones to a servant. The mother should have the deepest sympathy with her own child, but to this sympathy must be added knowledge and a wise understanding of what is good for the real needs of the child.

Every one must agree that a wise mother is incomparably the child's best trainer. But when we face the present-day facts, it seems certain that few mothers are at all fitted for this task. Thus, it is certain that the sexual education of the child ought to begin with the sexual education of its mother. This is, perhaps, the greatest difficulty we have to face. How can we teach the mothers? How get them to want to learn?

It will not do to depend on instinctive knowledge. A tiny boy or girl may easily slide, or even be driven, into bad sexual habits, without either the mother or itself being aware of what is happening.

I cannot emphasise too strongly the almost overwhelming effect on the destiny of the child that is exercised by the influence of the mother ; indeed it is hardly too much to say that the after-fate of every individual is decided in the nursery. And that is one reason why the sexual education of the child by its mother is a matter of such supreme importance. In these nursery years the child is beginning to develop the first sexual curiosity, usually expressed by the question, " Where do I come from ? " And the very certain interest and investigation of the child into this problem are aided, usually in the worst possible manner and in a way that few adults realise, by the sharpest observations and deductions from unconsidered actions and words and even attitudes of the mother, and also in a lesser degree of the father and other adults ; all of whom have no idea of the watchfulness of the child in these matters. Few of us understand the confusion and hurt that may be caused by the false theories and untrue ideas of birth—often the result of our stupid silences and our even more stupid hints and allusions—that fix themselves into childish minds, where they cannot be checked, owing to imperfect knowledge and immature development. In this way harm often is done that will be determinative of grave evils to adult development. I must insist again, though by doing so I risk annoying my readers, that there is no escape from this sexual curiosity on the child's part, which is, indeed, entirely normal

and unavoidable ; and that all opposition set against its satisfaction is dangerous.

If saying nothing could be trusted to work well, we might, indeed, leave the matter alone : but we know that it can not and does not work well. Only as our knowledge increases do we come to understand better how manifold and how great are the dangers to which we are exposing our children. And here, in passing, I would say that in the social life of the future this need will surely be recognised and met. Until these subjects are openly put before children and young people with some degree of intelligent and sympathetic handling, it can scarcely be expected that anything but the utmost confusion in mind and in morals should reign in the matter of sex.

It is a painful fact that many parents, who are keenly conscious of their responsibility and most anxious to train their children aright, are too shy, too held back by their own complexes and unconscious difficulties and struggles, to be of much direct use to them in their sexual education. They cannot free themselves readily from that vulgarisation of the idea of sex that has resulted from their own training and life. It is plain, too, that those children who most need definite instruction and warning because of bad homes and ignorant or careless mothers are least likely to get it. For these unhappy children, and unfortunately their number is not small, I can see no plan except that the necessary teaching should be given at school (in a later chapter I shall speak of this) ; but I cannot emphasise too strongly that nothing can make up to any child for the early teaching, which should be given by the mother.

In all children the activity of the intelligence begins to work at a very early age, and all who are not wilfully blind must know that this activity tends to manifest itself in an inquisitive desire to know many elementary facts of life, which are really dependent upon sex. The primary and most universal of these desires is the desire to know where children come from. I have referred to this sexual curiosity already, but the matter is so important that more must be said. The degree of curiosity differs, of course, in different children, but I do not think it is absent from any normal child. If they do not question their elders, they certainly will talk with one another.

Now this brings me to what I hold to be more important than all else, in this difficult question of the sexual teaching of little children: *It is the child who must guide the parent.* I regard this as the most urgent rule for the mother: *never to arouse sexual curiosity, but always to satisfy it when it is present.* This is, of course, to say that the questions of our children should be answered by the truth. A child of four and even younger may begin to ask questions of its mother, simply and spontaneously. As soon as the questions are put they should be answered, quite simply, and in such manner as the child is able to understand. There can be no question but that this privilege belongs by right to every mother. It is, perhaps, the saddest fact in motherhood that so few mothers are ready or willing for this privilege.

There are many stories that are told by us in our blindness and lack of faith to put off the child's natural and right desire to learn of its own origin. In England and America, for instance, the child is usually told

that babies are found in the garden, under a gooseberry bush, a cabbage, or elsewhere. Sometimes it is said, with some nearer approach to the truth, that the doctor brought it in his bag. In other cases the child is told that God sent the baby. Other parents make use of the stork story, of German origin. There is a kind of illusion among parents that children believe these stories. I do not think that this is true. Most children are guided by the unnoticed remarks of their elders, in particular in conversation and remarks made aside, when they think the child is not listening. And what I would point out here is, that this puzzling of the child's mind by these foolish stories defeats, of necessity, the object for which they are invented. The child's attention is focused on the subject instead of diverted from it. One thinks much less of what one knows and is sure of, than of what one does not know, but wants to find out. This is surely so plain, that I need not insist upon it. I am, however, sure that the only children who do not talk or think very much about the origin of babies, are the children who know how babies are born.

I may notice here, too, that the same objection applies to the plan adopted by many parents of telling the child, when it asks these questions, that it is too young to understand and must wait until it is older. The parent thinks the child forgets. This is very rarely the case ; the child puzzles alone, its curiosity quickened by the hurt that has been given to its childish intelligence. The parents have to remember further that, if they refuse the truth to their children, too often it will be given to them by others *in the worst possible way*. The silly stories told by parents are supple-

mented by equally absurd and often very injurious conversations with other children. Many servants of both sexes are addicted to idle and irreverent, even if not vicious, talk upon this subject, and by this means the views of children, and even their whole future outlook upon sex, may be distorted and besmirched. The part played by servant-girls in the sexual initiation of children, carelessly left in their care, must be reckoned with by all parents. This is particularly the case with boys, where the danger is much greater than it is with girls. Beautiful and sacred emotions, marvellous processes of nature, legitimate and essential longings, become associated in the tender expanding mind of the healthy child with the unseemly, the shameful, and the unclean. Where the child should learn to wonder he is taught to show horror, or to deride. The results are terrible in many cases. It is certain that the greater the mystery about sex matters, the more the curiosity of children will be heightened, and so far from keeping them pure, it heats and too often perverts their imagination. I cannot insist upon this too often or too strongly. One of the first and great dangers the trainer of the child must avoid, as far as this is possible, is to prevent any embarrassing mystery creeping up in the daily habits connected with the child's body and its needs.

The moral reactions against the conflicts of the sexual life, strengthened by the hateful ascetic idea that the facts of sex are ugly and disillusioning, are of course at the bottom of all those sexual lies that are told to children. It is, however, entirely false to think that these things, rightly told, will shock the young child. It is only to the adult that there is anything surprising

in sex. The child will receive your teaching with delight and wonder and guileless curiosity. You need have no fear of your child, only of yourself. To teach the child, quite openly, its physical relation to its own mother, its long indwelling in her body, and the deep and sacred bond of tenderness between mother and child in consequence ; then, after a time, to explain the work of fatherhood, and how the love of the parents for each other was the cause of his own (the child's) existence : these things are easy and natural—at least they are so to the young mind, and excite in it no surprise, or sense of unfitness, but only gratitude and a tender kind of wonderment.¹

If you doubt this, I can only ask you to begin to try with your own little child. As Canon Lyttelton has said, in urging the duty and privilege to the parents in sexual instruction of the child : “ People sometimes speak of the indescribable beauty of children's innocence. But I venture to say that no one knows what it is who has foregone the privilege of being the first to set before them the true meaning of life and birth and the mystery of their own being.”

But again I would give warning. We must not be over-eager, or we shall fall into sentiment and grave mistakes. This, I think, is a fatal error and one that to-day is very common. The child, at the age when such questions will first be asked, and should be answered, will very quickly tire of any information that you may give to it. It will break off to run away and play, and will interrupt the most beautiful and carefully prepared of your lessons. And if you are

¹ I have taken this passage from Edward Carpenter, *Sex Love*, p. 11.

wise, you will never go on beyond the interest of the child, or the satisfying, and *nothing further*, of the special curiosity and trouble which at that special time is occupying the childish mind. So important, indeed, is this that, I am certain, it is better and safer to err on the side of saying too little than saying too much.

But this holding back of information until the hour when it is wanted and sought for is very different from telling fairy stories that are lies to your child, or putting off its curiosity by telling it that it is too young to understand. As we have seen, this often serves to arouse a morbid preoccupation with the forbidden subject in the child's mind. Bans and prohibitions so often defeat their object. Label any subject to your child as improper, unspeakable, or naughty of it to speak about, and you set up certainly an abnormal and often very harmful curiosity.

And there is another and, perhaps, even stronger reason against the mother telling her child these fables about birth, instead of the real facts ; it is one which should be decisive with every mother who values her influence over her child. The child will not fail to discover, either through its own intelligence, or by information gained from others, that what has been told by the mother is a lie. With such a discovery the confidence of the child is broken, and the mother's hope of helping it in the future years is ended. It is, I am certain, this fatal early mistake on the part of the mother which strengthens so greatly, though, I think, it does not set up that barrier of silence which separates her from the child. It is a barrier that once made strong in this way can hardly ever be broken down.

We come now to the best method of instruction. From what has been said already, it is clear that there can be no one scheme of teaching coercively imposed upon the child. Not only because this means fixing what should be left free to the individual needs, but because such a course violates what I have before stated is the chief rule, to be followed by the mother, *that it is the child, and not the parent, who must be the guide.* The ideal must ever be to educate through love; to avoid always the telling to the child what is not true, but to be ready always to give the information that is sought *and nothing more*, and in this way to aid the expression and growth of the child: let the child establish its own psychic individuality.

It is obvious that sex instruction may be given blunderingly even with the greatest goodwill. What above all else is necessary is as full openness as is possible, and sympathy between the mother and the child. And for this it is essential that the mother should have herself the most absolute faith in the purity of sex and in her own physical relationship to her child, so that she can speak of this with the utmost frankness and tenderness. The slightest doubt or uncertainty on her part must communicate itself to the child, and then, at once, shame begins to creep in. This is almost inevitable should the early instruction be delayed, indeed the longer it is postponed the greater will be the difficulty of speaking simply and naturally. The child with its bright intelligence and boundless curiosity will furnish the mother with all the opportunities for guiding the childish thought and knowledge.

There are still many parents who will fear this open-

ness of speech and action, holding that it is dangerous to break through that mystery and reserve which has always surrounded the physical facts of love. This danger is felt to be specially great in the case of girls. I think this is a very deep mistake. Show the child that the mystery of sex rests in its sacredness : teach it that for this reason we do not speak of it lightly, holding it in too great reverence for common speech. But never let it be thought of as a subject tabooed, for then it will become shameful : uncleanness, and not mystery, will keep it in the dark places of silence

CHAPTER II

SEXUAL EDUCATION

(A Continuation of Chapter I)

I T must not be thought that I am unmindful of the difficulties of this question of sexual education being given to quite young children. There are many parents and teachers, who, fully recognising the importance of safeguarding the child, yet fear, what they hold to be, the danger of bringing the sex impulses into the focus of consciousness. The answer to this objection has been given already in what I have said; the impulses of sex cannot be eliminated from the consciousness of any child. At the same time, every care must in all cases be taken not to anticipate the child's interest, and the utmost caution is always necessary not to force on the child too quickly; the right opportunity for sexual instruction is when the child seeks for knowledge, and the right knowledge is what the child wants to know.

It is also thought, though less often said, that in previous generations boys and girls got on very well without this "fad" of sex education. But the question is whether they really did? The widespread prevalence of sexual troubles (which are only now

beginning to occupy the attention that for so long they have claimed) is to a large extent the corollary of our ignorance as well as our hypocritical or cynical attitudes as adults to the difficulties of childhood and youth. We ourselves have "muddled through." And we placate our consciences with the whisper, "What we have done the youngsters can do also. Let them alone. It's a beastly awkward subject to tackle." This lack of understanding can go unbelievably far; indeed, our whole education is carried on with the tacit agreement to know as little as possible about these matters, and to maintain the deepest ignorance in regard to their expression. Thus we fail to recognise that all children really are primitive in their deeper natures; and because we do not understand, and will not learn, we set up every kind of pretence as to the reasons of their bad conduct. Always we are playing at "hide-and-seek" with ourselves and with the young. Every habit of the child, and especially bad habits, are almost always symptoms of some conflict within—the result, as a rule, of our mistakes in training. Such habits as biting the nails, thumb-sucking, picking at things, boring into the ears and nose, and numerous others are, or I had, perhaps, better say *ought to be*, of the deepest significance to the mother; helping her in the always difficult task of understanding the child's character.

There is another point that should be considered. It is often stated, by the most careful parents as well as by the careless, that complete and perfect sympathy exists between them and their children. "My child tells me everything," has been the thought to bring comfort to many mothers. But is this true?

For myself, I have wondered often if this ideal can ever be fully attained. Nor am I certain, if we think only of the child, whether it is an ideal that is really to be desired. We have to remember that we—the parent or the teacher—belong to one generation and the child to another. And in nothing is this barrier of age more felt than it is in sex. Those intense and complicated forces that moulded us are only wakening in the young life. We can, at best, hope only to guide our children by the knowledge we have gained, and the experience of our mistakes ; we cannot give to them their knowledge, or save them from making their own mistakes. Idle curiosity and harmful bewilderment is, indeed, banished by simple honest teaching, and much evil may thereby be prevented. But the boundless curiosity of the child is not, and indeed should not be, satisfied wholly with what we can teach. The girl or the boy will have to experiment, to find out for himself or herself. To ignore this is, I am certain, to blind ourselves to the facts of life. And for this reason we must be prepared that, with all our care,—all the elders' efforts to gain the confidence of the boy or the girl,—there will often be failure. We must be prepared for our children to turn away from us to those of their own age and experience in their search for knowledge. I believe that almost all healthy children will always talk to one another about those facts of sex which specially interest them with greater freedom than they can speak to even the most loved parent.

It is this factor of separation through age and difference of experience, which—though acting as a rule unconsciously—accounts largely for the shyness

on the part of the parent or teacher, that often makes sexual education so difficult. The elder feels that the necessary knowledge can only be given awkwardly and ineffectively, while on the child's part there is an instinctive hiding, even if not a defiance against listening, and, for that reason, it is probably decided not to give instruction at all. I have tried to show how fatal is the error here. For when silence is maintained an atmosphere of unwholesome mystery is inevitably created in the child's thoughts with all the prurient and perverting influences which such false mystery encourages. If a relationship of openness and confidence has not been established in the child's early years it can hardly be done later. And even when this is done, when the mother has established a natural openness in conduct and in speech, there will still be needed the utmost care that what has been gained may not be lost ; all the wisdom, and patience, and tenderness of the parent will be needed to preserve even some measure of such confidence after the epoch of puberty and into the difficult years of adolescence. And again I would give the warning that, in these later years also, it is the child and not the parent who must be the guide. The parent must always be ready to receive, but the task is, I think, one of very patient and loving waiting. It is the child who must give the confidence. I feel very sure that any direct personal teaching on sex can be given only with advantage when the boy or the girl comes to seek it. The wise mother, even the teacher, may, indeed, create opportunities of confidence, and to these the child will readily respond. At least this will be so when the early training of the child has been such that it knows

it can trust and depend on the teaching that now will be given. The boy or the girl will want to know, if they feel that you can, and really will, give them just the knowledge they want to gain.

The great failure in sexual education is that we treat sex as a subject we must always connect with warnings and the "thou shalt nots," that inevitably arouse antagonism in the young. In my opinion, this "fearing and blaming" attitude is more harmful than anything else; I believe that until we have cleared our thoughts in this direction very little can be done. There is, of course, a very deep reason for this fear. The sex impulse is kept more or less apart from the general life of most men and women. And though it can be caught up and fused into all that is best and finest in life, it remains in most of us in great part untamed and untutored. The sex instinct has retained its wildness. There is, in all of us, a volcanic element in sex, underlying and influencing all the rest of our nature, and for that very reason shaking it from its foundations with tremor, if not catastrophe. Here, in this dynamic force, is the reason of our fears for our children. We feel that many growths that we do not like in ourselves may spring up in them. And the immediate result is an inhibitory awkwardness—largely an effort of hiding everything that comes within hailing distance of the sex passions. In particular there has arisen a fear of the body, and with it the custom of secrecy about those organs that are connected with the sexual function. Little children, from their earliest years, are taught to think of these parts of their bodies as mysterious; and not only so, but that there is something shameful about them,

something that must not be spoken about, except in that half whisper which in itself carries with it the suggestion of indecency and shame.

I hold it of the utmost importance that every child, the girl as well as the boy, should learn the names of its sexual parts at the same time that they learn the names of the other parts of the body. I do not think that euphemisms here are any help to the child, but a great hindrance. The ancient and simple names are unquestionably the best, and by teaching them in love to our children, we may give back to them that dignity and sacredness they have lost through being dragged in the mud. I would even teach my child, as he or she grows a little older, the names that are used by the vulgar. Many of these words are very ancient, and, in their origin, had no connection with the obscene. Your child will hear these names sometime: a boy will inevitably learn them when he goes to school, the girl often learns them first when she marries. I am certain that the wisest safeguard is to become acquainted with these names in the home and from the mother.

And this openness of speech will be of great assistance to the parent in the sexual instruction of the child. Nor need there be any fear of hurting the instinctive delicacy of the young mind. Always we have to remember that the real and true mysteries of generation and birth are far removed in the thought of the unspoilt child from the vulgar secretiveness with which prurient custom surrounds them.

I know children who have been reared according to the tradition of reticence, or of false teaching, and I know girls and boys who are being brought up in the

light of knowledge adapted to their ages. Without hesitation, I say that the children who are openly and lovingly instructed by their mothers and fathers or by wise teachers, have a surer foundation for right conduct, and are, as a rule, less susceptible to the evil influences of evil companions than those children who are told falsehoods, or from whom knowledge is withheld. I wish that I could impress upon every parent that impurity is not a synonym for knowledge. Impurity of thought is the companion of ignorance, or of distorted ideas that spring up and flourish as evil weeds in an atmosphere of parental reticence. I am convinced that the child brought up in the light is more likely to have clear healthy vision than one reared in the dark. I believe that many of the perversions of sex, a whole list of diseases, the number of unhappy marriages, and much of the existing social evils and misery, could be lessened greatly, though I cannot hope, as do some, that they would be prevented, by the wise instruction of youth, in particular by the inculcation of reverence for the reproductive force, and the cultivation of a desire for beauty, not alone in outside things, but in all thought and deed relating to the life force, which is Love.

Reverence for sex as something most holy in the plan of life should be part of every child's education. The eternal hymn of love is the noblest strain in the universe, and the young should be taught to heed it reverently. There must be no base or false valuation of the impulse that unites men and women, if we wish our daughters and our sons to fulfil worthily the high duties of parenthood.

To this end, then, we must labour in the sexual

training of youth, having patience in the face of inevitable failures, remembering our mistakes and our own sins against Love.

There is a question that must now be considered. Little children, from their earliest years, are taught to be ashamed of nakedness. Above everything this, I believe, is harmful. Let there be no mistake here; this shame of the body has its origin in prudery and prurience, it has nothing to do with true modesty. But so deeply has this evil been rooted amongst us that any way of escape is very difficult. Little boys bathing on the outskirts of our towns are hunted down by idiotic policemen, apparently infuriated by the sight of the naked body even of children.¹ Lately in one of our northern towns, where an experiment was being tried in mixed bathing, the regulations (made to ensure propriety!) were a painful witness to indecency. Let me give another illustration. The other day I chanced to notice a little scene between a mother of the working class and a tiny boy of not more than four years. The child was playing with a kitten, it jumped on his shoulder and, clawing at the stuff, undid the button of his jersey. The little one laughed in glee. But the mother seized and shook him, pulled away the kitten, and said, "Oh, the rude cat, to undress you!" The child, half whimpering, soon began to giggle. He turned to another woman who was with them, calling out in his shrill Cockney voice, "Auntie Mary, kitty undid my jersey; rude kitty, rude kitty!"

Now this is, of course, an extreme case, but it is not uncommon. It saddened me deeply. I felt then, as so often I feel, a burning anger at the way we

¹ Ed. Carpenter, *Sex Love*.

besmirch our children's minds, often, it is true, quite unconsciously, with our hideous impurity. Certainly until this unnatural idea with regard to the human body is cleansed there can be little hope of anything like purity in our children.

I think that boys and girls, when young, ought to bathe quite openly together. They should also have opportunity of seeing their elders without clothing. This advice may cause surprise to those who have not thought about this matter. I do, however, believe that it is wise, provided always that it is done in a perfectly open and natural manner. Of course, the difficulties are very great, for one cannot separate one's own conduct and attitude in these questions from the general atmosphere in which we and our children live. Thus there is some fear of harm lurking even when we cannot see that it is there. Yet, in my opinion, the danger is far greater from the secretive and indecent mystery with which we conceal our bodies. And even here I hold we are in error. It is the adorned or partially concealed body, and not the absolutely naked body, which acts as a sexual excitant. This fact is quite familiar to those who have lived among primitive tribes, among many of whom clothing is used only for adornment. It is also quite recognised by all artists. Indeed, if the conquest of sexual desire were the real object, it would be more reasonable to object to clothing than to object to nakedness.¹

¹ H. Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, vol. v. p. 97.

Dr. Ernest Jones (*Papers on Psycho-Analysis*) takes an opposite view and holds there is fear of harm being done to the child unless the conventions are rather strictly maintained. I cannot accept this view.

I am very sure in my own mind of the value of nakedness in the sexual education of the child. For one thing it will prevent much hurtful curiosity of one sex with regard to the body of the other sex, that often in later years leads to the greatest evils. It will also prevent that feeling of the body as something unclean and to be hidden.

Reverence for the beautiful human body must be taught to the young. We can never do this while we think of the body only as dressed in clothes. How deeply we have wronged the child who has learned from us to regard nakedness as "rude." Children should be encouraged to see beauty, not ugliness, in all the processes of nature ; and their right and natural interest concerning all their physical organs and functions should not be checked, but respected and guided by wise teaching. All shame must, as far as is possible, be put away as indecent. Let children learn the use and beauty of the functions of their bodies, the marvels of nature's methods for building up the frame, of getting rid of the waste matter that would cause harm, and how the body and mind are interrelated and interdependent. This will be their surest safeguard. Boys and girls do not assoil that which they have learnt to reverence and admire. It is a perversion or a stultification of the sense of the beautiful that so often leads to delight in the unclean and the repulsive. Both prudery and prurience are unlovely. Children must be preserved religiously from both of these pernicious influences.

Much may be done in this direction by a wise educational use of statues and pictures of the nude figure. By this means the parent will be able to safeguard

the child at the outset against the unclean ideas which later he will certainly encounter. But even here difficulty awaits us. Prudery has entered into our art : the use of the fig leaf on our statues is but another sign of how far we have departed from a beautiful and natural delight in the human body.

It may be thought by some that I am over-emphasising the importance of this factor of nakedness in the child's sexual education. But if I am right at all, this is not so. The main task, in my opinion, of the educator in sex is to remove by every possible means that sense of false shame (which must not be, as it almost always is, confused with modesty) which arises inevitably from our customs of hiding the body, and, in particular, the organs of sex, and to make clear in the child's own mind an absolute faith in the purity and dignity of its own body. I know, of course, that the difficulties are very great, some of them I do not think can, at any rate for a very long time, be overcome, but this is the ideal that, in my opinion, must be aimed at. Purification of our own thoughts is the first step towards teaching the truths of sex purely.

And until this is done, I am exceedingly doubtful of the efficacy of formal instruction in sex. By our unconscious example we are showing the young in every direction and in ways unnumbered our attitude of hesitation and our own secret pruriency, and we should realise that this unconscious influence must always be far stronger on the child's mind than anything we can say, or the instructions in sexual facts and conduct that we may give them to read for themselves. Of what use, then, can our teaching be if,

through our want of faith in ourselves and the physical facts of love, the concealments that breed curiosity and shame have already sprung up as weeds in the garden of the child's mind? We can never undo by any after-instruction, however good, however carefully given, evils that have been going on in secret through the long years, which count most in the formation of character.

This belief in outside instruction, the giving of sex lessons or the use of the written pamphlet on the subject is, after all, an easy way of discharging our debt to the young; I am sure that it is not the right way. And sometimes I fear that sexual education, in particular when such teaching is delayed until the child is reaching puberty, or until the time when the dangers of school life have to be met, involving, as it must, a sudden breaking through of the silence of years, may work for harm instead of for good. That this is so in the case of some boys and girls I know to be true. You see you cannot grow flowers in a soil choked already with weeds.

It is for this reason I am pleading, with all the power that I have, that the sexual enlightenment of every child should be given first by the mother in the home as part of the ordinary daily life, rather than as a matter of formal instruction. I would have each parent remember that every normal child is interested in his or her sexual organs, and in those of other people, the sisters or brothers, or the parents. I, who had no brothers, and whose father was dead, can recall still the immense astonishment that seized me on one occasion, when I was staying in the home of an aunt, and I happened to go to the nursery as a boy

cousin was having his bath. He was older than I was, and at once I was told to run away. But this injunction only deepened the impression made on my mind. I had seen that the boy was differently made from myself. I had never previously seen a boy except in clothes. Now, the harm was that there was no one to whom I could speak about this ; I was much too shy, owing to my training, to speak even to my mother. I puzzled about this difference for a very long time, and the inevitable result was that I dwelt upon the occurrence in a way that certainly was harmful. It has seemed worth while to relate this incident, as it will serve to illustrate what I am trying to make plain—how fatally easy it is to direct and fasten the thoughts of a child on sex matters, by the very means that are taken so often, and so mistakenly as I think, to shield the child's innocence.

It will now become plain why I advise that boys and girls should be used to seeing every part of the naked body of children and adults of both sexes, so that the sense of mystery and unhealthy curiosity should be destroyed by the simple method of leaving nothing mysterious in the exterior of the human body. If this course is pursued, the child is certain to ask for information concerning the differences of the sex organs. Here at once opportunities arise for the right kind of sex instruction. The mother will be able to give answers in natural conversation which will be certain not to force information never sought for by an incurious child. And this is surely a wiser way than gaining knowledge in a coarse or mutilated form from chance remarks made by other children, or from vulgar servants, or as suggested by accidental glimpses.

It goes without saying that the mother must answer the child's questions as if she were talking about any other part of the body, or explaining the difference between a crab and a lobster. This course can be adopted only where adults are able to talk on these subjects simply and with knowledge. When so treated, it will be found that children are not inordinately interested in the question; they will break off from the subject of the procedure of the sexual act to talk about toy soldiers or dolls. This, to me, is the immense value of this form of teaching: the child has the information, and yet does not trouble about it when it is not to the point. Such a result can never be the case when the information is interconnected with warnings and hints of mysterious vices or moral platitudes, or even when too much is said about the beauty of the subject, with references to flowers and birds as illustrations, or, indeed, when the informant is so ill at ease about explaining what on the face of it is a simple matter, that she dare not speak for herself, but is reduced to handing a little pamphlet to the child.

CHAPTER III

THE SCHOOL

TO the theoretical teacher eager to reform the world on paper the introduction of sexual education into the curriculum of our schools may appear a very simple step. It seems a very easy matter to introduce sexual hygiene into the training courses of the teachers, to formulate schemes for school instruction, and to lay down rules—new finger-posts to right conduct, whereby the younger generation may be enlightened and (as we hope) by this means be saved from making the mistakes that we ourselves have made. But can we do this? Is it possible that our teaching, however wise, can exercise this charmed power? Are we really being honest with ourselves? For in sex we have as yet learnt very little, and this is true even of the wisest among us; and, indeed, I doubt sometimes if we can ever learn very much except each one of us for ourselves out of our own experience. We of the older generation cannot save the young from those personal difficulties and struggles, and probable failures and mistakes, through which they must pass on their way through life to reality and love. And I think it may be well that at once we realise and acknowledge the very narrow limits of our power.

But this is not to say that we are to go on shirking our plain duty and continue to act as if all were well in this matter, when we know that it is not so. The manner in which, up to the present day, we have almost completely ignored the very existence of sex in our educational system is incredible. There has been, indeed, in this direction a vast range of betrayal and baseness, of cowardice and falsehood, in our treatment of youth.

No other emotion is so hindered, opposed, and loaded with material and moral fetters; we know how education makes a beginning in this way, how life continues the process. Perhaps some of these hindrances are inevitable, are even helpful and good, but many are useless and bad and the direct result of our adult stupidity, and the way we have failed by the training we offer in meeting the real needs of the young. How can we expect the primitive powerful sex impulse not to suffer, not to seek escape from repression in undesirable ways? The sex emotions are among the deepest, if not the deepest of our nature; they exercise a controlling and directing influence on every phase of growth, and, in one form or another, determine the entire being of the individual. We know this. And all the time we continue to educate boys and girls as if they were sexless neuters. Could folly be greater than this?

There is something quite astonishing and extraordinary in the education and life of the boys or girls in the ordinary school. All the adult world around them seem to be agreed to educate them with as much ignorance as is possible of the vital facts in which they are, and ought to be, interested; and to inspire

their souls, by the ceaselessly acting suggestion of this mysterious silence, with a profound shame of such things; sometimes with an extreme impatience and horror and often, at the other extreme, with a hidden shameful lewd delight; the former result being, I think, more common in the case of girls, the secret delight more usual to boys.

Under the influence of the idea of the sinfulness and radical evil of sex, we have stood helpless, as if we were faced with a mysterious and malignant power; we have left the development even of our own children to the blind hazard of chance. In choosing a school for our sons or our daughters we have neglected entirely this one all-important question. If we have thought of it secretly, we have shoved it back into the dark places of our minds. When any one, as, for instance, Mr. S. P. B. Mais, in his illuminating book, Mr. Alec Waugh or Mr. Hugh Lunn, tells us parents the truth as to what happens in schools, we do not believe them. Perhaps, we say, such things may happen in some bad schools and to some bad boys, but *I know* they could not happen to *my* boy in *his* school.

Now, this attitude on the part of the parents is a very direct encouragement to the usual pretence that goes on, and the hiding of unpleasant facts on the part of the schoolmaster. I could write much on this subject, but it lies rather outside the limited scope of this present book, and as I hope to treat it at considerable length in the next work I purpose writing,¹ I shall not say more about it here.

By our secrecies and our examples of furtive shame and fears we do more harm than we know; too often

¹ *Mothers and Sons*, to be published in the autumn of next year.

we mar for the young the harmony of developing their lives. Why is this? Let us try to be truthful to ourselves about ourselves. We are shamefaced because we are still savages in sex. If not, why this awe and funk, these taboos and mysteries, all the secretive cunning both in our homes and in our schools with which we hide from the young the truth about those facts that we all know, but pretend, even to ourselves, that we do not know?

And it cannot be overlooked that this fear of sex is of very ancient origin, which makes it the more difficult for all adults, and especially for the individual teachers, to face honestly the problems of sex; and yet, as I have stated already, this honest facing of oneself is, in my opinion, the first essential step towards naturalness, towards understanding, and wise teaching. We have also, I am certain, to allow for an ages-old, and therefore strongly rooted, sense of separation between the generations—between the young to be instructed and the adults who are the instructors; and this causes an often conscious, but always, I think, unconscious, antagonism between the teacher and the pupil. I am not very hopeful of overcoming or breaking through this separation, that is really a strong sex antagonism—a hidden unrecognised hostility. For reasons into which I cannot here enter, this hostility is stronger in boys than it is in girls—a fact which explains, I believe, the different attitude of boys towards their masters from that of girls towards their mistresses. I do not think that this feeling of secret resistance can ever be wholly eliminated; I am not even sure that it should be eliminated. It is, however, certain that its presence has got to be reckoned with, and that it must add im-

mensely in this question of sex instruction to the already difficult task of the teacher. Between the young and one who instructs them gapes the wide gulf of experience, marked by the milestones of mistakes, of failures, and some achievements, with an almost certain atmosphere of disillusionment and dull acceptance. Few adults who have crossed this gulf remember the language they once spoke, or are strong enough for the painful task of recalling the thoughts and longings and difficulties of their own young days; more often they are filled with an unconscious envy that finds expression in impatience and want of sympathy as they look at those who stand where they once stood, noting their eager life and wild activities. The adult is rare who, through his own troubled experience, can reach back in tenderness to the young.

If, then, the generations cannot hope fully to understand one another, it would certainly be safer for us who are older not to obtrude too confidently our prejudices, or even unwisely to enforce knowledge on the young; and above all we ought not to prevent, or try to prevent by our censure, their thinking about these things and talking among themselves about sex and its many problems which, as they grow up, necessarily interest them more than anything else. To stamp curiosity about sex as unhealthy, abnormal, or indecent only turns inward and possibly perverts a force that cannot be annihilated. It can be repressed only at the cost of repressing life itself.

Such an unwise course of repression destroys also the possibility of any kind of confidence between the adult guide and the boy or the girl. Children and young people will not refer to a subject about which

they are supposed to be too healthy and too pure even to think. But if they feel that no kind of blame attaches to their curiosities and desire to find out things, they will be much more likely, from time to time, as difficulties arise and when anything goes wrong, to turn to their elders for advice and help. This, however, is a result that cannot be counted on, but it is certain that it can never be gained by the ordinary teacher who continues the old method of the adult walking always before the young on moral stilts.

Unfortunately there are further difficulties to be faced by the teachers of sexual hygiene in our schools, but as these are more obvious and usually recognised, I shall say less about them. They cannot, however, be entirely neglected. If it were possible to take for granted that the pupils had already been wisely trained in their homes, the immediate difficulties would not be so great. It is, however, impossible to have any such confidence. It would, indeed, be safer, if we took it for granted that most children had already been so trained at home, that some feeling of shame and dislike enters into their consciousness as soon as sexual subjects are spoken about by any adult. It is also unfortunately true (as I have already explained) that the teachers themselves are seldom in a completely healthy state of mind with regard to the subject, nor have they, except in exceptional cases, the necessary understanding of the child's psychology or the will and honesty to acknowledge their own difficulties and limitations.

Another trouble arises from the many opposing types of homes from which the children come—homes where parents are bringing them up according to tradi-

tions derived from different social classes and from different ideals or aims in life. Again the problem is quite a different one in the boarding-school from what it is in the day-school. My own feeling is that little can be done well until the general atmosphere of the school and the relationship between teacher and pupils, and also between the home and the school, are different. At a boarding-school, for instance, where a sensitive boy feels that school is a place where fifty to a hundred boys go to bed at the same time, rise at the sound of a bell, and wash with similar pieces of soap, where the teachers are regarded, at best, with toleration, usually with enmity, it is improbable that the necessary sympathy between pupil and teacher will exist. In girls' schools I do not think the case is much better, though, as I have pointed out before, the hostility is less active ; the false delicacy and consequent ignorance of the girls and the teachers concerning matters of immediate importance to their own health and special sexual needs, renders any healthy, frank, and really helpful teaching almost impossible.

In the elementary schools, where most of the children know far more about sex than do the children of other classes, there are often difficulties to be met ; the prudery of the parents, causing a very powerful, even if not actively expressed, resistance, often is at its worst. In some of the shameful conditions of life that exist in our cities and towns children have nothing to learn of the seamy side of sex ; what must be done is to show them that there is another side—a healthy side. But the teacher's task, at the best difficult, under these conditions is doubly hard. For the parents of such children, believing themselves that

sex matters are filthy, often protest violently against their children being taught this filthy knowledge. The teacher's hands are thus tied. And, until some change comes in the attitude of the parents, the teaching of sexual physiology, as a natural and inevitable part of general physiology (the only right way in which it should be taught), will be a matter of such difficulty that it is, I feel, hopeless to anticipate any quick or certain results. And it appears to me that in this matter we shall do well to hasten slowly. I feel certain that the difficulties that must be encountered, as well as the possible harm that may be done, have not yet been fully faced, and I fear that in eagerness for reform we may rush into new dangers. I fear that, as in the home so also in the school, at least as much harm may be done by saying too much as by saying too little.

The teaching given in the school will, of course, be far more impersonal than that given at home. But even if the teacher tries to give an impersonal address to a whole class, dangers will tend to arise. The various children have many ideas and feelings, some healthy and some morbid. Teaching that would be suitable to one child might easily do harm to another. Also the wishes of the parents have to be consulted, as good can come only when parents and teacher work together. Unfortunately, it is seldom that any real intimacy exists between the teachers and the parents. The teacher is therefore forced, to a great extent, to work in the dark as regards the child.

One method of approaching the subject very usually recommended is to introduce it by teaching botany and zoology. I am not very sure of the wisdom of

this method. It cannot but seem a somewhat shame-faced expedient to the children, whose intelligence is usually much quicker on these matters than the teacher assumes. No doubt, however, instruction on these subjects is of the utmost value to the children, and the sexual parts of plants and animals should be pointed out to them, so that they may understand the methods of plant and animal reproduction. I suggest, however, that it is not the wisest plan, for more than one reason, to use this method only for making plain to the child the facts of human reproduction.

The best method of giving class teaching on the subject is simply to teach physiology, and include the sexual organs among the other organs of the body. The teaching in each class, in which the subject is dealt with, should be carried just as far when dealing with one part of the body as when dealing with another, the information given being, of course, simplified to suit the ages and capacities of the children. It goes without saying that the simpler and more natural the teaching the better the result will be likely to be.

Much may be done by indirect teaching. Certainly this is not the best way, that is, if it alone is depended upon ; but it does afford many opportunities that may be utilised by the teacher who has the necessary knowledge and the naturalness to speak on these subjects openly and simply. I may relate, as an illustration of an excellent use of an opportunity for indirect instruction by a teacher, an incident that happened to my boy, when quite little, when he was once out on a nature study walk with his school on Hampstead Heath. Here he saw two frogs copulating,

and pointed them out to the teacher, who at once called the class together and told them a few simple facts. When the boy came home, he at once told myself and my husband all about what he had learnt, just as he might have spoken of any other school lesson.

Sex enters into many subjects taught in our schools, and should not be artificially excluded as to-day it is. The class questions of the children will afford many opportunities to the wise teacher. Such questions should be answered simply and directly—if possible, in the class at the time they are asked; if not, an opportunity may be made by the teacher for speaking to the child alone. Of course, everything here depends on the wisdom of the teacher, but a way is opened up of sympathy between pupil and teacher that can hardly fail to have good results. In every school the aim should be that the children should have no shame in knowing that they are begotten of a father and born of a mother. The children should be taught that if at an early age they learn enough about their body and its uses, they will know how to keep themselves in good health. And though I must insist again that we must not place too firm a reliance on the good necessarily following from our teaching, a feeling of self-respect is aroused more strongly by knowledge than in any other way.

I must pause here for a minute, for, as I read back what I have written so far in this chapter, it seems to me that I have, perhaps, failed in making sufficiently clear my own attitude. I fear that in my anxiety to avoid an easy optimism—an anxiety which has led me to give prominence to the difficulties that beset

the path of the teacher like thick-growing weeds—I may have given the idea to my readers that I am opposed to the teaching of sexual hygiene in our schools. Now, that is very far, indeed, from what I feel. I am certain that the early teaching given to the children by the parents in the home ought to be supplemented by instruction given by the teachers to boys and girls in the later school years. For one thing, an inestimable and, I think, deep-reaching service to the children is likely to result from such connection being established in the vital and intimate questions of life and conduct between the home teaching and the school teaching, which are the two worlds in which children live and grow up. We have to consider also the practical fact that we can train and watch the teachers in the schools much more easily than we can train or watch the parents in the home, and that, if we act wisely and take into consideration the new knowledge now at our disposal, we may be able to formulate and introduce into our schools a system of sexual education—not, of course, a cut-and-dried plan, but rather opportunity and suggestions for methods of teaching that will have, in all cases, to be adapted to the particular circumstances and special needs of the children—a system, I say, of help towards sexual health that will prove of real service to the young.

I want now to consider briefly the means by which it seems to me this splendid and desirable end may best be achieved. Let me try to face the situation both practically and truthfully.

There are the characters, attitudes, and previously acquired feelings of three sets of people that must first be taken into account: first, those of *the parents* and

the very various "home atmospheres"; second, those of *the children* and the tone of the school, which may either help the teacher's efforts through the help and goodwill of the children themselves, or turn what is in itself wise teaching to bad effect by a hidden rebellion, enabling the leaders of school public opinion, if themselves sexually unhealthy, to exploit what has been said for evil purposes; it is, I think, this attitude of the children that is most important, and unfortunately it is also the most difficult to control, for it depends, very largely at least, on the third set of persons, whose characters and feelings have to be considered, namely, *the teachers*, with their own possible repressions and avoidance of sex, setting up an unconscious inability to treat the subject simply and wisely; marking their dread of its claims on the individual, which must conflict with the conventions or real claims on behalf of the good of society.

Now, the first most necessary step is, by some means, to bring these three sets of persons into an association, by means of which it may be possible to gain some kind of harmony in the teaching that is to be given. It is, therefore, necessary, if we are to be thorough, to begin the work of sex instruction in the school by requests from the school to the parents for the parents' help. The parent should be asked to take advantage of suitable occasions in order to give information to the children. And before entrance to the school, a pamphlet written in simple words, and graded according to age, should be sent to the parent, who should be requested to go over it with the child. At the same time an offer should be sent of the assistance of the school instructor, if this is needed, or is desired, by the

parent. The teachers' powers of instilling decency into the parents, of course, are limited. Also they can only use their influence over the children to preserve them from contact with vulgar amusements and vulgar conversation while they are at school. The meeting together of the parents and the teachers would, however, do much to strengthen this influence. Any parents who objected to the requirements of the school in this matter would have to be told that the entrance of their children into the school was dependent on the complete following out of the plan laid down by the school. Every consideration and assistance would be given to the parents, but they would have to learn that sexual ignorance could not be tolerated. We demand a certain amount of intellectual knowledge before a child may enter a school, and surely moral knowledge is of greater importance, both for the individual child and for the community of the school.

Later, and during the whole school course, there should be opportunities for the school instructors, from time to time, to meet the parents in private consultations, in health lectures, and in study groups. There should be the greatest possible openness between the parent and the teacher about everything connected with the child. Nervous symptoms, which the teacher ought to be taught to recognise, should at once be reported to the parents, and the assistance of a trained helper, a nerve doctor, or an analyst should be called. If necessary, the child would be suspended for a time from the ordinary school and placed in special happy surroundings, until a readjustment to normal health was established. In this way an immense

amount of nervous disease would be prevented. This adult frankness would also greatly help towards moral conduct in the school years. The mere fact and influence on the pupils of a union between their parents and teachers, in this work of care and assistance for their sexual health, with the open facing of their special difficulties, could not, I believe, fail to work favourably. And though I realise fully that it can never be possible by any adult plans to prevent all mischief, it is certain that the children will feel less shame, with the consequent evil repressions, if shame and hiding of the truth is not present, as now they must know that it is, between the guiders of the two adult halves of their world.

I am aware, of course, that the actual working of such a scheme would be difficult ; and must, almost certainly at first, lead to discord, perhaps actual conflicts, between the teachers and the parents—the school and the home. I do, however, believe it is a necessary condition to the introduction of sexual teaching into our schools. There can be nothing but confusion, disharmony, and hurt to the child unless in this matter parents and teachers, home and school, act openly and work together.

In selecting the teachers who would be prepared to give sex instruction in the schools, the following ought, I think, to be taken into account : the headmaster or headmistress, who might from several considerations appear as the most suitable person, does not usually know the pupils sufficiently intimately ; nor do they, from the boys' or the girls' side of the question, often occupy the best standpoint for confidence. They are too high above the pupils. What

I mean is this : the headmaster may be natural with the boys, but they will not be able to be natural with him—to pretend that they can be so, even with the best type of headmaster, is, in my opinion, but to deceive ourselves. I am very certain of this : whatever the headmaster says, the boys will look out to see whether he is aiming this or that remark at any particular boy or group of boys ; they will be uneasy and wondering if he has “ found anything out ” or been “ told anything ” by the other masters. Boys are usually antagonistic to headmasters, while girls frequently worship the headmistress. I have spoken of this already ; but what is not usually known is that the antagonism and the worship arise from the same cause and are based on similar emotional disturbance. The headmaster or the headmistress suffers through the transference to them of the authority of the father, which usually leads on the part of girls to affection and on the part of boys to distrust, if not worse. Often this causes a very active, though unconscious, hostility, which, being directly connected with the sex emotions, is very powerful in some boys, and is never, I think, quite absent on the part of any normal boy. And this antagonism, in my opinion, makes it almost impossible for the headmaster, however good and wise he is, to be the right person to give the sexual instruction classes in the school. What I mean is this : the father hostility, more or less acutely and harmfully at work in the boy's unconscious, must act adversely against sympathy and understanding in this matter of sex instruction.

The situation, though reversed, is the same, but probably not so actively adverse, between the head-

mistress and the girls ; naturalness and openness would, however, I think, be prevented by the action of the unconscious emotions.

Now, if the heads of the schools are to be placed aside as unsuitable, it is plain that the decision as to who is to give the necessary teaching will be one exceedingly difficult to make. There can be in each school only certain of the available teachers who could speak on this subject. And to select any of these would be at once to place that teacher on quite a different footing with the pupils from that on which all the other teachers stood ; it would be a footing more intimate and responsible and at the same time more difficult and likely to open up many ways to grave mistakes. It seems to me a situation almost unworkable. For one thing, the differentiation between the teachers would not be desirable ; while innumerable difficult situations would be certain to arise between the teacher and the pupils and still more between the parents that could hardly fail to bring disaster to any school. I would suggest, therefore, another plan. The teacher of gymnastics, games, scouting, drill, and all the physical and sport activities of the school stands in a position apart from the rest of the school staff. He, or she, is accustomed to speak to the boys or girls about the care of the body, about health and fitness, and about good and bad habits, and the way these affect general fitness ; it is also common for them to prescribe special plans of training, restriction of diet, special exercises, etc. etc., for the attainment of special ends. Now, it is evident that the approach to the subject of sex would be simpler for such a teacher than it could possibly be for any other member of the

school staff. The sex instruction, in this simple way, would be linked up with health and the general care of the body, all of which would be connected in boys' and girls' minds with games and the part of school life for which they most cared. This would, I am certain, be an inestimable advantage and would save sex instruction from the fate, that may so readily overtake it, of being regarded as "moral talk" that has no relation that is felt by the pupils to **their** young activities and the conventions which control school life.

It goes without saying that these teachers should be specially chosen and specially trained; they should, I think, be called Health and Games Masters and Health and Games Mistresses. In particular they should have a wider knowledge of life than is common with teachers; they should know how to recognise common nervous troubles, such, for instance, as repressed fears, and to do this they should have received some training in the curative methods of modern psychology.

The work of the Health teacher ought not, in my opinion, to be limited to teaching the children in the school. In the way I have already suggested, the home must be linked with the school—the parents' influence gained to support the efforts of the teacher. Thus, it would be a recognised part of the work of the Health teacher to make friends with the parents; in the case of day scholars by visiting them in their homes, the best plan, as in this way a knowledge could be gained of the home influences, which would be of inestimable assistance in dealing with the child; but with boarders, where such home-visiting would be impossible, a correspondence should be carried on regularly with the parents, and from time to time they should be requested to

attend conferences at the school, and should in all cases be summoned at once for friendly discussion and advice when any kind of trouble arises in regard to the sexual health of the child.

I look forward to the time when attached to every school, or in the case of smaller schools, perhaps to a group of schools, there will be a school doctor ; not as a visitor only but as part of the school staff, one of whose duties would be to supplement the work of the Health master or mistress in sex instruction. In the case of girls the doctor, of course, should be a woman. I think strongly that the ordinary sex lessons will be better given as a regular part of health instruction, and by the Health teachers ; but their work should be supplemented by the doctor, who would carry further the lessons on the care of the body. I must, however, say again that teaching by itself can never accomplish what we wish. It can be of but little avail to hold up in the mind of youth the purity of natural functions if in the general community of companions, outside the home and the classroom, the mention of love arouses but sniggering laughter.

The greatest difficulty, of course, occurs with the elder boys and girls, among whom sex has gained a strong and conscious interest ; sexual instruction at this age takes a different aspect, and, if it is really to serve the needs of the adolescents, must become more personal and connected with the wider needs of the out-of-school life. There are many problems of marriage and sexual conduct which need to be discussed and honestly dealt with among adolescents if sexual instruction is to become a practical force for good in the later life.

Now, I do not think the Health and Games teacher or even the school doctor is necessarily the best qualified to give this more personal instruction. Who, then, is to be the teacher? I have spoken already of the special difficulties which in this matter beset the headmaster or headmistress; yet I do not know who else could give this most necessary teaching. One would like to be able to suggest the school chaplain, or whoever is responsible for the religious teaching in the school, but one cannot do this until religion itself has become a real thing in the hearts of the young. One must also be certain that the truth would be told. Incalculable harm would be done by false statements and an over-insistence on goodness.

The difficulty is a very real one, possibly especially so in the case of girls. Celibate schoolmistresses can hardly be expected to give the right kind of teaching. I am not over-hopeful of what would be done by headmasters for boys. Few members of the scholastic profession have sufficient experience or sufficient courage, nor have they sufficient knowledge of sexual psychology, to give the right kind of teaching; and they are usually prejudiced. The greatest honesty and the greatest tact and sympathy are called for in addressing the young on all these subjects, whether by general lectures or in individual interviews.

All talk with the young on sexual conduct is, for the reasons I have given, peculiarly difficult. The adults of to-day have been altogether wrongly brought up. The inoculated feeling that sex is something evil has left, except in the very few, a heritage of shame, which persists with terrible, though often unconscious action, causing doubt and hesitation in the imparting of the

truth, even by those who are able theoretically to recognise that all shame about sex is unnecessary and harmful. Thus few teachers are fitted or, indeed, able to deal truthfully with the difficult problems of sex, or by their advice to exercise the privilege of training and guiding the young to a wise understanding. No knowledge given can, I think, avail if the attitude of the teacher is not right ; I can hardly emphasise this fact too often or too strongly.

In a task of such real difficulty the possible errors are numerous. I can but indicate one or two that to me seem specially important as being those most likely to be made. If, for instance, the teacher over-emphasises to boys the advantage of pure romantic love and chivalrous devotion to woman, it may be dangerous. To personify all inspiration and nobility as Woman is really to make unknown vice attractive. The youth is sure to see that his sisters' or his mothers' friends are not such extraordinarily interesting people, and this will stimulate his curiosity with regard to servants, waitresses, or women of a bad class. It is probable that times and places where excessive respect for woman has been expressed have been distinguished by looseness of sexual habits, just in the same way as extremely vulgar behaviour between the sexes is compatible with the strictest physical chastity.

It would certainly seem as if a consideration of the physical disadvantages of womanhood, of the illness necessitated by motherhood, of the comparatively narrow life opened to the majority of women, is a much sounder basis for a boy's respect for women than the example of Dante's silent (and possibly

unknown) devotion to Beatrice, or the conduct of a Scott's hero trying to rescue an impossibly insipid heroine.

In the case of girls, the evil that may be done by over-exalting romantic love is a different one, while the harm that may be done is, I think, even greater. To idealise the male virtues of courage, adventurousness, and self-confidence, comes near, in many cases, to teaching the girls admiration for the calm, reckless Don Juan. Innumerable unhappy marriages may be traced back to this false ideal. In the story of "Beauty and the Beast" we have material out of which part of the great sex difficulty can be explained. In the fairy story, the husband before marriage looks like a beast, after marriage he becomes a prince. In real life, the story is inverted. There is a deluding force in the mere skin and limbs of those of the opposite sex at the time when maturity is being reached, which may give princely attributes to those who would be seen as beasts at other times. The prince seen as a beast after marriage is a tragedy which the romantic, ignorant girl must beware of drifting into.

Girls ought to be made far better acquainted than they are now with the man's character, before they leave the sheltering care of school and the home; they should be taught to recognise what is true, and what is false, in love. Girls also need to learn their deep responsibility towards men; their duty in expecting and claiming from every man who is attracted towards them the qualities that are real and of importance. This teaching must be given very plainly, and the practical advantage of right conduct, rather than the moral aspect, should, in my opinion, be emphasised.

The ignorance of girls of school age is really very great, and later they are carried on by their own unguided impulses, and they lead men into much folly that could be prevented. Men have always been, and will continue to be, what women make them; and, therefore, it is of the greatest importance that girls should from the start know more of sex and its obligations, understand themselves and men better, and what is their duty. They should be warned against falling in love with love; against the romance that sees a hero in every lover. The man who most boldly plays up to the romantic part expected of him—reciprocating to the perhaps unconscious encouragement of the girl—is not the man who will be the most agreeable to live with. Such teaching as this, given to adolescent girls, about the danger of an over-romantic view of love, will not safeguard from all evils; but it will at least give knowledge that may protect in some time of peril.

The need of warning girls about infection from venereal diseases is, in my opinion, far greater than the need for similar instruction by male teachers, because, for one thing, it may be taken for granted that most boys have some knowledge on the subject. Girls must be taught to understand their responsibility in this connection, and the harm they may so thoughtlessly do to other women, when they excite the passions of men. If our girls really felt their power, and the responsibility it placed upon them, they would not dress in the provocative manner that to-day has become so common. Thus the teaching given to the girls in connection with this subject would not be, as it usually is in the case of the boys, looked

upon as being intended only as a guidance in morals, but rather as a means of emphasising womanly responsibility much more than warning them against the vicious inclinations of others. Hence, naturally, I am justified in giving what at first may appear somewhat contradictory advice with regard to the instruction of the two sexes.

The teaching to be given to adolescent boys on this subject is certainly more difficult. To insist too much on the dangers of contracting sexual disease as a ground for chastity is repellent to reason and to feeling ; to reason, if only because physical means, as the boys must learn, can be used greatly to reduce such risks ; to feeling, because it is obvious that to make this self-protection the main reason for virtue is to sink to the lowest egoism. On the other hand, it is true that if the main emphasis could be laid on the danger of infecting others, probably those nearest to yourself, or those to be your own children, the emotional character of this teaching would be greatly altered ; but it is improbable that boys will be able to think of an infectious disease mainly in this way. I think the truth should be told to them, however difficult such a course may be ; probably this work could be undertaken best by a doctor.

It is one of the chief dangers in the introduction of any teaching of sexual hygiene that so often such teaching is at variance with actual experience. The boys and the girls talk over the lessons among themselves, or perhaps with companions a little older who have left school, and they find out that their teachers have not told them the truth or have kept back part of the truth. As soon as this is discovered the credit of the

teacher is gone. He has lost everything by his secretive and one-sided exaggerations.

One mistake arising from the adult attitude, and its almost necessary opposition to the natural desires of the young, is what I cannot help regarding as an over-emphasis of the moral side. There are too many warnings against evils mixed up with the sexual teaching given to our elder boys and girls. It is specially evident in almost all school teaching, as can be seen from the manuals and pamphlets written by teachers on the subject ; it is only very rarely that there is any real escape from the established convention that sex is evil.

Now, this may seem a strange opinion ; yet the danger here is so real, that it would be cowardice on my part to pass on and leave it unnoticed. Nothing but harm can come from a dogmatic and unconsidered re-telling of ancient half truths, *even if this is done in the interests of good conduct*. Often, too, the young are repelled by the teacher's conventional phraseology. They want to be told the facts of life in a way that *is real to them*. I can hardly mark strongly enough the importance of this sense of reality. It is what is most essential. A delight in real things is the priceless possession that we have to cultivate unceasingly in the young. Our sexual leading will be worse than useless, for, indeed, it cannot fail in doing harm, unless we are brave and faithful to speak to them the truth as we ourselves know it.

Adults usually have a strange aptitude for forgetting entirely the facts of their lives as children and as girls and boys. And it would seem (curious as this statement may appear to some) that a general con-

tempt is felt really for the young, arising, I believe, from this failure in memory, which opens up a great chasm between the generations. This attitude of age superiority belongs unfortunately to most teachers. And the intensely individualistic attitude, common to the young, resents this very strongly, though often unconsciously. It is necessary to create sympathy, before the boy or girl can be taught and trained in the right expression of himself or herself—can be helped to establish through understanding his or her own psychic individuality. This kind of help (and it is the only kind of help that can be of much real service) can never be given by means of the rash and unqualified statements about virtue and about vice, which unfortunately are accepted too often as a necessary part of sexual education.

If we really desire to reach a sound conclusion, both for the children themselves and for the community of which they will one day become members, we must resolutely put into the background many of our own fears and hesitations ; then, perhaps, we may be able to avoid the teaching of the untrue precepts of conduct which hitherto we have in our own cowardice recommended to the young, though we have not accepted them for ourselves. What is above all necessary for teachers is to remember their own feelings and aspirations in their adolescent years ; their own struggles and their mistakes ; as also their own few triumphs.

One reason why we fail so often to make the right appeal to the difficult, and often strongly antagonistic, sympathy of the young is because we have travelled so far away ourselves from the wonderful beauty and difficult struggles of growth. Let us then turn to an

honest refacing of ourselves ; then it may be possible for us, with enlightened sympathy, to be more adequately equipped to guide the boys and girls committed to our care. Here, too, it is the children, the boys and girls, that must be our guides rather than we their teachers.

CHAPTER IV

ADOLESCENCE, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ADOLESCENT GIRL

ADOLESCENCE is the most critical period of growth between childhood and maturity. For the adolescent everything begins to be changed, and the change, it is important to remember, is a natural change, that should come about spontaneously, and, though it is subject to our direction, it is not subject to our control. And this means that we can help our children only by helping them to be themselves ; we cannot fit them into the arbitrary pattern that we may desire. We must regard these years as being the most important in the ascending curve of development, when childish ways and childish things are put away, when juvenile characters are for the most part slipped off as a crab slips off its shell, when adult characters are gradually put on, when the life begins to take definite shape, when the limit of growth comes within sight, and when sex impulses, at first mere passing whispers, compel a hearing to their mingled voices.¹

No over-emphasis can be laid on the fateful issues to the girl or to the boy this period of puberty and

¹ *Sex*, J. A. Thomson and P. Geddes, Home University Library Series, p. 119.

during the years of adolescence. Emotions and desires, which are of fundamental importance, not only for the individual character and life, but for all the later personal and social relationships, are for the first time united and developed, and find their expression in a new birth, either in the right direction of health, or in the wrong direction of repression or even of the abnormal. Not only is the body of the child remoulded in the form of the woman or the man, but the child's soul becomes the woman-soul or the man-soul, and nothing can possibly be quite the same as it has been before.

Let us consider something of what this means ; it is so easy to write of this wonderful period of youth, so very difficult to understand it. Stanley Hall, the chief investigator in this field, affords us the widest help. He says : " Adolescence is a term now applied to a pretty well-marked stage, beginning at about the thirteenth year with girls and a year later with boys, and lasting about ten years, to the period of complete sexual maturity. It is subdivided into pubescence, the first two years ; youth proper, from sixteen to twenty in boys and perhaps fifteen to nineteen in girls ; and a finishing stage through the early twenties. The first stage is marked by a great increase in the rate of growth in both height and weight. It is a period of greater susceptibility to sickness for both sexes ; but this vulnerability is due to the great changes, and the death-rate is lower in the early teens than at any other age. It is the time when there is the most rapid development of the heart and all the feelings and emotions. Fear, anger, love, pity, jealousy, emulation, ambition, and sympathy are

either now born or springing into their most intense life. Now young people are interested in adults, and one of their strong passions is to be treated as if they were mature. They desire to know, do, and be all that becomes a man or woman. Childhood is ending, and plans for future vocations now spring into existence and slowly grow definite and controlling."

It is evident that at puberty the parent and the teacher have their great opportunity—the greatest that can ever be obtained. This is the time, and the earliest time in the normal child, for a natural quickening of the moral, religious, and ideal elements of life. Up till now, and especially through the years of the play period, the girl's or the boy's attention has been fixed on the immediate environment, while the character may be said rather to be general than individual, for as yet there has not been an outward expression of the complex emotional nature which is set deep in the sexual impulse. The early training of the child now bears its fruit and the seeds sown long before, and often quite unconsciously, during childhood come to maturity. For the parent it is a time of anxiety, often of perplexity, but it is one of immense hope. An ideal world unfolds itself to your child; it is your work to help forward and not by careless unsympathy and hardness to push back the young, struggling soul. The adolescent youth and maid have a fresh outlook, with a different appreciation of other people and themselves, an appreciation that alters greatly and continuously. In this period your child will almost seem a stranger, so quickly and seemingly, so without reason, will he, or she, alter. The wonderfully rapid growth and alterations in the structure of the generative organs have

their counterpart in the mental and moral spheres ; there are new sensations which are scarcely recognised and are certainly not understood by the adolescent : vague feelings of unrest, ill-comprehended desires, impulses towards roughness and rudeness as well as a new tenderness, while an intense self-consciousness takes the place of the unconscious egoism of childhood.

It thus becomes clear that at the age of puberty a new and special sexual training is called for ; this training should be somewhat different for girls from that which is needed for boys. And the first reform that is called for is a readjustment of our educational standards. I should like to recommend a year's rest from the regular school work for every adolescent, but especially for girls during the period when their sexual life is becoming established. This is not, of course, to advocate idleness ; the adolescent should always have healthy occupation, but this is far different from the strain of an ordinary school course—a strain which is heavier on girls, as the course of study is usually foolishly arranged on the same lines as that for boys, and without any regard to sexual differentiation. If we were wiser, there would be in every large school a special class for adolescents : and this should be the most important class in the school. At puberty the girls in their schools and the boys in their schools would enter this class, in which they would stay for one year or longer. The work would be organised entirely to meet individual needs ; there should be no set course of study, no hide-bound rules, and *above all no examinations to be crammed for*. The work as far as possible should be done out of doors ; there should

be far more opportunity for rest, and for the following out of personal occupations and hobbies ; and while guarding against opportunities of harmful idleness, any kind of mental or bodily strain must be avoided.

The adolescent is often thought to be lazy, and, when called upon to work, shows an exasperating dullness and inattention. This is a natural condition when the girl or the boy is coming through the difficult strain of physical growth and change, and the inattention of the mind is, as a rule, but a symptom of the mysterious and difficult maturing of the body. And this adolescent backwardness, as should be known by the wise teacher, often leads in after years to finer progress, if only the right opportunity of peaceful inward development is given. "Every normal adolescent," it has been said, "is something of a genius."¹ And if there is some exaggeration in this statement, surely it comes near to the truth. I have often thought it is not so much genius that is rare, but the opportunity in which genius may find its right expression. And this thought was especially present in my mind when, as the headmistress of a large school for girls, my own blundering mistakes gave me many fears of the possible harm I was doing to these fresh young minds.

The teacher's task, then, is plain : to encourage adolescents in their natural reaching out for expression, not to smother all that is individual under set lessons, necessary and helpful at other periods, but now I am certain harmful, dulling the character with constraints and wearying the mind with strain through long hours

¹ Prof. J. A. Thomson.

of drudgery into a dull acceptance. Such a rest period as I am here advocating would serve not only to establish the health of the adolescents and fit them for vigorous manhood and womanhood, but would be of great advantage from an educational point of view. Hard study (and examinations, if these are necessary) may well come later at the close of those first difficult years. But I plead for all girls and all boys, during this fateful period of their metamorphosis from the girl to the woman and the boy to the man, to leave them much more largely than at present to nature and to themselves.

The observations of many medical men afford proof of the reckless way in which we interfere, and hinder, and maim the young by our absurd intellectual pressure and unthought-out methods of education. The harm that is suffered is deeper and more lasting in the case of girls than it is, as a rule, for boys, if only for the reason that the more active rebellion of the boy enables him to find for himself more and wider ways of escape. As one instance, out of many I have collected, I will quote a letter which appeared some time back in *The Medical World*, under the question-heading: "Does Scholastic Pressure on Girls Promote Hysteria and Sexual Precocity?" a letter that is specially interesting from the thoroughness of treatment and the frank facing of the problem. This is the letter:

"SIR,—It is a proverb that the onlooker at a game of cricket or football sees more of the game than a player. I have been a careful watcher of the game of education in the public elementary schools for more than twenty

years, and I have attended a large number of children who have suffered from scholastic pressure. The earliest signs are excitement on leaving school, rough behaviour, and disinclination to sit down quietly to a meal. Often the child takes a piece of bread and jam to eat out of doors while she is at play. At a later stage they become restless at night, and repeat school lessons in their sleep. Some talk about their lessons all day, and others play at being teachers, and arm themselves with a stick, which they consider a badge of office.¹ Many girls develop marked irritability of temper at the age of twelve, due to ovarian activity, and a few suffer from menorrhagia between thirteen and fourteen. . . . When girls leave school they are often anæmic and highly neurotic ; their chief desire is to walk the streets with a lad and go to the picture shows. They are wanting in self-respect and self-control, and in their eagerness to get married they often become mothers before the marriage ceremony is performed. Boys often suffer from overpressure and may be restless and excitable, but they do not suffer to the same extent as girls. They go errands and walk many miles besides attending school, and thus the nervous system is fairly exhausted and they sleep and eat well. Some cease growing and remain dwarfs, and a few grow to excess and become like lamp-posts. I have a large number of school children as patients, and when I find one suffering from too much school I give the parent a certificate to give the School Attendance Officer, stating the nature and cause of the illness, and that the child is unfit to attend school and requires a rest of so many weeks. I do not hesitate to order six or more months' rest if I think it necessary. The

¹ Any one who has even a slight knowledge of psycho-analysis will understand the deep significance of this statement.

education authority is always willing to act according to my directions.

" These observations indicate that scholastic pressure is a common factor in setting up ovarian excitement at the age of twelve or thirteen. The result is sexual precocity on leaving school, often associated with a tendency to hysteria. In these cases immorality may be regarded as the result of a morbid state. Another effect of over-pressure of the brain is an arrest of growth. I have several times noticed rapid growth after leaving school and a general improvement of the health. These cases of brain pressure do not always come to the notice of the School Medical Officer.—Yours truly,

" H. H. TIDSWELL, M.R.C.S.

" TORQUAY, September 1915."

In no other direction is the folly of our conventional attitude to sex questions more manifest than it is in our treatment of the adolescent girl, and in no other direction are the evils greater that result from our folly. The special sexual life of girls has for too long been ignored by both parents and teachers. In the immediate past this attitude was due to reasons of prudishness in regard to all natural functions, and notably menstruation. Girls, with an almost criminal neglect, were left quite unprepared for the monthly menstrual flow. Many girls were seriously frightened, and sometimes through foolish actions their health was impaired. Nor can it be said that even to-day there is much improvement, when quite different ideas prevail regarding feminine education. For the new emancipation has brought with it a false view that girls should be trained to be as independent of

their sexual functions as boys are. "I know of no large girls' school," writes Sir W. S. Playfair, a distinguished gynæcologist, "in which the absolute distinction which exists between boys and girls as regards the dominant menstrual function is systematically cared for and attended to."¹

The mistake here, and the harm that often is done, is so far reaching that it is difficult to write calmly. For what we are really doing is to teach our girls a shameful denial of their womanhood, which in the future must tend to lead to unhappiness, to many preventable evils, and to a steady weakening of morality. The immediate result is a general lowering of the standard of health of the future mothers of the race. Menstruation is a perfectly natural function, and every girl should be taught so to regard it. But the folly that pretends that special care is not required at the monthly periods cannot be too strongly condemned. Many of the unnecessary illnesses to which girls and women are subject may be traced back to this cause. As a rule, in healthy girls the first period starts quite normally, and it is not until the health has been spoiled by over-exertion of mind or body, by unwise work and want of rest and sufficiently nourishing food during the period, that it becomes painful and abnormal. Certainly in our folly we are making invalids of future mothers of the race. For the girls will follow our lead, and carried away by the ardour of their pursuit of work or pleasure they will themselves be reckless and ignorantly indifferent to the serious risks they run.

¹ "Education and Training of Girls at Puberty," *British Medical Journal*, Dec. 7, 1895.

I do not deny that in this respect the task of the teacher is frequently a very difficult one, and especially is this the case when a girl has received no wise sexual training in the home. In my own school I was met with this trouble again and again. The girls resented any mention of their menstrual function, and often expressed very real anger and disgust when I required them to tell me the dates of their monthly periods, so that I might see that they had extra food, more rest, and lighter studies. The answer that was usually given to me was, "My mother never requires me to tell her ; I never take any notice when I am at home." Often it was only after long and patient effort that I gained my way, and brought my girls to speak naturally and simply to me about this function. I had the very hardest work to free their thoughts from the deeply implanted feeling of disgust : in one or two cases I entirely failed.

Yet the duty of the parent here is surely plain. A girl is almost certain to be both shocked and humiliated when she first hears of menstruation ; unless, indeed, she has been trained to understand and to accept the monthly periods as the first and necessary preparation of her body as the sanctuary of life. But this happy understanding is still very rare. Should menstruation commence before the girl has been told about its meaning and use and been prepared, she will certainly regard the function with disgust and also with fear. It is, indeed, an alarming incident in the case of the girl who knows nothing about it. But if, before the advent of the flow, she learns to regard it aright as the sign of the changes that are taking place in her body—beautiful natural changes that one day will fit her for

love and for motherhood—her shame and fear will be converted into pride and gladness, and she will readily understand why she is under certain restrictions, and has at the times of her monthly periods to refrain from overwork and to give up some pleasures, in order that her development into womanhood may be without pain, healthy, and complete.

The girl at puberty, possibly, is less acutely and definitely conscious of her sexual nature than is the boy. This, at least, is the opinion held by the majority of those who have written on this subject; not only of doctors, but it seems also to be the view of parents and teachers. For myself, I am very uncertain whether it is true. So many lies are accepted with regard to the sex life of girls and women. I have had considerable experience with adolescent girls, and, I am sure, their thoughts, and in some cases their conversation (though possibly less frequently than is usual among boys), are occupied with love and vague sexual desires. It must be remembered that girls, much more than boys, are taught concealment, and this throwing the girl back upon her own thoughts is a very serious evil. And for this reason, it seems to me, that the dangers the girl runs from sexual ignorance, though different from those of the boy, are no less great, while the evils that may follow are even more difficult to repair. For one thing, the restricted life even still led by the majority of girls leaves them with less active occupation for their thoughts than is the case with boys; they have also far fewer opportunities for romantic adventures unconnected with sex, one of the great needs of the adolescent. A much deeper evil is the prudishness in which almost every girl is

brought up, for this almost inevitably forces her to view her natural desires and passions as something nasty, which she must conceal.

I would wish to make it very clear that these concealments have no connection with self-control, which, to be of practical use to any one, must be founded on knowledge and an understanding of the body's needs, and then built up by a wise sublimation of the sex impulses. Repression can never, I think, lead to health. And I have often felt that the brutal frankness of boys on sex matters, bad as it is, is in many ways better than the confused silence in which most girls are surrounded : at least it is in nearer touch with the facts of life.

With the same tendency to unreality and phantasy with regard to the sex life must be connected the over-developed emotions of many girls, which find an escape from repression in sentimental attachments that are rarely healthy. This is a very real evil in most communities of girls.¹ The thoughts are occupied with vague and romantic longings, much heightened by the nonsense written on love in the books and magazines written for girls, from which every hint of wholesome reality has been omitted. Thus, while always thinking of love, most girls know almost nothing of what love really is. I shall leave to a later chapter the consideration of the evils which, in later years, tend to arise from this false valuation of love ; merely saying now, as the fixed conclusion to which I have come after many years of experience and thought,

¹ The reader, especially if she is a mother of girls, who does not know this book should read *A Regiment of Women*, by Miss Clemence Dane, where an illuminating picture is given of a girls' school.

that those parents and teachers who oppose the sexual enlightenment of girls, wishing to keep up the concealments and mystery that have obscured their understanding of love and the needs of their nature, as well as their position in regard to men and their power and influence over them, are allying themselves, whether they know it or not, with the influences that, in future years, will make for wasted womanhood—unhappy marriages and imperfect motherhood.

It should perhaps here be noted that in what I have said I have been speaking of the normal girl in whom the sexual impulses take definite form during the years of adolescence. There are, as I know, some girls of delicate and sensitive temperament in whom sexual development is for long delayed. This may be due to many causes : it is frequently the result of any excessive mental strain at the outset of puberty, tending to denormalise the sex life by too much compressing and depressing of the growing brain. Now, to some parents and teachers, not fully understanding the result, it may seem that this is an end to be desired, that this postponement of the sex life to the years when the girl is older will be a safeguard against evils. This is, I believe, a mistake. When the time comes, and the long-repressed feelings find expression, the sex storm is often very great, and troubles frequently arise that could not have happened to girls who have been healthily and naturally brought up.

I would call attention here again to the common error, noticed in an earlier chapter, that the sexual impulses are absent in childhood, and only arise about the time and in connection with the maturing process of puberty. We now know that they are never absent,

though they may, and usually are, latent during the play period of childhood, which follows the infantile years. It is this fact which makes repression or any wrong treatment of the adolescent so dangerous. The transformation of puberty must thus be regarded as a co-ordination of the individual sex life—I mean a gathering up and fixing of the emotions—existing already in the girl or the boy. I have tried to show already how difficult these years are in which the boy or the girl has to find freedom for his own individual life and the expression of his own soul.

With the development of the bodily structure, and the marked changes in the sexual organs, there takes place a psychic growth, which causes a perfectly natural seeking for love ; the sexual impulse now first enters into the service of the life force—it becomes, so to say, altruistic. There is every possibility of morbid disturbance if the new order of development does not take place. And if this transformation is to succeed, there must be no forcing back of the nature upon itself—a turning away from the too great difficulties of the present to seek relief and happiness in the phantasm of the childish past, a condition of danger which must cripple the development and expression of the young life, and so may lead the sex impulses into unhealthy autoerotic manifestations.

The development of the boy is, I think, as a rule, more consistent and easier to understand ; while in the girl there are greater subtleties which open up many ways to greater evils. Perversions and abnormalities which tend to appear at puberty, may in most cases be traced back to some cause, often preventable, in the infantile sexual period, which, if now misunder-

stood and unwisely dealt with, will be fastened in the character, often beyond the hope of any after remedy.

All this will become clearer when, in Chapter VI., I come to consider "Sexual Mistakes and their Avoidance." What I wish to make plain now, is the folly of our educational system, which makes no kind of arrangement for the special care and training, in particular of girls, in these critical years of growth, but instead forces them to compete in difficult examinations, which they have to do in order to obtain entrance into the public and county schools. Some such plan as I have advocated is a reform in our educational programme that, I think, must come. Classes, in which the work is specially arranged and quite different from the ordinary school course, will be attached to every efficient school. Girls and boys, before the onset of puberty, will enter these classes, which will prepare them, when their sexual health is established, for the harder work of the higher schools. Perhaps even a better plan would be to have special adolescent schools provided, preferably in the country, where all work and play could be done out of doors, which the girls and boys will enter at the approach of puberty. The teachers for such schools will need to be specially trained; they also ought to have had a much wider experience of life than is usual to the teacher. One of the staff should have been trained as a doctor. The difficulties of the establishment of such schools, of course, are numerous. For one thing, the expense would necessarily be great, and it may be thought that this alone makes the plan impracticable. I can only answer that any expenditure which will produce

fit fathers and fit mothers for the race is an expense that will be met by a wise nation, when it learns to understand the folly of our waste of the youth of each new generation by our bungling attempts at education.

CHAPTER V

THE ADOLESCENT BOY

ON emerging from childhood the boy sets out to master the world ; he has to make in succession a series of experiments, breaking up his child's acceptance of adult opinions and rules of life into a wider and still wider range of difficultly-won personal knowledge, gained through his own discoveries. For the normal boy any stimulus, if it secures his attention at all, calls up a response that will liberate energy for some kind of effort, but for every boy the response will be different. All his actions are directed to the learning of facts, and to a better understanding of what the facts mean for him—an understanding which he attains only through great expenditure of effort and much failure in the attempt to value for himself. Everything is material for experience, but obviously what is near and often repeated stimulates the boy more than what is occasional and remote. But a mistake will be made if the boy is kept too long to one routine and without fresh material for experiment and adventure of spirit, for if such are not provided for him he will go out to seek them for himself. By such efforts he has to grow and build up his world, to combine and recombine what he is taught with

what he now finds out for himself. Thus he constructs little by little his own character in a new real world of his own finding out, and, if his innate capacities are good, the greater, as a rule, will be the separation between his own knowledge and that which has been imposed upon him by other people.

It is, then, a mistake to regard the lack of stability which marks the onset of adolescence as a quality necessarily evil and one that should be thwarted ; rather it is a natural mode of growth which will help the boy just in so far as he is wisely guided and his efforts to find himself unfettered : indeed, this changeableness must be regarded as the expression of the boy's deepest need ; the desire to test himself against the world and to come out from the protective circle of the home ; to find his place and do his work in the world of reality ; and the results in confidence and strengthening of character that in this way are achieved are needed to lead the boy from the childish dependence of childhood to the larger adult life. And for this reason the old-time methods of drill-discipline, both in the home and in the school, in lessons and in other activities, necessary and even helpful in the earlier years, now become wholly unsuitable ; for not only does such a course in youth engender boredom and dislike, directly inciting to rebellion, but the damming up of the dynamic young energy, which inevitably will result, either in the boy's finding expression in fresh and often unsuitable ways, or in an introversion or stoppage of his character which must prevent and hinder his adult development. •

The exercise of great patience is called for ; for the parents and to a less extent also for the teacher, it is a

time of waiting and watching. The hour will surely come when the boy, temporarily at least, is disillusioned with experience and feels he has gone far enough by himself; for as yet he cannot discover any further point to which his experience will lead him. He is now more ready to accept control, and will listen and react to the teaching of his elders, and he does this not so much as a matter of duty as a matter of convenience to himself.

And when it comes to the question of sexual education, which at no period is at once so important and so difficult as now in these formative years, this is a consideration of the very greatest importance. For such period of boyish self-distrust and weariness affords the great opportunities of the educators. Their task is to note (I do not mean in fault-finding or, still less, in forcing advice and authority, but rather in loving tolerance) the boy's process of growth; to interpret, that is, the relation of the boy's unconsidered acts to his whole development. The parent—the mother or the father—the patient watcher, who follows this wise waiting course will always, I believe, find opportunities, when the boy comes for help, that afford, in my opinion, the only right and fruitful time for personal sexual instruction and help.

Again I must give some warning. I am not talking here of set instruction, necessary as that is, but rather of the intimate talk and confidence with our sons, which we mothers desire so deeply and often find so difficult to gain. And I would here remind all parents who become discouraged, that your boy will ask you questions very far removed from the particular problem that is troubling his consciousness at the time. Your

task is to interpret quickly and with wisdom, and so by your simple frankness and sympathy to liberate the trouble. Let me give you, as an illustration to show more plainly what I mean, a little incident that was told me by a very wise mother of her way of dealing with her son, who was, I think, about fourteen or fifteen years old. This son was set thinking and evidently was worried about the very small families of one or at most two children, or the childless marriages, common among many of his mother's friends. He did not, however, speak of this trouble directly; instead he beat around the question, somewhat in the manner of a shying horse. After this had gone on for some little time, he one day asked his mother if her friends were more delicate (meaning, of course, more refined) than other people. His mother was aware of what was troubling him; she understood that what he really wanted to know was whether married people had sexual intercourse except as a means of having children. She wisely told him the plain facts, and the trouble for him was set at rest.

It has seemed worth while to record this simple incident, as a means of illustrating the kind of help a wise, and watchful, and instructed parent is able to give to the probing minds of the young in these perplexing years. In my opinion, this form of teaching is of far deeper service to the adolescent than any formal instruction, and indeed is, I think, the only sure kind of direct help that the parent can safely offer. Its immense advantage is that it gives the boy or the girl the help that *they want at that time*, by satisfying with knowledge the precise problem they are then occupied with, instead of giving them arbitrarily

imposed information in the form of facts and warnings which, probably at the time they are imparted, have no personal significance—in a word, are not wanted, and, therefore, have very little meaning. And there is, of course, a further advantage for the son or the daughter who finds the satisfactory and needed answer given by the father or mother *at the right time*: he or she will unconsciously be inclined to return again with fresh problems to the same satisfactory source as these may arise. Yet, I do not think that this immense gain can be counted upon by any parent. For one thing, sympathy is so delicate, even between the most loved mother and the most trusted son, that a very little occurrence may shatter it for a time. The young are very sensitive, and rush to cover as readily as the rabbit scurries to his burrow. But there is also a deeper reason to which I have referred many times in that strongly imperative urging, which forces the adolescent to break away from the protective parental help. Each mother, and also father, needs to know this and to accept this greatest sacrifice of parenthood, so that they may not hinder their child's growth by the very protection they long so passionately to give.

Now, it is just this fact of the child's need to free himself from his parents and the protective childish environment of the home that marks the importance of the school and of the teacher. The more personal help given by the parent in the home needs to be supplemented by wise sexual training in the schools. I have already written about this in Chapter III., where I gave what practical suggestions I was able with regard to what seem to me the most hopeful methods

of school teaching. I would, however, emphasise further that everything depends on the instruction being given directly, simply, and truthfully, and with an absolute avoidance of hypocritical warnings ; and by the right kind of wise and properly instructed teachers.

The teacher of sexual hygiene needs to be endowed with very exceptional qualities. And in this connection I would wish to quote the wise statement of Havelock Ellis : ¹

To fulfil his functions adequately the master in the art of sexual hygiene must answer to three requirements :

- (1) *he must have a sufficing knowledge of the facts of sexual psychology, sexual physiology, and sexual pathology, knowledge which in many important respects hardly existed at all until recently, and is only now beginning to be generally accessible ;*
- (2) *he must have a wise and broad moral outlook, with a sane idealism which refrains from demanding impossibilities, and resolutely thrusts aside not only the vulgar platitudes of worldiness, but the equally mischievous platitudes of an outworn and insincere ascetism, for the wise sexual hygienist knows, with Pascal, that " he who tries to be an angel, becomes a beast," and is less anxious to make his pupils ineffective angels than effective men and women, content to say with Browning, " I may put forth angel's pinions, once unmanned, but not before " ;*
- (3) *in addition to sound knowledge and a wise outlook, the sexual hygienist must possess, finally, a*

¹ *The Task of Social Hygiene*, pp. 250-251.

genuine sympathy with the young, an insight into their sensitive shyness, a comprehension of their personal difficulties, and the skill to speak to them simply, frankly, and humanly.

If we ask ourselves how many of the apostles of sexual hygiene combine these three essential qualities, we shall probably not be able to name many, while we may suspect that some do not even possess one of the three qualifications. If we further consider that the work of sexual hygiene, to be carried out on a really national scale, demands the more or less active co-operation of parents, teachers, and doctors, and that parents, teachers, and doctors are in these matters all alike untrained, and usually prejudiced, we shall realise some of the dangers through which sexual hygiene must at first pass.

I am brought back once more to the difficulties of the right method of sexual instruction. There lies before the teacher of sexual hygiene many years of hard pioneering work. At our present schools, where the relation of teacher and pupil is very rarely intimate and personal, and the boy figures more as a unit in a group than as an individual, the imparting of knowledge in set lessons is the only possible plan; at any rate, in the less expensive schools. But here again much may be done in the direction of imparting sex knowledge in a natural sequence rather than in the arresting and stimulating form of specialised instruction. I have indicated already my grave fears of this method of instruction, which treats sex as something apart from the rest of life. Those who undertake this pioneer work of introducing sex teaching in our schools must slowly discountenance the prevalent idea that if the facts of sex are to be communicated to the young at

all, these facts must be presented in special lectures that consist of warnings and ethical exhortations ; nor do I much believe in getting over the difficulty by means of pamphlets given to the boy or girl to read alone. On the contrary, all children should, at any rate at first, be taught about their sex organs and their use in the natural sequence as a section of human physiology. Bowdlerised physiology merely irritates the intelligent boy, to whom it is obvious that an important and interesting section of his body has been omitted. As soon as possible he proceeds to supplement his knowledge from undesirable sources.

It is well to remember that few boys remain ignorant of the physical facts of sex. This may be possible in the case of girls (though I have shown how great is the danger arising from this ignorance) ; it is not possible for the boy who goes to school : the matter for the parent to decide is not whether his boy shall know, but rather it is what form his knowledge shall take. Left to himself the boy will find out, and this often in the worst possible way.

Before I go further there is a remark I wish to make. The separation of these two chapters into the " Adolescent Girl " and the " Adolescent Boy," though it seemed necessary to my purpose, has placed me in considerable difficulty, that may lead to repetition and even to some misconception. It will, however, be evident that much of what is said in both chapters applies equally to the adolescent girl and the adolescent boy. I have, I hope, made it clear that, in my opinion, there is a very real difference between the boy and girl, and that what is good for one cannot, in all cases, be good for the other. That the girl requires a different

and special care if her sexual functional activities are to be healthily developed, must be allowed by all who are unprejudiced. The ailments and breakdowns that I spoke of in the former chapter, which are so frequent among girls at this period of stress, are comparatively rare among boys. There may, and as I believe are, reasons to account for this quite apart from the physical sex differences ; but this does not alter the position ; and to disregard the menstrual function of girls is, I am certain, to open the way to disastrous results both to bodily and mental health. And, if I have emphasised this question, it is because I am very conscious of real danger in our modern thought and action in this connection.

But this does not mean that the development of girls is not in many ways similar to that of boys. Even in the matter of conscious sexual desires, the girl is not, I think, much different from the boy ; it is only that the expression of such desires is more hidden, and, I think, also they are more complex ; but this, if I am right at all, does not tend to decrease their force, though it may direct them more readily into other channels. The girl is also less likely than the boy to have her sexual nature aroused too soon and in the wrong way ; nor does she, as a rule, run the same danger of having her thoughts of sex contaminated by vulgar communications.

This brings me to another question of very real importance, of which I now must speak. We are, for the most part, so occupied in safeguarding our girls from sexual hurt, that we forget the much greater dangers surrounding boys in this direction. What I mean is this : it is very rarely that young girls are

placed in any position of necessary intimacy with an adult male, except their fathers or their brothers. The very reverse is the case with boys. They are tended by women servants ; at school their clothes are looked after by women ; in sickness they are nursed by women ; they are brought in innumerable cases into much more personal and intimate relations with women than girls ever need be with men. It is folly to close our eyes to the evils that too often arise. I would trust growing boys with no servant, and with very few women. This may seem a hard saying : it is founded on a wide knowledge of what has happened, and still is happening, to uncounted boys. The part played by servants in the sexual initiation of boys is much larger than usually is credited. Nor is it servants alone that have to be feared in this connection. Many boys of tender years have been seduced by women who often would be least suspected of the committal of such an act. I could give cases from my own knowledge ; and men, at least, will know that I speak the truth. The facts are ugly, but they may not be overlooked. There are girls and young women whose adolescent impulses, often introverted by an unwise upbringing, causing a want of nervous balance, who have for so long been repressed, that, as adult women, their sex impulses are aroused even by the immature male. It is not even wise to blame them for an unnatural state of tension that arises too often from the unhealthy suppression of healthy instincts, but these are the cause of dangers to boys and young men which may not be disregarded.

But to return to the training of the adolescent boy. If we try briefly to summarise what we have learnt,

there is much to give encouragement. By some teachers the whole period of adolescence is regarded as one prolonged and anxious crisis, marked by instability and danger. I have spoken about this before, at the beginning of this chapter, where we saw that there is some truth in this view, especially as regards the boy's earlier years at the start of puberty. With the definite eruption of physical sexual manifestation and desire, a new turbulent disturbing influence appears. Against the force of this storm, while it is active sometimes, any form of training and enlightenment, however wisely directed, may be powerless. Thus, these years were described by Arnold of Rugby as "the dangerous period," through which the lad must be "hastened." While, however, it is necessary for the teacher to understand all the difficulties and the possibility of failure of his wisest efforts at a given period, there is grave danger if he does not look beyond that time. The response for which he must wait may for long be delayed, but the time will come when the boy will be ready, even if the teacher does not know that it has come. We have seen how puberty marks in the boy (as, of course, also in the girl) in these most wonderful years of life the efflorescence not only of a physical, but of a psychological, birth. The stress of the sex instincts is only one manifestation of the new life. As one who has entered into a new country with a new life and new friends, the adolescent as he or she passes over the first struggles of puberty will enter into a different and much wider phase of understanding, with a fresh relation between himself and his surroundings. All adolescents at first wait, open to suggestion from every quarter; inexperienced in the new position and eager

for experience, they answer readily to every call. Thus the stir of friendships, also of morality and of religious endeavour, and particularly the social impulses of fellowship and helpfulness, as also the intellectual life and the beauty of art, appeal to them on every side, just so far as their capacities and their opportunities permit. Wherever suggestion is sufficiently strong there will arise a response. All who have known youth at this wonderful period of growth must have been surprised at sudden awakenings, fresh developments of character, and of hitherto concealed capacities for work, for service to others, and for play. After a long period of dullness and indifference the boy or the girl will take a rapid step forward, rejoicing in the freedom of the new-found powers.

As I have tried to show, this forms the teachers' (as well as, of course, the parents') great opportunity; their task, as I have insisted again and again, is to wait, to watch, and to direct towards the gaining of this desired result. The right environment must be provided for the young growing life. Is this done? Do we in our schools to-day sufficiently recognise and assist the development of this "psychic puberty"? The answer that must be given is a sorrowful one. No, we do not do this! And one reason why the urge of sex is so insistent is often largely because other stimulus is wanting; overpressure is brought by wrong surroundings and unwholesome influences and the suggestion of evil companions—all of which direct the force of life into the one channel. In our carelessness and indifference, or through fear, we have in the past turned away and left youth to

struggle alone. We have failed, as Havelock Ellis has so rightly and beautifully stated, "in guiding this youthful psychic puberty," and "indirectly aiding the young soul to escape from sexual dangers by harnessing his chariot to a star that may help to save it from sticking fast in any miry ruts of the flesh." ¹

This brings me to one fact I have struggled throughout to make plain. For, by emphasising this psychic puberty, it must not be thought that I am urging an over-insistent moral or even intellectual pressure. At no period of life is the boy—and also, though possibly to a less extent, the girl—less patient under restraint, or more roused to indifference or to anger by the retailing of moral platitudes. To use these as part of sexual instruction is, I am certain, a great mistake. There is also danger in any forcing of the psychic growth, a danger that is not less than a forcing of the physical growth. But the opportune suggestion from the teacher of feats of endurance, of practical discipline of character, provided always that these are suited to the individual boy or the girl, and are gladly undertaken and without any compulsion, will tend to train the character, "testing the muscles of the soul as much as of the body." ²

There is one further matter to consider. This question of the training of adolescents has become one of even greater importance now that the school age is to be extended. Continuation schools will need to work out a serious and considered scheme adequate to the growing needs of the older boys and girls.

¹ *Psychology of Sex*, vol. vi. p. 86.

² *Ibid.* p. 87.

Problems of conduct are in many directions more difficult, real, and critical than ever they have been before. Private questions of what may be done and what may not be done, of moral behaviour, are pressing upon the young from all sides. And these problems are all concerned more or less directly with the increasing importance of the sexual life. We need to do more in our educational efforts to associate for the young the developing sex life with a truer appreciation of the joy and beauty of life in all its manifold forms ; delight in nature, in literature, in the drama, in art, in music, sculpture, architecture, and also in worship. The young want religion. It will not be sufficient for the adolescent to learn in school what makes for sexual health ; he must learn also how to use his life, and be made to feel the benefit which he will himself gain from sexual health. The problem of his education in life must be approached, not from the side of the catechism and the " thou shalt nots " of the over-moral teacher, but from the side of what the boy or the girl wants for himself or for herself.

And what I am insisting on all the time is this : boys and girls, on one side of their nature and at a certain stage of growth, want mysteries and violent things. At puberty and in the first years of adolescence, when they are learning the way of their feet in the world of the adult, they are very readily turned to experiment in all that belongs, or to them seems to belong, to adult experience. And to me it seems that we touch here one of the most urgent appeals of sex. Sexual experience to many boys and girls is licence to be grown up : it is adventure. Perhaps it is the boys and girls with strongest characters who, if left un-

guided and without help, will turn from the commonplace daily tasks of home and school to find relief in the mysteries that are concealed and forbidden. Often it is not, I think, so much the actual desires of sex, as adventure that stings. And there are also other forces (all good until misused), such, for instance, as the genial predispositions and social sex impulses so strong in these years—impulses towards friendships and service that arise as fair flowers, but often are neglected until they riot as weeds, destroyed by our wrong educational system. The desire for companionship is strong in most boys and girls, for the transformation of puberty is marked by a new altruistic motive connected with the physical sexual changes. Under the conditions of our schools there is not enough opportunity for the expression of this need.

The social impulse is perhaps the surest ground on which the teacher is able to work. Gregariousness, or what is sometimes called "the gang spirit," is a common characteristic of adolescence.¹ Boys, and to almost as great a degree girls, band themselves into societies or gangs. The gang has its elected leader, its rules, its passwords, special language, and rules and ceremonies. These secret companies are known in every school; often they give trouble, leading to the breaking of the school rules, and for this reason they are discouraged. Rightly directed, however, they may be of immense service. Let the teacher of sexual hygiene be sufficiently friendly with his, or her, pupils to be privileged to be consulted and possibly even to become a member of such a society. He will learn

¹ *Youth and Sex*, by Scharlieb and Sibley, p. 15.

much, he will also be more fit to teach, for he will know something of the spirit of youth, with its endeavour and its failures, its swift emotional changes—its fluctuations from the very high to the very low.

CHAPTER VI

SEXUAL MISTAKES AND THEIR AVOIDANCE

IN this chapter I come to the real and great problem that must be faced if sexual education is to go at all below the surface, and, indeed, is to have any meaning at all. As long as the facts of sex to be communicated to the adolescent boy or girl are strictly physiological, limited to a statement of general facts and health rules, no special or great difficulty should arise that cannot be dealt with by the trained, intelligent, and sympathetic teacher. It is when we come to the dominion of quasi-pathological facts like masturbation that the trouble begins. Is this subject to be spoken of to adolescents at all, or is it to be passed over in silence; and, if spoken of, should it be referred to openly in the class as part of the general sexual instruction, or privately with the individual boy; and in what manner shall it be treated, primarily as a health question or is it to be regarded as a grave sin to be met with moral exhortations and blame?—these are but a few questions with which the teacher is faced. In no instance is accurate knowledge, guided by common sense, of such vital importance as in the handling of this subject.

Proper enlightenment here is an urgent necessity

for youth. At puberty the rapid development of the sexual nature leads to unaccustomed and often acute desires, which become more intense because they have, as a rule, to be concealed as too private, even too shameful, to speak about to any one. In boys, especially if of sensitive temperament, the suffering thus caused may be keen and prolonged.¹ As they grow older the trouble often grows stronger, and frequently help and information are sought from the worst possible sources. Much irreparable harm has been done by those whose concern it is to trade on the fears they so skilfully arouse. It is a terrible fact that numberless youths are in the hands of quacks, who dupe them into the belief that having once begun this habit they are on the road to physical and mental ruin. This is not a light matter; and the evil can be cured only by breaking through the hateful conspiracy of silence between youth and those from whom guidance should be sought.

But again a warning is necessary here. The uncomprehending Puritan attitude towards sex, added to the ignorance and unwisdom of the great majority of teachers and parents, may, and often does, cause evils that are hardly less injurious to the sensitive heart of youth than the trouble itself. It is a thousand pities that inaccurate, though often well-meaning, writings on sex and the special difficulties of the adolescents, and in particular the evil results of auto-excitation, are published broadcast, while the dispassionate inquiries of scientific investigators, founded on long and careful research, are quite inaccessible save to the very few

¹ See, in this connection, H. Ellis, *Psychology of Sex*, vol. vi. p. 60; also I. Bloch, *Sexual History of our Times*, ch. xvi.

who must be at no small pains and expense to acquire them. Even the books written by the heads of schools and others with the intention of instruction in sexual hygiene cannot be said to be free from the common errors of unproved statements, even if not absolute untruths. For instance, most of the sex manuals for boys, written as a rule by schoolmasters, touch on these unnatural practices more or less fully; but as a rule they over-emphasise, or it would be more true to say *wrongly* emphasise, the dangers, with an unscientific disregard for truth, so that not only are the warnings they give rendered useless, but not infrequently they tend to lead to worse evils than those they attempt to prevent.

Thus, at the outset, we find two extremes must be avoided by the instructor of youth in this difficult problem. The teacher must first of all divest himself of the pernicious idea that it is his duty, in the interests of morality, to exaggerate and paint as black as possible the consequences of masturbation. The objections to such a course are manifest if we think straight, and clean our thoughts of outworn moral platitudes. For, first of all, such teaching is untruthful, and the intelligent boy sooner or later discovers from personal experience and the confidences of other boys that *it is untruthful*. Thus inevitably any teaching that has been given or is given in the future is rendered futile. And the harm does not end there, for having suspected and proved the falsity of these horrific statements, the boy in whom the sexual *nisus* is strong will almost certainly revert to his usual method of obtaining relief. Such teaching is, indeed, worse than futile, for having discovered the unreliability of what his seniors tell

him, the boy may even revert to excess, much greater than his possible previous moderation. There is an even worse evil that may result. In many cases such teaching is positively baneful. The sensitive highly-strung boy of imaginative faculties may be plunged into a Hades of perpetual dread and conflict, the terrors of which can be but faintly comprehended by those of less sensitive nature. And the point to be marked here is that we thus waste by our untruthful folly some of the finest and really the most pure characters.

I, as a result both of my knowledge of the young and of life, as well as from what I have been told by doctors and others who are my friends, unhesitatingly express the opinion that the "bogy policy" of hinting at insanity, disease, and death as the inevitable fruits of boyish self-abuse inflicts, in four cases out of six, on the sensitive adolescent tenfold more harm than his occasional shamefaced resort to unnatural practices as a means of relief from a nervous tension, which indicates almost always some specific nervous trouble that can be helped only by wise treatment, or a want of understanding and lack of general control that cannot be cured by vague admonitions and threats of future punishments.

At the opposite extreme of this "bogy policy" of fear is the old policy of *laissez-faire*. This shirking, on the part of the educators of youth, of a very serious problem must be equally condemned. The widespread prevalence of a too early sexual stimulation among growing boys is to a great extent the corollary of our hypocritical or cynical attitudes as adults to the difficulties of adolescence, and is largely due to our supine disregard of our duties to the young in this question

of sexual enlightenment. Those, however, who cry "All is well," and, depending on this sense of false security, leave the young to "muddle through" as we have done, ought to consider much that is taking place on every side to-day. We have to remember that many of the old boundaries that fenced our lives in safety have been broken down. We have to remember, too, that the relation in which we stand to our children differs exceedingly from the relation in which we stood towards our parents. We are much more certainly our children's friends, and this bears with it an immense responsibility. We also have far more certain knowledge. We know, or we ought to know, that the adult life of our children is being decided by us in their nurseries, their homes, and their schools. It is we who will be guilty of the consequences if we continue to shirk dealing truthfully with the sexual troubles of adolescence. Let us ask ourselves the question as to what is the reason of our attitude of neglect.

The fact is, the parents and the schoolmasters shirk the difficulties of this difficult task. The thought, though unexpressed, in our minds would seem to be, "We ourselves have muddled through; we had to weather alone the storms of these unquiet years, and we find in ourselves no very ill effects"; so we shrug our shoulders, and placate our consciences with the whisper, "What we have done the youngsters can do; it is a temporary phase of adolescence, which boys grow out of."

But is this true? Do we ever really "grow out of" any habit? Is not the present, as also the future, always a growth from the past? Have we, indeed, come through unscathed? And there is another

question I would ask, the answer to which will possibly give us the other answer we are seeking. Why is this duty of speaking the truth about this thing so difficult to most of us? Surely it is the mark of our own failures: the sign of the shameful silence with which we in our youth were surrounded.

We forget now, in our complacency or our fear, the dark places that imprisoned our young, growing souls, haunts of gloom, or shame, and of despair, that were never lit by a ray of enlightenment from our sadder, and wiser, but so forgetful seniors. We forget the grievous wounds to our self-respect, the introversions and repressions that have hindered our lives: those many disharmonies of the individual sex life, whose power for harm does not stay with the individual, but spreads out in many directions and ways, that are not even recognised, in unhealth and rottenness to the race; and are beginning to engage the attention of modern psychologists—those evils that could, and ought to be, prevented. Yes, we forget the morbid reactions of self-loathing that survive to-day in our adult unconsciousness to war with that unity of our psychical and physical instincts that is happiness and health. Looking back through the years can we say still that with us “All has been well”? I think not.

We forget that the present ever grows out of the past, and that nothing that has happened can by any escape leave us unmarked; that, when forgotten by our consciousness, the hurt that the psychic has suffered is always more active for harm in our unconsciousness. In our blindness we refuse to heed. But the oscillation of the young soul between furtive, trembling concessions to an impelling force, not at all under-

stood, and the swift-following reaction, will almost inevitably warp the nature, leading to disharmonies that may work unceasing evils that can be tracked into a thousand bypaths of the after-life.

It is, of course, a question on which it is very difficult to make any certain pronouncements. No one, indeed, who was not quite ignorant would attempt anything so foolish. In the course of this chapter I try to show what, in my opinion, are the most destructive evils in adult life tending to follow from autoerotic indulgence in youth. At the same time it is most necessary to avoid dogmatism and to escape the fabrication of moral lies. We have to remember that this is no new problem, we have not even any proof that it has increased in our own times. Even among animals autoerotism is a widely diffused phenomenon; we meet with its manifestations just as much among the lowest races of mankind as we do among civilised peoples.¹ We know, too, that it occurs frequently in the earliest childhood, and may make its appearance at the time of suckling, when it is, of course, rather an expression of general comfort, and it is absurd to connect the habit with any idea of sinfulness.² In the school period the bad habit frequently is diffused like an epidemic disease. It is chiefly the becoming a slave to it, and especially an unwilling slave, so that the erotic idea against the desire of the soul dominates the will, that causes the evils which must, if the struggles be long continued, bring about a deterioration of the personality.

The spiritual influence of all kinds of autoerotic

¹ Bloch, *Sexual Life of our Times*, p. 411.

² See Freud, *Three Papers on the Sexual Theory*; also Fürbringer.

indulgences is, I am certain, much more harmful than any direct physical result. And in this connection I am glad to find my own view supported by so great an authority as Iwan Bloch. He writes as follows :¹

“ The ‘ solitary ’ vice influences the psyche and character in the mere child. The youthful masturbator seeks solitude, becomes shy of human beings, reserved, morose, unhappy, hypochondriacal. In the adult the sense of the debasing character and the sinfulness of masturbation is much more lively ; self-confidence departs ; the masturbator regards himself as absolutely ‘ enslaved ’ by his vice, the eternal struggle against the ever-recurring impulse gives rise more to mental depression than the actual physical harm. From this there results a whole series of diseases of the will, for, by masturbation, much less harm is done to the intellect than to the vital energy, the capacity for spiritual and physical activity. The cold, blasé manner of many young men, who seem never to have known the natural youthful joy of life, the whole ‘ demi-virginity ’ of modern young girls—all these are without doubt dependent upon masturbation and upon psychical onanism. The egoism of the onanist in the sexual relationship increases his egoism in other respects, gives rise to cold-heartedness, and blunts the more delicate ethical perceptions. The campaign against masturbation as a group manifestation is *eminently a social campaign for altruism ; it insists that young people should take their share in all questions relating to the common good.*” (The italics are mine.)

I would quote a further passage which is in the same

¹ *The Sexual Life of our Times*, p. 423.

chapter, p. 425 : " A very serious result of onanism is the disinclination to normal sexual intercourse to which the habit gives rise, and the production of sexual perversions. The former is more marked in the female sex, the latter more in the male. Masturbation is the principal cause of sexual frigidity in women and of disinclination to normal intercourse. Undoubtedly psychical influences here play the principal part."

I am not able now to follow out the many suggestions that open up here and are connected with the problems that to-day are warring with our private and social happiness. I am, however, of the opinion that four-fifths of the misery that follows in the train of sex fulfilment in the adult life of the individual, as well as many of the disorders in our racial life, are due to an early mental and moral disharmony caused by masturbation and other autoerotic indulgences. According to our temperaments, they make of us ascetic puritans, or careless voluptuaries—cynics and hypocrites. And we are all of us, except the very few who happily have been saved, to some extent harmed and soiled for ever. Deep and ineffaceable in us are the records of that unassisted early grapple with a great organic impulse, which no one taught us to understand.

The tremendous sex force that often awakens in the normal adolescent a force that with wise control and comprehension might be directed and tended till the season when it flowers into love, is too often, through our neglect, blighted and shorn of its pure splendours. Then, indeed, its whispered intimations of wondrous delights to come will fall upon deaf ears. Led by example, and wrong training and surroundings,

to regard sex as a malignant enemy that will destroy, instead of as the most sacred and wonderful agency in life, the adolescent either enters into a hopeless struggle to eliminate the most basic part of human nature, or falls before its force in secret surrender.

Here, then, is one reason why most of us, embittered at the threshold of our lives by the degradation of this struggle, *whether it be won or lost*, grow up to view with such shameful distrust what we avowedly call "the physical side of love." We, and in particular women, accept it resignedly as an unavoidable base weed in the grain of Love. We forget that the baseness is in us, and not in Love. Love has no physical side, or mental side, or spiritual side. It is a unity of all these upon which we lay sacrilegious hands when we set up these barriers, in our foolishness making artificial and impossible separations. We do this because of the seeds of disharmonies that, in the Spring of our lives, have been sown into our thoughts, and must bear weeds in the reaping of our after years.

I am strongly of the opinion that the tendency to regard Love as a divided passion—one expression of which is physical and rather evil, and the other part spiritual and good—is almost diagnostic in an individual of a disharmony, arising from an ancient reaction against sex caused by self-gratification, repented of and struggled against. The tendency of masturbation, as, indeed, with all other forms of autoerotism (in which I include the bought embrace), is to hypostatise, and accentuate, and above all to localise the voluptuous element of the sex impulse; and by so doing it causes, or perhaps, I ought to say, may cause, an introversion which sends the individual back towards

the childish sexuality, and thus debases sex into a purely egotistical indulgence, similar to the pleasant stimulation of senses, which, as we saw in an earlier chapter, belongs to the sexual life of childhood.

It may seem to some that I have drifted away from the practical problem with which this chapter deals. But the moral to which these observations point is clear. Much more careful and truthful inquiry needs to be made into this whole difficult question. This is not the place, nor have I the requisite knowledge, to give any certain pronouncement. I do, however, suggest that, in the way I shall now try to show, the dangerous after-results that may follow from this early misuse of the sex impulse, causing, as it must, in lesser or greater degree a deflection of the life force from its racial ends to purely personal ends of pleasure sensation, will need, as soon as we come to face these problems truthfully, to be reckoned with as perhaps the strongest, as it is the starting factor, in national degeneration.

Our whole attitude towards these sexual difficulties and lapses of youth needs to be changed. In all teaching that is given the emphasis should be placed on responsibility, and the racial rather than the personal aspect of Love. And before we can do this we must, I think, rid our minds of many of the old "bogy theories" of individual sin and direct punishment, for however plausible this method may seem to some, practically it is useless to prevent the evil.

We must tell the truth to the young. We need have no fear. There is, indeed, no cause to invent improbable and irrelevant horrors of disease and insanity to alarm and injure a boy at the threshold of

his sexual life. Masturbation (as also all other sins against Love) is punished by its logical fruits ; these can be explained to any intelligent boy.

These fruits are twofold.

The premature exercise of the sexual organs tends to have deleterious and debilitating effects, varying, of course, with the frequency of the act, and also with the constitution of the boy. Further evil arises in the nervous system, not completely grown and stable, from the nerve storms which accompany the artificially produced orgasm ; this again varying with the frequency of the act and the constitution of the boy from almost nil to a degree of extreme nervous exhaustion in the neurotic.

These physical effects, however (save in the case of delicate boys with a bad nervous history), are relatively unimportant compared with the mental and moral effects.

The mental results of habitual practice in private unnatural gratification, like also its physical results, vary with the mental constitution of the boy. Its effect on the mind of a robust, well-balanced boy will be trifling compared with its effects on the mind of a sensitive-conscienced, imaginative boy ; but the difference will be entirely one of degree. Both will, in my opinion, suffer the same peculiar mental modification to a varying extent ; and this mental modification will be in the direction of a heightened and childish egoism, which may in extreme cases reach a condition best described as "inflammation of the ego."

Such heightened and unhealthy self-consciousness (I use this word in its bad, and not in its good, meaning)

evidences itself in many ways familiar to those who have had the charge of boys: of these the most significant symptom, from the point of view of treatment, is that the boy prefers his own company, and eschews games and co-operative amusements. He turns in everything to find his satisfaction within himself, instead of reaching out, as he ought to do, to gain that satisfaction in action and fellowship with his companions. I shall refer to this later.

Let us consider, now, in further detail, what seems to me the wisest way in which the teacher and the parent, who should act together, can treat this problem. To begin with, what should be told to the boy? I assume, of course, that the boy has no pronounced psycho-neurotic defect, and is normal and healthy; if this is not so, the case is one for the doctor, but it must be seen that he is a man capable of dealing with such a boy.

It is impossible to draw up a verbal formula to meet all cases or to dogmatise as to the exact form of teaching to be used. The boy's temperament ought in every case to be studied and taken into consideration, with a special watching of any nervous symptoms. Always knowledge should be gained of the home surroundings and the attitude of the boy to his mother, his father, and his brothers and sisters. This absolute necessity for different treatment and teaching for each individual boy is one of the reasons why personally I do not approve of sexual instruction being given in this matter by means of the written pamphlet, however good these may be. The manual that would be of assistance to one boy might easily be useless or even do great harm to another boy. While

the mere fact that the subject is approached in this indirect way must, in my opinion, suggest to the boy concealment and hesitation in the thought of the teacher, whether this be the schoolmaster or the parent, with the almost inevitable result of a corresponding concealment arising in the boy's own mind, which will close the door to his sympathies. Always boys have their own special difficulties, arising out of the special and different circumstances of their lives, and often intensified and complicated by their own special ignorance; often such difficulties and ignorance that can be helped even if not solved by words of sympathy and understanding. If the manual is to be used at all the teacher and the boy should read it together. This mutual confidence, if it can be attained, is, I believe, the only way to get free from that sense of shamefulness which, as I hope I have made clear, is the most dangerous sunken rock that, if not avoided, will certainly wreck all sexual teaching.

The task of the teacher, provided always that he has the necessary knowledge of the subject and an understanding of the boy, ought not to be too hopelessly difficult. So long as he is certain that the boy has no more than the average sexual impulse, and that he practises self-abuse because he has learned a "bad habit," and is not in need of special medical care and assistance, some such appeal as the following might be tried:

Point out sympathetically and kindly that by persisting in the habit he has acquired, he is interfering with his development into a strong and happy man. It is quite unnecessary to cast reproaches on the

boy, or to teach him to regard himself as a scoundrel, or a lost sinner. But let him understand quite plainly that his sexual organs were not intended for use until much later in life, and that to excite and use them at his age is equivalent, for instance, to making a baby walk before its legs are hard enough to bear its weight. And make him realise, in some such way as this, that when he arrives at manhood he will bitterly regret having wasted himself when he was a boy. Show him that he is responsible to his own children as his father has been responsible to him : that he is a member of Life and responsible to Life. Show him this, if you can, and he is ready and capable of responding to such teaching. But do not preach, and never threaten. Point out further, that even in the present if he refrains from this habit he will be better able to excel in games, have more energy, and be a manlier and finer boy.

These last are considerations so practical and obvious that they will appeal to a boy when a moral tirade often will provoke only a sullen attitude. The teacher, to be effective, must, [I am sure, avoid any use of moral stilts. These will not make a lasting appeal to the average boy. It should further be realised that the emotions aroused by repentance and sudden resolves of future virtue are very likely to lead to further lapses : this is a fact usually forgotten by those who are training the young. And this is one very strong reason why I would recommend so certainly a common-sense and very practical treatment of this question.

There are many physical rules and precautions that must not be neglected. The aid of the school doctor

should be sought to look for and exclude sources of local irritation. The boy should be guided in the sensible ordering of his daily routine ; for example, attention to the bladder immediately on waking, and precaution against constipation. The avoidance of heat and the cultivation of cold is of special importance. Heavy bedclothes, hot baths at night, or a close atmosphere all tend to excite the sexual system. Cold baths act in the opposite direction, and should be encouraged. The careful washing of the sexual organs should never be neglected. Most boys have very faulty habits in these essential matters that concern the hygiene of the body. It is the early training that, as a rule, is responsible : many mothers are ignorant or careless about these important things.

The question often arises in the training of large numbers of boys as to the advisability of making a public statement on the subject of masturbation. Masters seem to be divided in their opinions. Those who deprecate this open facing of the evil urge that such a course might induce boys who had not heard of the practice to try it through curiosity. But here we may well ask—Is ignorance a safeguard to be trusted ? In the course of school life boys will be almost certain some time to come across this practice ; they may hear it advocated, or condemned, but they will hear of it ; and too often it will be treated as a matter of jest. The question is, of course, a difficult one, so that I hesitate in urging a decided opinion. To me, however, it is plain that full openness is the right way to avoid secret shamefulness. Besides, in my opinion, when such a subject has been publicly ventilated, a healthy public opinion will tend to grow up, which is helpful,

often in ways undreamed of by the teacher, to discourage the practice. Desire is always, I think, directed by thought, and any practical and public dealing with this evil among a group of boys will help, I am almost certain, to discourage the individual boy from private indulgence in erotic imaginations and voluptuous reveries. These are, as a rule, the prelude to the evil. Most boys (as indeed every one) will continue to do what by their thoughts they have trained themselves to want to do.

I have spoken in the last chapter of the great need for adolescents of healthful occupation. This work is a consideration of immense importance in connection with the problem we are considering ; but this filling of the empty places of the mind must be done wisely, and ought to be combined with rest and happiness and entire absence of strain. A serious detriment of most school life is the lack of privacy and leisure, and the opportunity of following out private hobbies and personally liked studies. I know, of course, that danger lies here, and that privacy and leisure are not good for all boys ; nor are they good for any boy, unless he is provided with a pursuit. It is true that boys will seek privacy that they may be vicious, thus it is sometimes feared that opportunities for privacy may lead to vice. But that this should be so is really nearly always the fault of the adults who have the care and daily training of the boys. Sexual vice, as I have repeatedly stated, in normal boys is due in part to the great need in adolescence for mental or physical excitement. Vice is often a crude substitute for romance. It is often, at its start, due to nothing else at all than this—the boy is bored. And remembering this, and also

the fact that a boy, as a rule, thinks of one thing only at a time, the great aim of the wise parent or teacher will be to give to each boy in his charge some interest that will give full opportunity for the effort that will give romance, and then direct and encourage his pursuit of it ; he will follow this, if the right appeal is made, something in the same way as the hound follows the scent of the fox, with every nerve intent and quivering. But this is a problem of the parents' and the teacher's duty to the adolescent boy that is rarely faced, and has certainly not been solved.

Abundant outlet for motor energies must be provided, and the character of these outlets will need to be varied according to the disposition and inclination of the individual boy. Physical exercise is usually recommended, such as athletic games, especially those in which emulation plays an important part, as it is the usual opinion that nothing relieves sexual tension so thoroughly, even in the adult, as the healthy exhaustion of muscles and nerves in games demanding both skill and strength.

There is, however, another side to this question, and it is, at least, open to doubt whether physical exercise may not be a positive stimulus to sexual activity. Thus Havelock Ellis states :¹ " It is undoubtedly true that exercises and games of all sorts for young people of both sexes have a sexually hygienic as well as a generally hygienic influence which is undoubtedly beneficial. They are, on all grounds, to be preferred to long sedentary occupations. But it is idle to suppose

¹ *Psychology of Sex*, vol. vi. p. 207. See also, in this connection, *The Loom of Youth*, by Alec Waugh, where it is shown that the most athletic boys are often the leaders in vice.

that games and exercises will suppress the sexual impulses, for in so far as they favour health, they favour all the impulses that are the result of health. The most that can be expected is that they may tend to restrain the manifestations of sex by dispersing the energy they generate."

And the same difficulties must be faced also in the case of mental exercises, which are also advocated as a means of calming sexual activity. To quote the same authority:¹ "If it (*i.e.* the mental study) is profoundly interesting and exciting it may stir up rather than lull the sexual emotions. If it arouses little interest it is unable to exercise any kind of influence. This is true even of mathematical occupations, which have been advocated by various authorities as aids to sexual hygiene."

If I may give my own opinion on this question, I would say that everything depends on the direction of the thoughts of the boy. We take much too little trouble in this connection. Must not the boy, in the wooden system of our schools, tend to remain in an undeveloped condition, unconscious of the vital opening thoughts of life, its visions, its hopes, its ideals, its problems? Of course, how far this is true will depend on the boy's character.

And herein rests one of the great difficulties of the teacher—the varying character of each boy: to guard, to direct, and train, this is the true problem of education; and it is one that as yet we have hardly touched. In the English educational system there is too much of drill in school, and *laissez-faire* out of it. The masters are at once too ignorant and dull and too

¹ *Psychology of Sex*, vol. vi. p. 208.

indolent to consider the individual boy apart from the system ; which does not trouble to recognise character, does not even look for it or desire it, for character is always troublesome. Thus the teacher reckons nothing of early development or of late, of normal or abnormal capacities ; knows nothing of the past or present home histories of the boy, conditions which in reality explain his character and his special difficulties, capacities, and faults ; he measures boy-humanity for the class routine like a tailor measures his cloth, with a yard measure. The discipline in almost all schools is at once too severe and too careless, even if it is not brutal. There seems to be no adequate thought, at least none is betrayed, that the school, itself a world in small, is really a preparation for the world at large.

Of course the difficulties of the teachers are immense. If the parents do not know the character of the boy, as they usually do not ; if the boy does not know himself, and, ignorant and dumb, he does not ; it is hardly surprising if the masters, for their part, make no attempt to know him, do not, indeed, inquire whether there is anything to know. But, of one thing I am certain, until this state of indifference is changed there can be no real result gained by the introduction of sexual hygiene as a school subject.

But these general remarks are causing me to diverge a little from the subject of this chapter.

So far in considering the problem of masturbation the word has been used generically, by which I mean that it has been implied that all boys who practise this act are led to do so for the same reason. But to leave the question here would lead to grievous error. It is

necessary to differentiate. There are two varieties, of course speaking roughly, among the boys who fall into this evil habit : one emphatically pathological and the other only quasi-pathological, even if it can be so regarded at all. In the first class of boys the habit is due to some psycho-neurotic trouble, usually of long standing, but which now, for some reason, possibly overstrain at work or by suggestion, manifests itself by this means. The cause among the second group or class is far different. Owing to a variety of causes among civilised peoples, the maturing of the sexual desires during the adolescent years is not coincident with the opportunities for its expression. There is a considerable gap of years during which no healthy provision is made for the sex needs. And civilisation, which has incidentally tremendously increased the sexual tension of adolescents, as, for instance, through diet and the many unwise stimulations of modern life, tends to increase this gap ; while sternly forbidding and making impossible for happiness and health any other course except chastity, yet ignores the necessity for systematised instruction in the meaning of the sexual tension, or any wise and systematic diverting it, even if this can be done, by providing healthy motor outlets.

Under these circumstances it is questionable whether masturbation, resorted to solely for relief of tension by a robust adolescent, can, strictly speaking, be considered pathological.¹ That it is regrettable there can be no doubt, and also harmful for the reasons already stated ; that it can be to a large extent, if not

¹ The reader is referred to the chapter, "States of Sexual Irritability and Sexual Weakness," in *The Sexual Life of our Times*, by Iwan Bloch.

altogether, avoided, we have grounds for hoping ; but to assert that it is in every case merely a degrading vice indicating moral depravity is to talk untrue balderdash.

Thus for the purpose of classification I shall regard this variety of masturbation separately. It will, however, be convenient to take first the strictly pathological variety, due, not to circumstances, but to psycho-neurotic defect. And here it is very necessary to note that the habit of sexual abuse is only one among many manifestations of psycho-neurosis, or, in popular language, of an early acquired, ill-balanced nervous system. The unfortunate victim of an unfortunate home and unwise parents betrays himself in many directions in which the normal person exercises a varying amount of self-control. His difficulties may be seen in paroxysms of temper, in cruelty, in unusual appetites, in many unconscious actions, and in numerous other ways. In such a subject, when the sexual *nisus* arises, as it does often at a very precocious age, trouble is almost certain to arise. Often misunderstood, and undirected, the youth gives full rein to indulgence, in some cases running the gamut of every known perversion of the sex instinct.

Now, it cannot be too strongly emphasised that masturbation when practised by the child or the boy of this type, is a symptom and not a condition. It is but one of many symptoms of nervous trouble. In the old days before the existence of psycho-neurotic defect in children was recognised, the mistake was made of putting the cart before the horse. This habit was considered to be, and was quoted with many headshakings as, a fruitful cause of insanity. Nowadays,

on the contrary, it is known that it is one only of the early symptoms of that general slackening of the powers of self-control caused by some psycho-neurotic defect ; some unrecognised trouble of the unconscious, which, though working harmfully, has not become so well marked as to cause active mental derangement.

I may perhaps state the position more clearly, and mark the essential difference between the two kinds of auto-excitation by the use of an epigram : " The one is a normal symptom in an abnormal person ; the other is the abnormal resort of a normal person."

How, then, are we to act ?

The answer is emphatic. In all cases where this habit is known, or suspected, careful examination should be made of the boy by a qualified medical man, who, in my opinion, also ought to have experience as an analyst, for the possible existence of psycho-neurotic defect, as evidenced in other nervous symptoms, by unconscious betraying habits and by peculiarities of conduct in many directions. Should such defect be discovered and its other manifestations be traced, then attention need no longer be focused on the sex habit alone, but should be turned to discover the hidden trouble of which it is one visible sign. The case is one for the most careful supervision and training, and above all for psycho-therapeutic treatment on approved lines. The masturbation is important only as providing an arc of a vicious circle, for it, in turn, undoubtedly aggravates the psycho-neurosis which is its organic cause.

I come now to the treatment of masturbation occurring amongst normal boys ; here again a subdivision must be made. We must recognise the exist-

ence of this practice as a general "bad habit" learned by one boy from another. In these cases it is not uncommon to find indulgence practised to great, or even to considerable excess, by boys in whom the sexual impulse is not especially strong. This may seem a contradiction. I am certain, however, that it is true. Such boys have learnt from other boys how to produce a pleasurable sensation, and, often quite unthinkingly, they go on, especially in periods of idleness, treating themselves to this sensation, really in much the same spirit as they overeat at the tuck-shop. This may seem a light way in which to speak of this evil, but I am trying by a common-sense view to get at the truth. And what is important is that with these boys the task of the teacher should not be difficult; provide them with some other healthy outlet for their sensations, at the same time making them understand the harm they are doing to themselves in the practical ways I have tried to suggest, and the bad habit will by most boys be given up without great effort.

The other case to be considered presents much greater difficulties. It occurs among boys in whom the sexual *nisus* is unusually strong, who resort to auto-excitation as an occasional, and often despairing, way of obtaining relief. Such boys should claim sympathy and the most patient efforts to help them to gain control. We have to remember too that self-control has its own revenges. It is with no inconsidered lightness that I state this fact. The emotional changes and fluctuations often caused by these struggles against sexual temptation may hamper and absorb the energies of the boy to an extent that is almost certain to produce ultimate evil. There

are, indeed, few phases of adolescence more pathetic than the tremendous self-discipline sometimes exercised by boys of this type, who frequently limit themselves to a single act of indulgence at long intervals, doing this as a despairing compromise after months of ineffectual attempts at complete continence.

Such boys present the most difficult problem connected with masturbation. Approaching young manhood, sensitive, intelligent, they have to face alone the intrusion into their dreaming idealistic years of a force that has a disruptive effect on their whole existence, so that in desperation almost they seek escape from a sexual tension so great that life becomes well-nigh unbearable without relief.

Many moralists will solve this problem by denying its existence. Such denial is, however, foolish and serves to lead us nowhere. Morality to be of any real value must face what we know, or should know, to be the truth. Of course, the problem is difficult. And it must be admitted that it is no easy matter even for the specialist to discriminate in these cases between different types of boys, judging when this habit arises spontaneously through a genuine need, due to a naturally powerful sexual development, and when the impulse is to a large extent factitious, and due to physical stimulation. A fairly confident diagnosis may, however, be made on the following basis: The existence of an unusually strong sexual *nisus* is suggested by (1) early onset of puberty; (2) well-marked secondary sexual characteristics; (3) robust development and active functioning of the sexual organs. When we find these signs co-existing with a naturally refined, intelligent, and self-controlled

disposition in such a manner that the boy, much against his will, is haunted by sexual images, which so far from bringing him pleasure are a source of acute vexation and annoyance, we may safely assume that the case belongs to the category described above.

What are we to say to such a boy? It is a task of infinite difficulty to suggest an answer. To begin with, we need to clear our minds from much prejudice. Endless confusion and recriminations and misunderstandings have been caused by the failure to differentiate, in the way that has been suggested, between different types of boys. Many moralists state a truth, but only half a truth. Thus, on the one hand, it is true that for a large proportion of adolescents sexual continence is both attainable and compatible with perfect health. On the other hand, it is equally true that an unascertained proportion of youth (and these often the more highly organised and intelligent section) can only attain absolute sexual continence at the cost of continuing an exhausting conflict.

It is necessary, however, to remember that the undoubted damage to health that ensues, in such cases, from the required abstinence has a complex origin. It is doubtful how much of it is due to the abstinence itself and how much to the struggle to maintain it. And here we find the clue that we are seeking. The best course is to help the boy to renounce his solitary and ineffectual struggles. Persuade him at the cost of any trouble to openness of speech. Then let him confide his own special troubles to an intelligent and sympathetic medical man, fully conversant with the physiology and psychology of sex (which many medical men are not). The task will be rendered easier by

the fact that these boys are usually of exceptionally high moral character and intelligence. I feel confident that, strengthened in this way, and led from the dark horrors of concealments and remorse into the communion of understanding, such a boy may be trusted, and should be helped by the widest sympathy. I am equally certain that an austere and uncomprehending morality can only drive him to despair.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUDING REMARKS

THE conclusions arrived at in these chapters, in which I have tried to indicate, what to me seem to be, the facts of special importance to be remembered by parents and teachers in this difficult question of sexual education, need by no means render us pessimistic, but they may prevent us from looking for results that are unattainable. To-day we hold in our hands more certainly than ever before the clues that should direct us; and what the parents and teachers of the past sought ignorantly, we may attempt by methods directed by knowledge. Yet there is a risk that from over-eagerness in reform, and by a lack of imaginative sympathy, we may move in the wrong direction, that in many ways can scarcely be less harmful than the old policy of neglect. In any case our desires and our hopes will not be realised.

It is very necessary also to remember that the results gained from sexual enlightenment will vary in the case of each individual boy or girl. While some adolescents have strong wills and others subdued passions, there are as well many in whom the sex impulses arise with so great a momentum that, for

a time, all educational influences are powerless ; little can be done but to wait until the storm period has passed.

For it often happens that such a period of sexual stress and storm, coming either at puberty or in the later adolescent years, will be succeeded by a period of calm. The finer social impulses of the boy (or the girl) will not be dead, but buried for a space in the worse ; and there will be gleams out of the darkness, a reaching out of the young soul from the trouble within,—aspirations and impulses towards social service and right conduct,—that will visit him, or her, though it may be long before the power is gained to connect and use them. Such a boy (or girl) will need all the help that he, or she, can get ; such help may come from religious teaching or from moral ideals, but better and more surely, I think, from any engrossing work, especially if that work is undertaken, not alone, but with others of the same age and advancement. The psyche will gain strength from the feeling of a social solidarity with his companions at school or elsewhere ; or possibly the desired gain will grow up as a flower from the slow development of artistic fastidiousness. This last quality, much stronger than usually is believed in the young, in my opinion, is one of the strongest of all moral safeguards. Just in so far as the sense of beauty and the harmony of life is felt, will there arise a corresponding hatred of all that is disharmonious and ugly. All great literature and paintings and statues, music and the drama, may in this way become to the adolescent soul a vital part of sexual education. He, or she, will come to know that poetry and art are a vesture of religion, the woven garment of men wherein

we see God. Love will have to teach this. The youth and maiden will not be born in the spirit until they love. I doubt if anybody is.

This later development through Love is, however, a subject that lies outside the scope of this little book. In this matter of enlightenment on sexual things, all that can be done by the wisest parent or teacher is the preparation of the ground, which in the future may make possible the growth and flowering of the higher issues of life. Adult power guides the child like a controlling fate. The responsibility that is upon us is, indeed, tremendous. The aim of all education is the liberation of the psyche or soul. It is desirable that educationists should concern themselves more with the human side of the child and less with the intellectual. The emotions should be harnessed by the teacher to serve the intellect ; which, in plainer words, means that all work to be of educational service to the pupil must be done willingly and with whole-hearted interest. Slackness is the most dangerous condition for the soul. If, for instance, the Latin exercise is ill done, or the mathematical problem left unsolved, the pupil is left with a feeling of failure and inferiority—and this is true, however much he appears not to care ; this must lead to evil, for we now know that the young person is bound to get the satisfaction that comes from a feeling of power out of some source, even out of his own body, or abuse of his mind. The successful performance of a school task can satisfy the soul ; the getting thoroughly interested is the supreme need of the young.

During the later school years the dawning sexual life plays such a significant part that to guide it into

useful directions should constitute one of the most important tasks of the teacher. All the pupils, and, I think, especially the girls, for they will do this less readily for themselves than boys, should be encouraged, much more widely than is common, to find suitable and expressive outlets in their self-chosen interests ; in this way their energies may be freed and kept running "sweetly" upon some fine achievement ; that is, upon some work that calls for effort and discipline, but work that is done for the love of doing it, or, if that is not attainable, for some desired end to be gained by means of such work.

I would emphasise again some of the main facts I have tried to make plain in the course of these chapters. The attitude of the teacher towards this question of sexual teaching must be wider as well as being simpler and franker. Particularly to be avoided is the still too frequent custom of impressing the young with feelings of guilt, shame, or horror, or simply of anger or impatience ; a result almost certain to arise by an unwise insistence on moral conduct, aided by threats of punishment or frightening the sinner with bogies of feared results that do not happen.

Perhaps it may seem to some parents and teachers that so practical an estimate of sexual education, as that which I have purposely set up as the ideal to be aimed at, is wrong and is wanting in moral force, and, in particular, objection may be taken against my conviction of the uselessness, and, indeed, the actual harm that is certain to follow from too much admonishment and punishments with regard to the troubles and sins of adolescence ; it may, indeed, be felt that this attitude is due to a low estimate of moral values. That

is not so. I claim that no one can have a stronger sense than I have of our deep responsibility in this matter to the young. But I have learnt the irreparable harm that the old may do to the young—yes, and with the very best conscious intentions. If we think we are saving the child, often we are but feeding our own unconscious passion for mastery. Let us try to be honest with ourselves if we can.

Sex is the great transforming force in the individual life-history of the boy or the girl; it is the spring of conduct that may start a lead in almost any direction. If we spoil the energy of life by our misdirection and repressions, or make little of its power for good in fear of its power for evil, we not only fail to use one of the finest possibilities in education, we destroy happiness and bodily and spiritual health.

Of course the task is difficult, and our mistakes are certain to be many and great. No formula of teaching can be laid down. Possibly the most that can be done with any certainty of success is very little.

The safest manner of training the sexual feelings of the young is not to allow these feelings to run rampant. Adolescents should be helped and taught to transfer their instincts to other aims of the emotions and intellect, that is, to sublimate sex. Such a pronouncement as this is, as I am well aware, easy to make; but it does not go to the beginning nor does it go to the end. The training of the body and its subjection to the soul is of paramount importance; yet, we have to remember that sublimation may itself be a process set about with danger. There is no fixed safe way. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to say that every child needs a different sexual enlightenment. That is why,

in my opinion, nothing can replace the intimate, natural, gradual education, which can be given only as occasion arises by the mother or father to their child, and, even then, the result desired cannot always be gained.

The opportunity of the teachers comes later in the school period. Unfortunately ignorant of adolescent psychology, they are, in the great majority of cases, unable to give the teaching or help that is needed. This is not merely a failure in direct teaching, it belongs to the general attitude of the teacher and the school. It would need the writing of another book to say here all that I mean. Our schools fail to hold the older boys and girls. To give one illustration, much too little account is taken of the development in the later school period of the social sense ; again, the teachers fail to propose any satisfying ends to which the emotional activities, so usually wasted in school life, can be directed. No real help is given in this matter, because we fear to begin at the beginning or to go on to the end : there is little or no attempt on the teachers' part of a frank facing of the real difficulties of the sexual life of the boys and girls in their charge. The fact is that most adults are so unused to think truthfully even to themselves about sex, that they are frightened and incapable when they come to speak to the young. Thus the barriers of blindness, lies, and the "thou shalt nots" of sex are maintained, just because they make the situation easier for the teacher. But the situation is not easy ; I must drive that truth home. I do not think it ever can be easy. I fear much of the difficulty must remain even with the best of our efforts.

The reason is not far to seek. It is terribly hard for the adult to be truthful and really frank to the young. And yet, if sexual education is really to do even one-half of what we are claiming it will do, I am sure we have to try to find some way of sympathy as well as we can. We shall have to break through the barriers of the old and the new falsehoods and make ourselves, as far as this is possible, the friends of the young. Boys and girls are very sensitive and very quick; always they see through our pretences much more quickly than we ever realise. Surely it is time now that the generations drew nearer together and helped one another with the truth.

And here I would refer back to one most important fact that I tried to make plain in a former chapter. I mean this: *there is no need for any parent or teacher to invent punishments for sexual sins.* Slackness, or indulgence, or carelessness, brings its own inevitable punishment. I spoke of this before when I tried to show that the real and deep harm arising from masturbation, or any other indulgence in any form of eroticisms, came from a heightened selfishness—a turning of the nature inward to gain its satisfaction as the child does from solitary immediate pleasure, which, in extreme cases, may lead to a condition which I described as an “inflammation of the ego.” I do not wish to dogmatise, and the question is one of very great difficulty; yet surely in this attitude of childish seeking for self—an attitude in which so many people remain, never reaching the adult attitude of service and giving to others—can we not here find, indeed, the roots of all the evil growths of disease and failure and sin that are destroying our national life? I want,

in one connection, to follow this further, and I would refer now to something deeper—a hurt that is more permanent : the action of this moral disease of egoism on the later life and character. I have spoken of this already in the former chapter, but there is more I want to say.

There is, perhaps, no necessity to catalogue the evil effects on character-building of an intensified egotism ; they are legion. A few, however, may be singled out for special notice.

One of the most far-reaching effects of any perversion of what I may for clearness call the social or race elements, the sex impulse, focusing them into a craving for egotistical sense-satisfactions, is the resultant attitude towards the opposite sex. To the sheer sensualist other people have very little real existence ; emotionally the sensualist remains in the condition of the child who values everything from the standpoint of the pleasure he obtains from it. To such men, women are hardly human beings ; they are mere purveyors to favoured males of an intensified form of sense-gratification. Of course, when the youth comes into the world, he finds ample corroboration of this standpoint in the prevalent treatment of woman as a form of property, valuable mainly from a sexual point of view. From the modern worship of pleasure which robs and limits the influence of women within the family, to the logical converse, the women outside the protection of the family, who sell their sexual favours (the point of view that prompts and inspires the conversation of the smoking-room), the young man finds everywhere the echo of our modern meanly egotistical views of the mother-sex.

It might be profitable to carry the analysis further, and trace the effects of this perversion to more ultimate issues in social life. I must, however, reluctantly pass on, remarking only that here, as I believe, is one of the most poisonous weeds in the field of married love. No man (of course, this includes woman) in sex liveth or dieth to himself ; and the childish sexuality of the egoist must always remain rather a social than a personal vice. Yet the price paid by the sensualist is heavy enough ; to him is denied for ever the sweep and grandeur, the serious simplicity, the candour, and pathos, and uplifting of passion. Its austere naked beauty is hidden from him by a leering mask. For the sensualist, orgasm ; for the lover, fulfilment.

Another untoward effect of an early perversion of the sex impulses is one that seems to me of even greater importance. Does it not frequently crowd out, like an overgrowth of some poisonous parasite, the more tender plant of parental instinct ? I think this is a true explanation of much that we have not understood. The poverty of this instinct in some women and its wealth in others ; its limitation in the male as compared with the richness in the female ; may not these arise from an early accentuation of the " pleasure " factor in sex, due to auto-excitation, begun in childhood and continued in adolescence, which militates against the development of the altruistic side of the sex impulse ? This is, of course, conjecture, and I may be wrong.

A word of explanation must be given here.

It must not be forgotten that sex perversions are not confined to boys. Authorities seem to agree that normally the incidence of masturbation is somewhat different in the two sexes. It appears to be commoner

in the female sex in childhood and in middle age, common in the male sex at or about puberty and during adolescence, when "in girls there appears to be a form of regression."¹ It is, however, very difficult to be at all certain on this question, owing to our very defective knowledge of the sexual life of girls; there are, however, many facts in support of this view. It would certainly be an error—and it is a very common one—to underestimate the forces of the sexual impulse in girls. On the subject of sex, and in spite of intense secret curiosities, girls' lips are sealed by a peculiar shyness. It is not only that they are instinctively shy of the subject; they are as well frequently much ashamed of their ignorance and uncertainty in these matters. Often they evade questions; and any effort to establish confidence is met by hostility, or, perhaps more frequently, with an elaborately maintained pretence of indifference, with an assumption of knowledge.

I must once more draw attention to the fact that much of what has been said of the adolescent boy refers equally to the adolescent girl. I have, perhaps, got somewhat away from the truth by treating the sexes apart, however necessary this seemed to emphasise the special demands of the boys' and the girls' nature.

Another significant difference between the sexes in this respect is that acts of autoerotism among girls would seem to be practised frequently without any consciousness of their sexual significance. This, it seems to me, is a fact of very far-reaching importance.

¹ Freud, "The Transformation of Puberty," *Three Contributions to the Sexual Theory*, p. 59.

The sex impulse is less direct, and, for this reason, perhaps, is not so openly active among girls ; though, in my opinion, its subconscious action is stronger and even more dangerous. I do not believe in a higher standard of sexual virtue existing among girls than among boys. But when all this is granted, there is still, I think, a very real difference in sex expression. Thus, without being dogmatic (or making a false claim of female moral superiority), I would allege that *conscious and deliberate* masturbation is more characteristic of the adolescent boy than of the adolescent girl. And it appears to me probable that there is some connection between this fact and the relative intensity of the parental instinct in the two sexes. This theory, at any rate, is worth following out.

The unsatisfactory conclusions that to-day must result from any investigation of sexual problems are due to the fact that even yet, and in spite of all the new knowledge that has been gained in the last few years, we know little of the subject. It has to be confessed that only a very few have faced and dared to probe in any way the secrecies of sex. We have most of us an instinctive perception that sex is a great and difficult thing in life ; but our early training has all been in the direction of regarding it as an irrelevant enemy—as something disconnected with the broad significances of life, as hostile and disgraceful in its action. Until this attitude is changed, as I have tried throughout my book to show, not very much can be done by us who are older to help the young ; they, like ourselves, will have to come again, and perhaps very bitterly, to the wisdom we have achieved. We continue to regard sex as something we have to struggle

against and deny ; an alluring mystery indeed, but a force of destruction from which we must try to keep away. Yet its strong presence continues, yes, and will continue to obsess us in spite of all our running away and our fears, and in spite of the inward pretence of our extravagant decency ; indeed, our stimulating falsehoods and half-truths and silences, our fears and our hidden excitements, do but add to its power.

In this book I have attempted to clear the ground of a few of what seem to me to be our greatest mistakes ; I have endeavoured to approach the many problems before the parent and the teacher in this question of sexual instruction from a practical standpoint. I have, in a word, tried to tell the truth. I am well aware that in many cases I have crossed the threshold only of the questions I have treated. Much has been left out that ought to have been said. I am certain I have made many mistakes. I hope that at least I may have opened up suggestions about some new aspects of this difficult problem, on many of which I could not dwell at length. All this may bring the hesitation that will lead to further inquiry and more practical knowledge.

Many of the conclusions to which I have come are so much opposed to those commonly held on this question of sexual enlightenment, and the best methods by which such instruction can be given, that now I am at the end of my work it may be well to sum up briefly its main result.

My own view of what ought to be aimed at by every parent and every teacher is clear, and may, indeed, be stated in a sentence : *To break down the barriers of repression and unwholesome silences, and*

to bring the secret broodings of the child into the light of conscious understanding.

Let this be the aim, set as a light always to guide the adult who instructs the young: his or her work, not so much to teach or admonish, but to find out the individual child's perplexities and hindrances and to liberate the sex trouble by a wise imparting of the knowledge, and by giving the help, that is wanted by the child at that particular time; let this be done and sexual instruction may, in the future, be a very great thing. And in this connection I would quote the wise statement of Havelock Ellis: "It is not merely a reform in the classroom, it is a reform in the home, in the church, in the law-courts, in the legislature. If sexual hygiene means that, it means something great, but something which can only come slowly, with difficulty, with much searching of hearts. If, on the other hand, sexual hygiene means nothing but the introduction of a new formal catechism, and an occasional goody-goody perfunctory exhortation, it may be introduced at once, quite easily without hurting any one's feelings. But, really, it will not be worth worrying about, one way or the other."

The parent, the teacher—all who undertake the work of sex instruction cannot too often meditate on these wise words.

Let us cast a brief glance backwards to summarise the facts that in the course of my inquiry have seemed to me of paramount importance.

First: The guiding principle of sex initiation of young children should be, not the imparting of sex knowledge as such at arbitrary intervals, but the skilful utilising of the natural opportunities for en-

lightenment, afforded by the expression of the child's own candour and fugitive curiosity.

Second: All children harbour curiosities regarding their bodily structure and the basis of life. If they do not speak about these things there has been in the home some wrong concealment and want of sympathy, though often quite unconscious, which is the cause of this repression. In an atmosphere of trust and openness, all young children will express these curiosities, probably at first, in a tentative, haphazard way. This is the psychological moment for the mother's instruction. The questions asked must be answered with absolute directness, and the truth told in terms simplified to the comprehension of the age of the child. The reply should have the character of being both candid and confidential—that is to say, it must satisfy the child's curiosity at that time; *it should not go further than the immediate curiosity that is shown*; and, at the same time, what is said should leave the impression that such subjects are to be avoided in general conversation, not at all because they are "nasty," but because they are so important and intimate that they can be mentioned only among those who love and respect one another. This can be explained even to a very young child. Facts communicated in this way, and at such natural opportunities, are subconsciously noted, and then, as a rule, dismissed from the conscious thought of the child,—though this happy result should not be counted upon,—who soon becomes interested in something else, after the disconnected, discursive fashion of childish thinking.

Third: This principle of confidential candour

applies more particularly to the attitude of the parents. It is their privilege to watch over the child from its earliest years ; their duty to note any peculiarities of the sexual life in infancy and the first years of childhood ; their work to train and direct the individual development through the happy years of the child's play period, when control should be strengthened, but dangerous suppressions avoided. By this means, they will assist the psychic forces in their child's character, which later act as safeguards, and will, if carefully directed and tended, lead to a sublimation of the sex impulses. But this can be done only where the parent has wisdom, which in these early years is of more importance even than knowledge, important as knowledge is, and sympathy to win the child's confidence in all the intimate and personal matters of its young life. This confidence must be established between parent and child before the onset of the difficult time of the strong reawakening of sex at puberty, if it is to be maintained during the years of adolescence. Here, then, is a task for all mothers and for fathers : it is one that will call for patience and waiting ; for much more fearless facing of the truth ; for deeper sympathy between the generations ; and, above all else, for a new clean belief on the part of the parents in sex.

We turn now from the home to the school. We have found :

First : The work of the parents in the home needs to be assisted and carried further by the teachers in our schools.

Second : But for this to be done in any way that matters, great and far-reaching changes will have

to be made in our educational ideas and the general plan of work in our schools. I am not, of course, speaking of actual book knowledge, which really matters very little one way or the other. The emotional training of youth is of much greater importance than their intellectual training; it is also far more difficult, which, probably, is the reason why we have so persistently and entirely neglected it.

Third: What I have contended is that our system of education, which is old and rusty with useless conventions, is far too restricted to one form that may suit one boy but cannot suit all boys; it must tend to result in uncounted cases in death to the inner life. We stifle and we cover up, but we do not educate. The social varnish laid on in our "gentlemanly schools" is superficial; the savage of the caves too often remains beneath in our boys, nearly unchanged.

Fourth: And the system which, by the dull narrowness of its aims, drives the young into finding the power and pleasure necessary to their growth in phantasies and the lower primitive satisfactions, which suppresses reality with persistent zeal and submits the rising personalities, with all their rich possibilities for the highest achievement, to the rollers of one equalising rolling-machine; this system that we continue to allow depends directly on a conspiracy of falsehood, of shame, and indecencies in all matters connected with the real issues of character and of life. The conspiracy is absolute; it is the fundamental curse of our education.

I wish that any words I have been able to say may in some measure convey an understanding to the headmasters of our great schools—for it is they who

chiefly are responsible for the hurt suffered by the young from such an attitude of falsehood towards the emotional life, on the part of the adults who train them.

Fifth : We have found the hidden reason for this false attitude must be sought within ourselves. The truth is, we are all of us frightened to acknowledge the appearance in the consciousness of the young of thoughts and impulses that really are hidden far back within us, and so deeply concerned with our own sexuality that we fear, and, indeed, are unable, to face their presence in those for whose welfare we are responsible. Teachers, and, of course, I might say also *all adults*, hide themselves from themselves and from the young by falsehoods, just in the same way as a company of rabbits scutter frightened into their holes at any, and every, alarm of danger. Hence there is an almost absolute taboo of any kind of perfectly truthful teaching about sex. It is part of our hypocrisy to pretend that what we do not like is not there ; and, as far as most of our boys' and girls' schools—as also their homes—are concerned, the concealment is absolute.

Sixth : Yet every teacher knows that sex is exceedingly potent in youth. It is mere cant to pretend we can educate, and, at the same time, to maintain the old indecent decency that sex does not manifest itself in the young.

Seventh : Nor, as I have tried to show, can the evil be met, or improved in any way that can matter permanently, by moral exhortation and the formal half-truths, which so often are accepted as sexual instruction. The importance of honesty cannot be insisted

upon too often or too strongly. We have found that the sexual education advocated by many to-day tends too frequently to take the unwise form of warnings against evil habits ; lessons are drawn up and given with alarming but vague hints about the later sexual life and its difficulties and dangers, but in which almost no practical help and little true knowledge is given ; and the teaching, even if good in some ways, is confused with platitudes about purity and control that in five cases out of six have no meaning to the young.

Eighth : The teacher of sex has to remember always that the boy or the girl is quickly repelled by conventional phraseology if applied to this subject, which must have a powerful emotional appeal. Thus the instruction, possibly right and wise in itself, may easily be felt to be something unreal and apart, having no relation to the school needs and the personal difficulties and questionings which trouble the young lives. This, perhaps, is the greatest difficulty of all—to make our teaching desirable. It is, of course, a difficulty as old as the generations. There is nothing new in it. The young have been indifferent to the teaching of the old, and the old have taken advantage of their indifference, which explains, perhaps, both the uselessness in practical results of most of the teaching we give, and our adult attitude of continuous seeking cover under lies.

Ninth : We have seen some of the ways in which this conventional attitude of parents and teachers has been, and is still, the cause of untold mischief.

Tenth : An attempt was made to show how, possibly, the greatest danger amongst all the many possible

dangers to be avoided by the teacher of sexual hygiene is the almost universal error of representing as great sins and crimes the bad sexual habits, which are usually the result in the young of a diseased condition of the emotional life. We have found that the self-abuse of the adolescent arises in most cases as a makeshift and a way of relief from conditions of emotional repression for which we, as adults, are responsible.

Eleventh: We have to accept our responsibilities in a quite new spirit of honesty and humility. We know that the habit is usually learnt by evil example, and is done, at any rate at first, without much thought, and as a quick way of gaining the emotional satisfaction which we have been too dull and too lazy to supply. I have asserted again and again, that if the necessary stimulus to right conduct is missing there must be a regression to primitive satisfaction. To understand this will help us to help the young.

Twelfth: We saw that there can be no greater blunder than that of exaggerating and falsifying the importance of adolescent masturbation by representing it as a horrible and extremely dangerous vice. In certain cases it is connected with deeply seated neurotic formations, and can be helped only by special treatment that is able to relieve the psyche and bring about a successful readaptation with the circumstances of life.

Thirteenth: The most important result we have gained from our inquiry, is the knowledge that it is not the good and pious precepts of the teachers or the parents; not, indeed, the inculcation of any new formula of pedagogic morality that will have

any strong, restraining, and moulding influence upon the characters of the young; but what influences them is the attitude we ourselves have, deep within our own characters, towards the questions of sexual conduct on which we are giving instruction: it is these concealed attitudes of the adult that create in the boy or the girl the truly affective state, which very often is totally unknown to the parents and educators.

I must insist finally that there can be no dogmatic statement on any of these questions: the actual mode of instruction in sex or its action in special cases cannot be fixed; there is no prescription or set of prescriptions, ready to hand, either for the parent or for the teacher. Much experimental trial will be needed; many mistakes certainly will be made; never will rule of thumb be able to replace sympathy and knowledge.

And as a first necessary step, all of us who have to do with the young need to get rid, if we are able, of our own emotional stupidity. If we cannot do this, then we are unfit to attempt any form of sexual education—at least, this is my opinion, and I have no hesitation about it at all. If our own concealed attitude towards sex is one of shame, confusion, and fear, of unconscious desire, then, indeed, the results of our teaching cannot fail to be useless, even if they are not actively harmful. Nothing can be done, nothing ought to be attempted, unless we are able to know ourselves and to feel, as well as to teach, an attitude of naturalness and simple acceptance of human nature as it is towards matters of sex. If

the attempt at instruction is made, without this quality of simple faith on the teacher's part, we shall but blunder by new ways into the old error of fear of sex. Still shall we cover its shining body with the stained garments of our shame.



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