
Sex in Mind and in Education

Maudsley Henry

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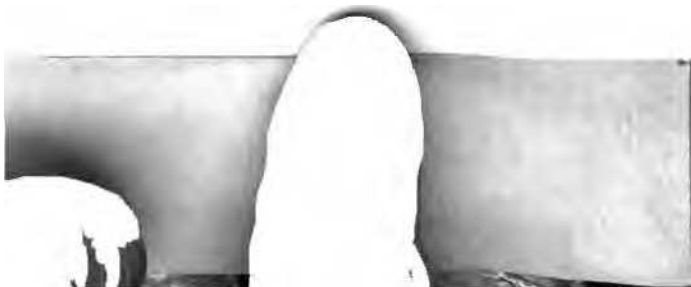
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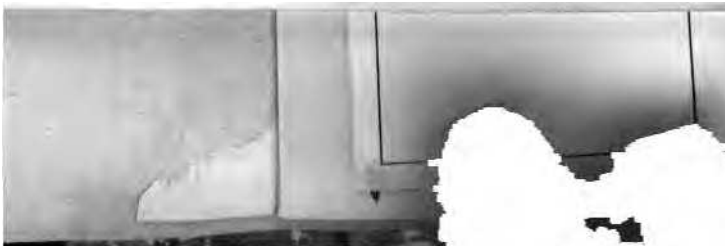
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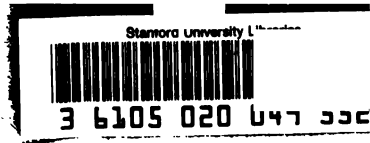
THOSE who view without prejudice, or with some sympathy, the movements for improving the higher education of women, and for throwing open to them fields of activity from which they are now excluded, have a hard matter of it sometimes to prevent a feeling of reaction being aroused in their minds by the arguments of the most eager of those who advocate the reform. Carried away by their zeal into an enthusiasm which borders on or reaches fanaticism, they seem positively to ignore the fact that there are significant differences between the sexes, arguing in effect as if it were nothing more than an affair of clothes, and to be resolved, in their indignation at woman's wrongs, to refuse her the simple rights of her sex. They would do better in the end if they would begin by realizing the fact that the male organization is one, and the female organization another, and that, let come what may in the way of assimilation of female and male education and labor, it will not be possible to transform a woman into a man. To the end of the chapter she will retain her special functions, and must have a





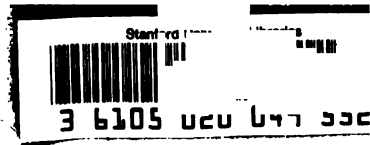
educational strain will commence about the time when, by the development of the sexual system, a great revolution takes place in the body and mind, and an extraordinary expenditure of vital energy is made, and will continue through those years after puberty when, by the establishment of periodical functions, a regularly recurring demand is made upon the resources of a constitution that is going through the final stages of its growth and development. The energy of a human body being a definite and not inexhaustible quantity, can it bear, without injury, an excessive mental drain as well as the natural physical drain which is so great at that time? Or, will the profit of the one be to the detriment of the other? It is a familiar experience that a day of hard physical work renders a man incapable of hard mental work, his available energy having been exhausted. Nor does it matter greatly by what channel the energy be expended; if it be used in one way it is not available for use in another. When Nature spends in one direction, she must economize in another direction. That the development of puberty does draw heavily upon the vital resources of the female constitution, needs not to be pointed out to those who know the nature of the important physiological changes which then take place. In persons of delicate constitution who have inherited a tendency to disease, and who have little vitality to spare, the disease is apt to break out at that time; the new drain established having deprived the constitution of the vital energy neces-



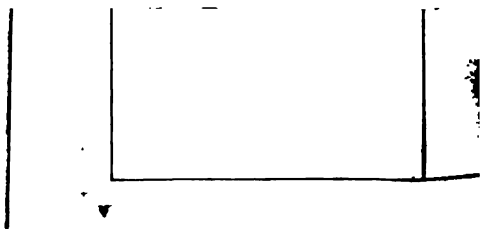


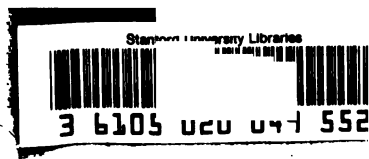
her special functions renders it improbable she will succeed, and unwise for her to persevere, in running over the same course at the same pace with him. For such a race she is certainly weighted unfairly. Nor is it a sufficient reply to this argument to allege, as is sometimes done, that there are many women who have not the opportunity of getting married, or who do not aspire to bear children; for whether they care to be mothers or not, they cannot dispense with those physiological functions of their nature that have reference to that aim, however much they might wish it, and they cannot disregard them in the labor of life without injury to their health. They cannot choose but to be women: cannot rebel successfully against the tyranny of their organization, the complete development and function whereof must take place after its kind. This is not the expression of prejudice nor of false sentiment; it is the plain statement of a physiological fact. Surely, then, it is unwise to pass it by; first or last it must have its due weight in the determination of the problem of woman's education and mission; it is best to recognize it plainly, however we may conclude finally to deal with it.

It is sometimes said, however, that sexual difference ought not to have any place in the culture of the mind, and one hears it affirmed with an air of triumphant satisfaction that there is no sex in mental culture. This is a rash statement, which argues want of thought or insincerity of thought in those who make it. There is sex in mind as distinctly as



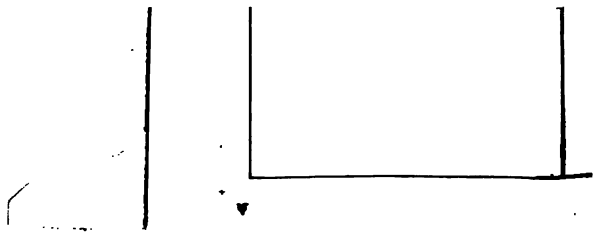
declare the influence of the different organs. There is an intimate consensus of functions. Though it is the highest organ of the body, the coördinating center to which impressions go and from which responses are sent, the nature and functions of the inferior organs with which it lives in unity affect essentially its nature as the organ of mental functions. It is not merely that disorder of a particular organ hinders or oppresses these functions, but it affects them in a particular way; and we have good reason to believe that this special pathological effect is a consequence of the specific physiological effect which each organ exerts naturally upon the constitution and function of mind. A disordered liver gives rise to gloomy feelings; a diseased heart, to feelings of fear and apprehension; morbid irritation of the reproductive organs, to feelings of a still more special kind—these are familiar facts; but what we have to realize is, that each particular organ has, when not disordered, its specific and essential influence in the production of certain passions or feelings. From of old the influence has been recognized, as we see in the doctrine by which the different passions were located in particular organs of the body; the heart, for example, being made the seat of courage, the liver the seat of jealousy, the bowels the seat of compassion; and although we do not now hold that a passion is aroused anywhere else than in the brain, we believe nevertheless that the organs are represented in the primitive passions, and that, when the passion is





been predicted. To attribute to the influence of education the mental differences of sex which declare themselves so distinctly at puberty, would be hardly less absurd than to attribute to education the bodily differences which then declare themselves. The comb of a cock, the antlers of a stag, the mane of a lion, the beard of a man, are growths in relation to the reproductive organs which correlate mental differences of sex as marked almost as these physical differences. In the first years of life, girls and boys are much alike in mental and bodily character, the differences which are developed afterward being hardly more than intimated, although some have thought the girl's passion for her doll evinces even at that time a forefeeling of her future functions ; during the period of reproductive activity, the mental and bodily differences are declared most distinctly ; and when that period is past, and man and woman decline into second childhood, they come to resemble one another more again. Furthermore, the bodily form, the voice, and the mental qualities of mutilated men approach those of women ; while women whose reproductive organs remain from some cause in a state of arrested development, approach the mental and bodily habits of men.

No psychologist has yet devoted himself to make, or has succeeded in making, a complete analysis of the emotions, by resolving the complex feelings into their simple elements and tracing them back from their complex evolutions to the primitive passions in which they are rooted ; this is a promising and





earliest period of animal life upon earth before there was any distinction of sex?

If the foregoing reflections be well-grounded, it is plain we ought to recognize sex in education, and to provide that the method and aim of mental culture should have regard to the specialities of woman's physical and mental nature. Each sex must develop after its kind; and if education in its fundamental meaning be the external cause to which evolution is the internal answer, if it be the drawing out of the internal qualities of the individual into their highest perfection by the influence of the most fitting external conditions, there must be a difference in the method of education of the two sexes answering to the differences in their physical and mental natures. Whether it be only the statement of a partial truth, that "for valor he" is formed, and "for beauty she and sweet attractive grace," or not, it cannot be denied that they are formed for different functions, and that the influence of these functions pervades and effects essentially their entire beings. There is sex in mind, and there should be sex in education.

Let us consider, then, what an adapted education must have regard to. In the first place, a proper regard to the physical nature of women means attention given, in their training, to their peculiar functions and to their foreordained work as mothers and nurses of children. Whatever aspirations of an intellectual kind they may have, they cannot be relieved from the performance of those offices so long as it is thought



bies as they would in attempting to suckle them. On the other hand, women are manifestly endowed with qualities of mind which specially fit them to stimulate and foster the first growths of intelligence in children, while the intimate and special sympathies which a mother has with her child as a being which, though individually separate, is still almost a part of her nature, give her an influence and responsibilities which are specially her own. The earliest dawn of an infant's intelligence is its recognition of its mother as the supplier of its wants, as the person whose near presence is associated with the relief of sensations of discomfort, and with the production of feelings of comfort ; while the relief and pleasure which she herself feels in yielding it warmth and nourishment, strengthen, if they were not originally the foundation of, that strong love of offspring which with unwearied patience surrounds its wayward youth with a thousand ministering attentions. It can hardly be doubted that, if the nursing of babies were given over to men for a generation or two, they would abandon the task in despair or in disgust, and conclude it to be not worth while that mankind should continue on earth. But "can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" Those can hardly be in earnest who question that woman's sex is represented in mind, and that the mental qualities which spring from it qualify her especially to be the successful nurse and educator of infants and young children.