

SEX IN INDUSTRY.

PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“For this the worth of woman shows on every peopled shore:

Ever as man in wisdom grows, he honors her the more.”

ELLIOTT.

MAN, except in the savage state, is a working animal. Even the pre-historic individual erected unwittingly the monuments of his industry, and fidelity to type.

Woman has been, in all time, man's companion and helper; his relation to intelligence determining always the degree of hardship in her toil. Degraded with the savage, lightened in her burdens and raised to higher dignities with each step of man's advance, the lines of Elliott express an apothegm.

Always a collaborator, but assuming new importance as the nature of her true value unfolded, woman's promotion with each added civilization has been toward equal, and in some respects even special partnership in the work of life. Dowered by God with equality of mental scope with man, unlimited like him in her possibilities of attainment, the sole imperative difference in woman, which insists on full and perpetual recognition, is her peculiar sexual principle, — her physiological dissimilarity, — at once her title to complemental rights, her glory, and her opportunity.

But woman, elevated by the advances of civilization, could not escape participation in its incident evils. These have assailed the very citadel of her strength. Imaginary wants have exacted from her an exhausting tribute; and delusions as wild as those of

“The crazy Queen of Lebanon”

have caused her to build from the pure gold of her possessions and privileges an altar to

false gods. Seeking for her sex distinctive honors, she has proposed to give up for them that which alone could insure their possession. Extremes meet. The demands of savage barbarity held woman in an unsexing servitude. The abnormities of our civilization are demanding anew of woman a kind and degree of labor similarly militant against sex.

Whether it comes from barbarity, or has its origin in false ambitions or disarranged economy, the result is the same against woman, and her highest work in the world, — the perpetuation and ennobling of her race.

The errors of ambition, the ignoring of sexual endowments in the search for attainments and distinction, lie chiefly within the realm of mental effort, — the work of education. The undue burdens imposed upon the sex by the disarrangement of economic forces in society deal mostly with bodily employ, — the domain of industry. Both, however, call with varying degrees upon the same organs ;

both preying especially upon the sexual principle and its designed results.*

The physiological characteristics and requirements of the forming female have been so adequately stated by recent writers † in reference to mental hygiene, and are now so generally familiar, that it is not necessary that they should be re-stated here.

An inimical influence upon brain or lower organ, that has its origin in education, is equally inimical if it occur identically in industry. That such identity does occur, and that industry presents in addition its own peculiar phases of sexual unfriendliness, it will be my effort to show.

* "Woman, in the interest of the race, is dowered with a set of organs peculiar to herself, whose complexity, delicacy, sympathies, and force are among the marvels of creation. If properly nurtured and cared for, they are a source of strength and power to her : if neglected and mismanaged, they retaliate upon their possessor with weakness and disease, as well of the mind as of the body." — PROF. EDWARD H. CLARKE: *Sex in Education*, p. 33.

† Edward H. Clarke, M.D., *Sex in Education*; T. A. Gorton, M.D., *Principles of Mental Hygiene*; Henry Maudsley, M.D., *Sex in Mind and Education*; Ely Van de Warker; *Popular Science Monthly*, February, 1875.

Prof. Clarke thus reviews the relation of the menstrual function, the salient point of the sexual system, to the health of both student and operative: "The principal organs of elimination, common to both sexes, are the bowels, kidneys, lungs, and skin. A neglect of their functions is punished in each alike. To woman is intrusted the exclusive management of another process of elimination, viz., the catamenial function. This, using the blood for its channel of operation, performs, like the blood, double duty. It is necessary to ovulation, and to the integrity of every part of the reproductive apparatus; it also serves as a means of elimination for the blood itself. A careless management of this function, at any period of life during its existence, is apt to be followed by consequences that may be serious; but a neglect of it during the epoch of development, that is, from the age of fourteen to eighteen or twenty, not only produces great evil at the time of neglect, but leaves a large legacy of evil to the future. The system is then

peculiarly susceptible; and disturbances of the delicate mechanism we are considering, induced during the catamenial weeks of that critical age by constrained positions, muscular effort, brain work, and all forms of mental and physical excitement, germinate a host of ills. Sometimes these causes, which pervade more or less the methods of instruction in our public and private schools, which our social customs ignore, and to which operatives of all sorts pay little heed, produce an excessive performance of the catamenial function; and this is equivalent to a periodical hemorrhage. Sometimes they produce an insufficient performance of it; and this, by closing an avenue of elimination, poisons the blood, and depraves the organization. The host of ills thus induced are known to physicians and to the sufferers as amenorrhea, menorrhagia, dysmenorrhea, hysteria, anemia, chorea, and the like. Some of these fasten themselves on their victim for a lifetime, and some are shaken off. Now and then they lead to an abortion

of the function, and consequent sterility."*

While pointing out the commonality of effect of "constrained positions, muscular effort, brain-work, and all forms of mental or physical excitement," upon students and operatives in the direction indicated, the same author urges two reasons why female operatives of all sorts are likely to suffer less from persistent work than female students. The first is, that "the female operative of whatever sort has, as a rule, passed through the first critical epoch of woman's life: she has got fairly by it." The second is, "because the operative works her brain less." Though I believe statistics † will warrant the expression that this first conclusion is too inclusive,

* Sex in Education, p. 47.

† The United-States census of 1870 gives the total number of females employed in industry between the ages of *ten* and *fifteen* as 191,100; total number (of these ages) in manufacturing and mechanical industries, 25,664, or about 13.4 per cent of the whole; total number females (all ages) employed in all industries, 1,836,288: showing that 10.4 per cent — i.e. 191,000 — of the whole number is under the age of *fifteen*.

the second reason may be debated on several grounds. It is no doubt true that the aggregate of simple cerebration on the part of the female operative is less than the aggregate performed by the female student. But in the intricacy of much modern machinery, the intrinsic mental demands of many processes of employ, and the special mental peculiarities of others, it is obvious that no inconsiderable amount of brain exaction is involved. Again: there are conditions connected with the acts of cerebration in the operative that in and of themselves are potent for evil; as, the monotony, depression, bodily fatigue, and "constrained position," few of which find their counterparts in ordinary student toil. The statistics adduced clearly give a very large per cent as certainly yet under the usual age at which the menstrual function asserts itself, who are employed in the industries of the nation. To this should be added the indefinite, but surely considerable number so employed, who, though over fifteen, cannot be presumed to be confirmed in the

possession of the "periodic" habit. The exception to a rule is certainly a broad one, that is based on at least fifteen per cent of all the cases involved.

The facts enumerated in regard to the brain-labor of operatives (of which substantial illustration will be given) would indicate, if proven, that, if the labor is absolutely less in the aggregate with the working-girl than with the scholar, its amount is indeed great, and, moreover, is performed under conditions themselves most unfavorable. To these statistics and facts may be added certain other data of kindred significance, bearing upon the main proposition, that the operative suffers less in the vital direction from her employ than the student girl from hers. Dr. Beard, speaking of longevity,* adduces the following reasons for the greater age of brain than muscle workers: "Brain-workers have less *worry*, and more comfort and happiness, than muscle-workers. Brain-workers live

* George M. Beard, M.D.: Public Health, p. 57.

under better sanitary conditions than muscle-workers. Brain-workers can adapt their labor to their moods and hours, and periods of greatest capacity for labor, better than muscle-workers." The death-rate tables* of three hundred inhabitants of Preston, Eng., one hundred being taken from each of the three classes, — the gentry, tradesmen, and operatives, — give surprising results against the operative class, both as to longevity and youthful deaths.

These and similar observations seem to stimulate at least a doubt whether the dangers to forming woman, conversely of the foregoing proposition, do not equally reside in industry and education. That some of the avenues of industry embrace processes potent in their aggressions against the integrity of female health, with even those of advanced years, has been frequently determined.

But, over and beyond the lines of simi-

* See Prin. Mental Hygiene, D. A. Gorton, M.D., p. 116.

larity in the effects of the influences of the worker and the student, there are clear points of distinction between the relation sex holds to education, and that which it sustains to industry.

The most advanced apostle of a differential education for the sexes demands only, for girls, a modification in method and time; not a substitution of ultimate ends, or rejection of contemplated attainments.

On the contrary, the guardian of the youthful female in her industrial pursuits seeks not only to ameliorate her condition in some, but would bar her altogether from participation in many.

In education, "the question," as Prof. Clarke admirably puts it, "is not, *Shall* woman learn the alphabet? but, *How* shall she learn it?" In industry, the questions, in view of precisely the same physiological facts, are, first, What shall she do, and what not do? and, second, How shall she least harmfully do that which she may undertake?

So far as purely economic and material interests are concerned, it also appears, that if, by the indiscretions of educational methods, the young female sacrifices life or health, the loss, though great, is but that, so far as the state is concerned, of an unproductive unit, and its capacities for increase. If, however, the working-girl is destroyed by her labors, the commonwealth loses both herself as a present integer in the maintenance of society, and her creative possibilities and powers for the future of the race. The student was as yet, in the strict sense, a burden upon the community: the worker was a productive and helpful member of it. The one may have given promise of a life of usefulness: the other had begun it. If an account current, on a purely economic basis, were to be opened between society and these two girls, the student would stand debited with continual outgo, and with nothing to her credit in return: the worker's page would exhibit the cost of maintenance and development to the point when her earning

began, and then the credit side would begin to bear figures. But homicidal and suicidal characteristics in the vocations of each have cut short their careers, and closed the account. The balances being struck, it will of course be found, that as an investment, so far as present material interests are concerned, the student has been least profitable: that which was invested is gone. But if future possibilities and expectations could be computed, as longevity is by "life-tables," then the expenditure might stand in the light of a venture whose every promise was satisfactory, but which some unforeseen misfortune rendered a dead loss. Of course it is of paramount importance for the community to prevent a loss, which, if it occur now, is total, but which, averted, by further expenditure and the alchemy of time is transmuted into gain. It is equally clear, that to lose *in toto* an investment that has become a source of revenue, is, so far as present time and economic forces are concerned, a graver loss than the abstraction of

that which is still depletory. The value of the one is present and real, that of the other prospective and uncertain.

As our future must be built up out of our present, as the animal must exist for the mental and spiritual to build upon, so far as purely political and social considerations go, *the present loss of the worker is greater.* It is only when we rise to a plane of higher contemplation of life, and view it as more than a social system constituted and ruled only for terrestrial duration, that we obtain a better conception of harmonious possibilities and ends for both student and worker. The power to originate and organize is always greater and more valuable than that of simple execution of details; principles being always higher than their adaptation. A recognition of principles, and the possession of power, are evolved only from breadth of knowledge. Hence there can be little doubt, that were the student and worker both to retain health, and enjoy the normal progress of their several vocations, and

eventually find their true place* in the world's work as perpetuators and moulders of it, the student, as a mother and trainer of men, would be most valuable. Carry forward the student and worker to a condition where other standards than those of earth are dominant, and physical bonds are left behind, and the intrinsic individuality of each, being gauged by a supreme wisdom, will find an exact recognition a finite mind could not give.

But the dangers to female life and health from the special ills incident to industrial

* "We have been studying woman, in her relation to the subject of this paper (professions and skilled labor), as a sexual being; and, if we continue the study in the same direction, we must arrive at the conclusion that marriage is not an optional matter with her. On the contrary, it is a prime necessity to her normal physical and intellectual life. There is an undercurrent of impulse impelling every healthy woman to marry. That this is a law of her sexual being, we know by the positive evidence of medical men and others. We also know that the married woman exerts a more marked influence upon men, and society in general, than the celibate."—ELY VAN DE WARKER, M.D.: in *Popular Science Monthly*, February, 1875.

pursuits, and their effect upon the public weal, are the present concern.

The results upon the community of the loss of the young female operative have already been shown. Bad as these are,* if the evils of employ break down the health, rather than destroy life, — as is the rule, — a heavier burden is thereby entailed than results from actual death. Years of total invalidism involve both the loss of the individual's production, with its increase, and the production and its increase of those who care for the disabled. Proportionate degrees of dependence

* "In Massachusetts, during the seven years 1865 to 1871, 72,727 died in their working period. In the fulness of health and completeness of life, they would have had opportunity of laboring for themselves, their families, and the public, in all 3,606,350 years; but the total of their labors amounted only to 1,681,125 years, leaving a loss of 1,925,224 by their premature deaths. This was an average annual loss of 276,461 years of service and co-operation. Thus it appears that in Massachusetts, one of the most favored States of this country and of the world, those who died within seven years had contributed to the public support less than half — 46.07 per cent — of what is done in the best conditions of life." — EDWARD JARVIS, M.D.: *Polit. Econ. of Health, Fifth Rep. Mass. Board of Health.*

on others imply proportionate loss. Says Dr. Jarvis, "Nor is the loss by early death all that the commonwealth suffers in diminution of productive power in the period presumably devoted to profitable labor. Even while men and women live they are subject to sickness, which lays a heavy tax on their strength and effectiveness. . . . It is estimated by the English observations and calculations that for every death there are two constantly sick; that is, 730 days' sickness and disability for every death." Reckoning on the basis of calculation furnished by the data of the English "sick-clubs," it is found that there was in the year 1870, among the people of Massachusetts of the working productive age, a total amount of twenty-four thousand five hundred and fifty-four years and eight months' sickness or disability, equivalent to so much loss of labor to the community. The bases on which the English results are made up do not include sickness of less than a week's duration, or any thing less than illness preventing labor:

hence a large total of loss is annually experienced which the above estimates do not include. There are, moreover, certain forms of disease, notably occasioned too by the injurious effects of mental or physical demands upon the sexual peculiarities of young women, which occasion a larger expense for their care than other forms. These are the various types of insanity. Says the author just quoted,* “Under the power of this disease, the sufferers not only cease to be workers, and to contribute to their own support, and that of their families and the state, but are positive burdens for the cost of their sustenance, and the care necessary for them in their wayward impulsiveness, and uncertainty of conduct. In the most favorable condition, the cost of care and sustenance of the insane is greater than that of the sound in mind; and, with most, the expense is very much greater.” The cost of efforts at the restoration of the insane is an additional item, and a heavy one, beyond the

* Edward Jarvis, M.D., *Op. cit.* p. 382.

cost of subsistence, and properly enters into the sum total of the possible burden involved by the loss to effective industry of the working female. There is no lack of evidence going to establish the special tendency of uterine and functional disturbance to produce insanity, and of the predisposition of certain lines of female work to cause these disturbances. It is found that "laborers" hold the second place in numbers among the patients of the Massachusetts insane asylums, and that a large preponderance of these are females. Of these, it is believed that fully five per cent have found the direct or aggravating cause of their insanity* in

* "It is certain, however, that disease of them (the generative organs) may act as a powerful co-operating cause in the production of insanity, without giving rise, so far as we know, to a special group of symptoms. Thus, for example, melancholia distinguishable by no feature from melancholia otherwise caused may be the effect of disease of the uterus. Schröder van der Kolk mentions the case of a woman profoundly melancholic who suffered from *prolapsus uteri*, and in whom the melancholia disappeared when the uterus was returned to the proper place. I have met with one case in which profound melancholia

menstrual disorder or uterine disease (not including the effects of the last climacteric in woman); and it is more than conjectured that a larger familiarity with the phenomena of insanity, and care in examination of insane patients committed to treatment, would establish a considerably increased per cent. As most of the female patients, who find residence in the State institutions for the insane, are those who have followed only industrial pursuits, their disorders, when referable to their avocations, have clearly originated in those of labor. The special tendency to uterine disorders of certain employments will be manifest in their consideration in future pages.

There is still another item in the error account against present customs of employ, which, though not wholly related to physical well-being, both by direct and reflex influence is powerfully operative upon sex, and

of ten years' standing disappeared after the removal of a *prolapsus uteri*. Other diseases and displacements of the uterus may act in the same way." — HENRY MAUDSLEY, M.D.: *Body and Mind*, p. 93.

its part in the future welfare of society. It has long been recognized, that, for the best good of the individual and posterity, there should be a sound development of body and mind, requiring a pretty definite term for its accomplishment, as a platform on which to rightly pose the special function of sex. A failure to secure this must inevitably militate against physical integrity, and to a great degree affect the moral *status* of the sufferer.

A youthful moral distortion involves inseparable present enmity to right physical and mental development. To this attaches persistent injury of fabric; and, even if the train of physical and social evils incident to prostitution and a life of misery do not follow, there is sure to result a lessened vigor and vitality. The influences that bring about these interchangeable moral and functional perversions are notably abundant in the present "omissions and commissions" of industrial employments. Says Gaskell,* "The

* P. GASKELL: The Manufacturing Population of England.

crowding together numbers of the young of both sexes in factories is a prolific source of moral delinquency. The stimulus of a heated atmosphere, the contact of opposite sexes, the example of lasciviousness upon the animal passions, — all have conspired to produce a very early development of sexual appetencies. Indeed, in this respect, the female population engaged in manufactures approximates very closely to that found in tropical climates; puberty, or at least sexual propensities, being attained almost coeval with girlhood. The early age at which sexual development calls into play a crowd of irrepressible sensations, — which, when properly tempered and directed, form the basis of future character, — and the unfavorable circumstances under which this forced development occurs, are in a great measure destructive to the well-being, physical and moral, of those who may well be called its victims." The disregard paid the decencies of life in the location and condition of water-closets, etc.; the laxity with which

clothing is worn, and postures are assumed, in the processes of manufacture; the constant association of both sexes in the shoe-shop, the factory, and the store; the temperature, excitement of emulation, etc., — are all actively operative for evil in this direction, in our industrial system. It is an influence whose dangers to society's best interests are co-extensive with its operation.

I have thus reviewed, in an imperfect but suggestive way, the relations of the health of the young female worker, as affected by her vocations, to the welfare of the commonwealth. This review would seem to indicate, that large numbers of her class are of an age at which unfavorable conditions of employ act with dire results against her especial sexual attributes; that severe requirements of brain-exercise, specially inimical to sexual function, are exacted by many processes of industry in which the female is engaged; that there are associate influences of brain-labor in industry of extreme deleterious effect, not occurring with the

mental exercises of education; that while with sex in education the effort of the reformer will be to regulate, in industry it will be to prohibit and banish, as well as control; that, so far as purely economic forces are concerned, the loss of the working girl by the errors of employ is greater than that of the student; that the maintenance of broken-down workers is a greater drain upon the community than their actual deaths at an early period; that insanity is a form of disease entailing special burdens on society; and that the unlawful employment of young girls, acting as a stimulant to premature development of the sexual principle, is productive of physical deficiency and immoral tendency, the latter acting reflectively upon the physical forces to their greater detriment. If I have argued correctly, there exists such a sum of antagonism against the foundation necessities of existence, as well demands the earnest attention of state and individual.