

Physical and Sexual Frailty of the Average American Woman.

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In the beginning the Perfect Designer created woman perfect and lovely. Every faculty appropriate, every organ and its function normal. But in adapting herself to the environments and fashion of the so-called high civilization, the primal and natural has been defaced and a physical degeneration has taken place in her constitution. Neither the views of the older theologians that man and woman in Paradise possessed highest refinement and society enjoyed an ideal civilization, nor the views of the evolutionists that our race has struggled painfully up from an apelike anatomy, and brutal savagery, can be supported by conclusive evidence. We, however, possess ample and reliable historical and anthropological proof that primitive woman was superior to her sister of the present day, anatomically, physiologically and hygienically.

Jewish, Roman and Greek history shows us clearly that the science of health was their chief and ~~most~~ favorite study. The Mosaic law of health and diet was undoubtedly one of the grandest books of hygiene that has ever been written. With their daily baths and ablution, massage after bathing, and subsequent anointing of the body with fragrant ointment, their loose garments, systematic physical exercise, open air life, and properly regulated diet, the Greek and Roman women gained world-wide fame for gracefulness and beauty. If the women of the present day were as careful about those things as were the ancient Jewish, Roman and Greek women, and if the men of today were more pure, more true and more thoughtful in their lives and conduct with the fair sex, the women would suffer very few physical ills.

I have had, as, I am sure, you all have, abundant opportunity to treat many women. We all are often most painfully impressed with the large number of female patients, who come to us for advice and treatment. The chief diseases common among them being some form of indigestion, nervous and sexual diseases. This fact is a lamentable reflection and reproach to our much-boasted modern civilization.

I am very much afraid that we physicians often fail to do our full duty with our patients. How many of us, I wonder, do heartily and conscientiously advocate physical exercise, moral uplift and hygienic means for the good of our patients and the human society

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at large? How frequently we have been silent and indifferent in regard to social errors, educational and physiological conditions and susceptibilities of young girls and women? If we remain indifferent and lethargic in regard to perfect development and psychical events in a woman's life, we will disorganize society and eventually destroy our race. The political economy and social sciences teach us that we are our brother's and sister's keeper. Therefore, it behooves us, as teachers of life and health, that we must rescue their precious lives not only when they are sunk in the mire and filth of ignorance and disease, but we must save them by every prophylactic means and method, that they may obtain perfect physical development and happy existence.

We find that too many American girls and women today are weak, sickly, flabby, pale, emaciated, constipated, with not enough strength and ambition in them, because they are cursed with certain damnable social environments and restrictions. Many of these women walk on the streets like beautiful dolls, with very little vitality in them. If they only would imitate their primitive sisters as to open air life, deep breathing, healthful style of garments, a purely moral and hygienic life, there would be comparatively few diseases for us to treat.

The average woman in America has no sexual desire or vigor at all. Because she does not live, act and be as nature and nature's Designer demand that she should! I am not at all surprised to find that so many married men in America go astray morally. Because their wives are women only in name. Cold and indifferent. It requires heroic struggle and inconceivable means and methods on the part of the husband to create any passion whatever in his wife. No wonder this beautiful land is cursed with the divorce evil.

The average American woman is not interested in the serious and sacred matters of life. Her chief desire is pretty garments, finery and a general good time. She does not seem to appreciate the fact that excessive indulgence in "good times" means indolence, and is dangerous to health, to delicacy of woman's nature, and to the sexual tract. If she realizes her great mission and responsibility to her home and to human society at large, and that she is a great factor in moulding the character and life of her brother man, she will be constrained to develop herself to an ideal womanhood, and that her usefulness will be wide and great in the world.

I am strongly convinced that it is chiefly in the hands of women that the future of society and this beautiful America lies. They will either lower or ennoble the ideal of manhood. Men will be what the women make them! We know of some of the noblest and

best men, who have been cheered and encouraged to lives of still greater nobility and worth by the congenial and exalting sympathy of pure and high-minded women. Yet, alas, there are a great many other women who are simply living for a sensual "good time," and who are constantly lavishing their smiles of approval where wounded pigeons flutter bleeding on the lawn, or where birds are driven in clouds to a wholesale slaughter, or where noble animals lie quivering with broken limbs beside some fence, or where some men spend their lifetime where the very atmosphere is laden with vice and scandal.

Two forms of evil which are very largely practiced in America are conjugal onanism and coitus incompletus, or where the emission does not take place at all. As both practices have a similar effect, I will speak of them as one. We are emulating France in this most infernal practice. It is quite common among the well-to-do, refined, Christian (?), educated society people. Their chief aim is not to have children. The wife is in high society and she fears that pregnancy will spoil her beauty and pretty figure, that the presence of a baby in her home will prevent her from enjoying the gaiety and pleasures of various social functions. Sometimes, however, this is only the man's sin, the woman in her childlike innocence and simplicity, not knowing its real character, thinks that it is the only and natural way. Occasionally man yields to woman's wishes in the matter. Then again, the fear of pains and dangers of parturition, puerperal fever, post partum hemorrhage, and the ill health of the woman are the reasons why pregnancy in this way is avoided. As a result, they not only damage their body and mind, but also a local and quite frequently deep-seated morbid condition of the sexual apparatus takes place. In women it produces weakness, loss of flesh, pallor, nervousness, irritability, unrest, dyspepsia, constipation, headache, vertigo, hysteria and general crankiness. In addition to these they frequently suffer with numerous forms of metritis, uterine displacements, Perimetritic inflammations, neuroses of the ovaries, amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, etc., simply owing to the lax and unhealthy condition of the pelvic organs and the absence or suspension of the genital life, produced in most instances by a profound disturbance of the general nutrition.

And what is the effect on the men? They often suffer dull pains in the head, spine, back and legs. They perspire on slight exertion and complain of dull, heavy praecordial sensation or pain, palpitation of the heart, with frequent thin, wiry and irregular pulse. Many of them suffer with urethral and prostatic trouble, and are greatly emaciated. Violation of nature's laws will bring its

penalty upon both the offenders, but more especially and more severely upon the woman!

Another cause of woman's frailty and sexual diseases is the moral laxity and impurity of men! A great many American men—single or married—are exceedingly sensual and immoral. I believe that there should be a "square deal" and "equal rights" between men and women! That man should have as clean a record of life as we require it of woman! That man should be as pure and undefiled as a virgin! Not only in their past lives, but also in the present and future. The violation of physical, psychical and moral laws in this regard is ruining the health and life of many a beautiful woman in this land of ours! There is no doubt that high conditions of modern civilization and luxurious and indolent modes of life tend to enhance men's passion and evil propensities and make them brutal and bestial in their social and marital relationship with women, ruining women's health in inordinate sexual appetite and unnatural sexual intercourse, and thus degenerating the minds, morals and lives of their offspring.

Thus the man's excessive passion and sensuality leads women to display their physical charms by all sorts of sensual and suggestive means. But, alas, how much the poor woman's vanity suffers physical discomfort and degeneration in consequence! This fact is evident from the women's style of dress. As a general rule, American women dress beautifully. But there is a tendency among some women to dress in such a fashion as to simply cover their bodies, without concealing the anatomical parts. They cover themselves only to enhance the loveliness of their divinely moulded form and thereby attract and excite men's attention. But such covering is simply a curse to themselves, and they only degrade themselves and damn the minds and souls of their admirers and onlookers.

While the average woman is, generally speaking, indifferent and lethargic in sexual life, yet she is exceedingly coquetish, stylish and man-pleasing in her nature, because she is jealous of her lover or husband. Hence many women dress loudly, sensually and suggestively, irrespective of comfort and hygiene of her body and garments. Some women try to make an artificial figure by artificial means. They force the body into a cramped position, and endeavor to produce sensual and suggestive anatomical outlines. I have often observed that these women, in order to keep their figure in graceful lines, wear close-fitting bodices and corsets. Some wear tightly-laced corsets, with long steel stays, which anteriorly reach almost the pubic bone and posteriorly the sacrum, in that way producing a curve of the body forward, and creating a to and fro movement of

the hips laterally, denominating it, I presume, as a most stunning style of walk. They seem entirely to ignore the eternal fact that no woman's figure needs artificial contour! When a woman gives attention to her development, health and baths, she does not need to worry about the real lines of beauty and attractiveness.

Finally, gentlemen, I have not spoken thus as a cynic or as a man scoured with disappointments, and indifferent to all the delights of manly exercise and of life. I speak as one who thanks God for having given him keen delight. I believe in all that is beautiful, true and brave in the world. Our intellect, which enables us to read the lustrous letters of the stars of heaven, and fathom the deep recesses of the earth, also constrains us to admire, love and adore that which is sweet, lovely and precious. In endeavoring to treat my subject I did not mean to cast reflection on women in general, or lower the ideal of true womanhood. By nature, observation and study I am fully convinced that woman is God's most precious gift to man. For, she is the embodiment of love and loveliness, as well as she is our counsellor, our companion, and our helpmate. She is the teacher of our early years, the dearest comfort of our homes, the encourager of purity and chastity, and the strongest bond as well as the brightest ornament of society. But in adapting herself to the present degenerate civilization and mode of life, she fell, and it is our duty, as moral and scientific physicians, to remedy the existing evil in social life, and prevent further defect and deformity in the minds, morals and body of the beautiful women of this glorious America and of the world.

Discussed by Gertrude Cuscaden, Omaha:

I should like to be able to reply to that paper. It is the funniest thing I ever heard. I should like to know the life story of the writer. His autobiography would be worth while.

I have been for fifty years looking at women, studying women, loving women, but I never have seen anything this writer has seen. I have seen women studying or working and having a good time; as a rule they are healthy, strong and taking care of themselves. I pity the poor health of our men as I watch the little husband and the strong wife.

This paper is just now to me the funniest thing in the world.

Discussed by Dr. Mary Strong, Omaha:

We read of these things in the Bible. It says that man received regulations about certain evils in Leviticus. Evils existed then or there would not have been regulations concerning them and I do not believe that nature was much different from what it is now. I have read a little ancient history too. I have read Roman and Greek history and have read stories about men and women in those days that did not strike me as exactly pretty.

To compare the morals of American women with the morals of the time of Nero is an insult to every woman in this room. Consider the condition of affairs in this country before the white men came, in the South Sea Islands, and even in Greece and Rome! Was that better than it is now?

I know something about the evils of today. I know there are evils and things ought to be better. And yet he talks about the women being worse than these other people. It is an insult.

I think that is all I have to say.

Discussed by W. F. Milroy, Omaha:

I received a different impression from this paper than that which is in the minds of Dr. Cusaden and Dr. Strong. I believe Dr. Mesrobian remarked in his paper that he did not intend to compare the morals of the women of today with the morals of Greek and Roman women. He referred to the physical condition without reference to the moral condition. I think he is correct, with regard to their physical condition.

The paper impressed me favorably and I think for the most part it is correct. It sets before us main facts as they exist today. During the last few years perhaps the condition of women has improved. We might say it is "faddy" in recent years to engage in physical exercise. There is still much room for improvement along the lines the doctor has suggested. I think the ladies present may be justified in taking exception only on the ground that they oppose public mention of these facts. In the main I think the paper is most excellent. I think it ought to be stated in this society that it is approved and endorsed. It is a very timely paper and I commend it.

Discussed by E. W. Demaree, Roca:

As a woman I wish to say that there seems to be much to commend in this paper. We should not greatly resent a statement of the fact that, for many reasons we are not living as we should. Dr. Mesrobian's paper did not imply that we are all sick, nor, as I understand it, did he make an implication against the morals of American women in general.

For many things in the paper I feel that thanks rather than condemnation are due the author from women.

Discussed by F. A. Butler, Harvard:

Dr. Mesrobian, is an Armenian, who located in our country at Edgar, about three years ago. He is a most excellent practitioner.

This paper might not be called scientific, but it touches on a point we should be interested in.

In the first place, there seems to be a different way among the average American well-to-do families, as to the way they rear boys and girls.

They study together, go to school together and play together, until they are about twelve years old, after this age, girls are crowded too much in school life. First, there is the public school, then the University and possibly a course in music. All confinement indoors. A continual nervous strain at the very time her muscular strength should be developed, her nervous system is developed to the detriment of the muscular system. She has too much indoor and too little outdoor life. Then in her social life there is too much to do, too much to go to. Something doing all the time. You are in it or else you are not in it, in the so-called better class. This, is the life of the average well-to-do American woman. A nervous wreck is the result, coupled onto a frail body in too many instances. We have a boy and girl, both twelve years old. They go to school together, study music together, have a splendid driving outfit and drive considerably. It is our aim that the girl have plenty of outdoor exercise and not be penned up to become a faded flower as is sometimes the case. She has about the same amount of outdoor exercise the boy has. It is our aim this may continue until she is fully grown.

In a general way I was much pleased with the paper.

Dr. Mesrobian closing:

I was a little embarrassed by the adverse criticism of my paper by two ladies, but I was most gratefully impressed by the attention you gave me. A

man worthy of the name should be magnanimous toward women and, if women make slanderous remarks, he should forgive them their ill disposition. Since the first lady wished to know my biography I will speak of it very briefly.

I came to this country about twenty-five years ago and took courses in different schools which this country affords to every one who comes here for an education. My lot has been cast among the most excellent class of people in this land. I was brought up in a noble Christian family in Armenia and from my childhood was taught to admire and respect all women and to live as a man worthy of the name.

When I prepared this paper I had no views of a foreigner but of a true American citizen and of one who is always proud of America. I love the Armenians because of their sufferings under the tyrannic Turkish government but I love this land because it is the best in the world. I married an American woman of culture and refinement and have the greatest respect for American women.

I believe you will observe that I spoke more strongly against the men of America, men who are the cause of their wives having so much trouble, than against the women. Before I came in, however, I expected that there would be one or more women in this audience with uneven dispositions who might misconstrue my statements. But as I said we must be magnanimous, we must be forgiving.

I thank you very much for your attention and consideration.