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A STUDY IN INTERESTS.

By CERPAS GUILLET, Ph. D.

In order to discover my pupils' state of mind regarding various fields of human interest, I put before them twelve subjects representing a wide range of matters and asked them to rearrange these in the order of their preference for discussion and composition. The pupils (of the Toronto "Technical" High School) were enjoined to state name in full and age. I obtained answers from 319, of whom 151 were girls and 168 boys. There was one boy of eleven years; there were three girls and four boys of twelve; 18 girls and 18 boys of thirteen; 31 girls and 38 boys of fourteen; 36 girls and 35 boys of sixteen; 22 girls and 17 boys of seventeen; 4 girls and 4 boys of eighteen, and 5 girls and 3 boys of from 19 to 23 years of age. On account of the smallness of the numbers, I grouped the ages 11, 12 and 13 together, and likewise the ages 18 to 23. To arrive at the position of a subject in the list at a given age of either sex, I added together the numbers indicating its rank given by each pupil of this age and sex, and divided by the number of such pupils: similarly for the boys as a whole and the girls as a whole.

I have plotted curves (not here given) showing how the interest in the different subjects varied from year to year in both sexes. It is striking how entirely opposite and complementary these curves of boys and girls are to each other in nearly every instance. There is almost an entire absence of parallelism. When the interest of the boys in a subject is greatest, that of the girls is least. As the boys' interest wanes, the girls' waxes. There could not be a clearer evidence of the radical difference in the masculine and feminine natures, a difference that is not confined to the body, but extends to the operations of the mind, to the attitude of the soul towards its whole environment.

Below is a table of the amount of sexual difference in interest at each age:

The general increase of sexual difference in interest at the age of fourteen (puberty) is interesting. In certain subjects there is a weakening of the sexual difference at the age of fifteen, *i. e.*, in the sixteenth year, for which I cannot account. Is it because it is a transition period from one kind of interest

	12-13	14	15	16	17	18-23	Total.
1. Plants and animals.....	.4	2.3	.9	1.3	.3	.5	5.7
2. Earthquakes and volcanoes..	0	0	.4	2.6	1.6	.1	4.7
3. Myth or legend.....	.2	2.7	.3	1.4	1.6	.9	7.1
4. Novel or story of modern life,	1.2	3	.6	.7	5.6	3.2	14.3
5. Life of some great man.....	1	2.4	.2	3.4	3.1	1.3	11.4
6. Bible characters.....	2.7	4.6	1.5	2.2	1.1	.5	12.6
7. Great event.....	1.3	.3	.8	.1	.5	2.7	6.7
8. Voyage of discovery.....	.9	.3	.9	1.5	3	1.2	4.8
9. Foreign customs.....	.7	2.7	2.4	2.7	1.3	2.8	12.6
10. Industry or invention.....	1.4	1.1	.7	3.4	2.3	4.7	13.6
11. Sports and outings.....	1.3	.6	2.1	.2	.1	4.1	8.4
12. History of some science.....	1.7	.3	.1	2.2	1.5	1.9	7.7
Total.....	12.8	20.3	10.9	21.7	22	23	109.6

in certain subjects to another, which makes this year partake less of the more pronounced differences both of the cruder early youthful interest (the interest of early adolescence) and of the more mature interest of the young man or woman, *i. e.*, of later adolescence? This is particularly apparent in the feminine subjects, *myth or legend*, *novel and great men*, and the masculine subjects, *industry and invention* and *history of some science*. The earlier sexual difference culminates as a rule in the fifteenth year, *i. e.*, at the age of fourteen. The later sexual difference culminates in most of the subjects in the seventeenth or eighteenth years; but later in three subjects, namely *great events*, *industry and invention*, and *sports and outings*. The number of pupils, however, in these later years (from eighteen on) is very small.

I have made out a chart to show the order and extent in which the twelve subjects appealed to the boys and the girls respectively as a whole. (See page 324.)

It will be observed that there are four subjects for which the girls care very little, namely, Earthquakes and volcanoes, Industry and invention, Plants and animals, and especially the History of some Science. These are all either of a scientific or a practical nature. These subjects are all placed higher in the boys' list: one of them, Industry and Invention, the most practical subject in the list, is placed very much higher, being in fact one of the boys' favorite subjects. The interest in industry and invention exists mainly in the students in the technical science department. The students in the commercial department have evidently little real intellectual interest in commerce: it would seem to be regarded merely as a means of earning a livelihood. The topic, History of some Science, which stands last on both lists, I put before them in order to ascertain to what extent the boys in the science department

*Chart showing Rank of Subjects according to the interests of
161 Girls and 168 Boys
of a High School.*

4		
.1		
.2		
.3		
.4		
.5		
.6	Life of some great man (4.62)	
.7		
.8		
.9		Voyage of discovery (4.94)
5	Customs of some foreign people (5.04)	
.1		
.2		Great event (5.17)
.3		
.4		Sports and outings (5.36)
.5	Myth or legend of ancient times (5.55)	
.6	Novel or story of modern life (5.61)	Life of great man (5.61)
.7	Bible characters (5.72)	
.8		
.9		Customs of foreign people (5.95)
6		Industry or invention (6.05)
.1	Sports and outings (6.15)	
.2	Great event in history (6.19)	
3.	Voyage of discovery or exploration (6.32)	Myth or legend (6.39)
.4		
.6		
.8		Earthquakes and volcanoes (6.89)
7		
.2		Story of modern life (7.17)
.4		
.6		
.8		
8	Earthquakes and volcanoes (8.06)	
.2	Industry or invention (8.21)	Bible characters (8.08)
	Plants and animals (8.35)	Plants and animals (8.23)
.4		
.6		
.8		History of some science (8.83)
9		
.2		
.4		
.6		
.8		
10		
.2	History of some science (10.22)	

were interested in pure science. And I found that whereas Industry and Invention was placed first by the science boys, the History of some Science was placed tenth. The third year science boys, however, while they also put Industry and Invention first, placed the History of some Science third. All this would seem to indicate that the science teacher should begin with practical applications of the physical sciences. But the beauty and the sublimity of the laws of God's universe should never be lost sight of in the myriad applications of them to man's amusement and comfort and advancement.

Of the first five subjects named in the boys' and girls' lists, two are common to both, namely, Life of some great man, and Customs of some foreign people. An interest in great lives and in strange races is evidently strong in all young people of high school age. Advantage should be taken of this hint that nature gives us of the most ready means of enlarging and ennobling the minds of youth.

It would appear, however, from an examination of this chart, that Great men, Foreign Customs, Myth and legend, Novel or story of modern life, and Bible Characters are, to a considerable extent, characteristically feminine subjects, being placed much higher in the girls' list than in the boys'. On the other hand, the three subjects that head the boys' list, namely, Voyage of discovery, Great events, and Sports and outings, are very much lower on the girls' list, coming considerably behind the five subjects that have been mentioned as characteristically feminine. These boys' themes are all of action, and of action in real life; whereas, in the girls' list, imagination, poetry and the ideal are very prominent. Was not Goethe right when he said, "Das ewigweiblich zieht uns hinan"?

When we come to consider the particular historical events that chiefly arouse the interest of these young people of both sexes, we have to confess a certain disappointment. As great events of history, the battles of Waterloo and Trafalgar, and the Taking of Quebec, dwarf all others in young Canadians' eyes. The French Revolution, the defeat of the Spanish Armada, the War of 1812, the South African War, and the battle of Bannockburn are sufficiently favored to deserve mention. Of the forty events mentioned, twenty-six are wars and revolutions, eight are other political changes, four are reigns (Henry VIII, Mary, Victoria's Jubilee, and Edward VII's Coronation), and two are discoveries, a single vote for each (those of the Portuguese and of Columbus). The events that arouse the widest interest are certainly important: love of country and love of freedom are two of the noblest sentiments of man. But the range of subjects is rather limited, and that "Peace hath

her victories no less renowned than war," has not yet become the conviction of any considerable number of these youths and maidens. With many of them "battles" and "great events" would seem to be synonymous terms; indeed, one boy asked me of "great events" if the great event *had to be a battle*. There is, moreover, scarcely any difference to be detected between the ninety-three answers of the girls and the ninety-three answers of the boys on this point. And this is all the more remarkable when we remember how different this investigation proves the reactions of boys and girls to be in general. Does the explanation lie in the masculinization of the girls in a subject handled by a man entirely from a masculine point of view; and does their knowledge of it consequently arise rather from passive imbibition than from active interest and appreciation? The wisdom of co-education, with all that this usually implies in practice, is by no means established yet. In discussing the subject of great events with the pupils, before assigning it for composition, one can spend an hour very profitably in questioning and cross-questioning them as to their reasons for deeming a certain event great. This inquiry gives rise to a very interesting and stimulating discussion, calculated to leave the pupils better prepared to appreciate the many great events they have ignored, as well as the true significance of many they have mentioned.

It is interesting to note that while the Life of some Great Man comes much earlier than some Great Event in History in the girls' list, the Great Event is placed somewhat before the Life in the boys' list. Boys evidently regard the fact, the accomplishment; girls are more interested in the person. Boys are lovers of deeds; girls hero-worshippers. An examination of the particular men admired reinforces the present argument. In the case of the boys eighty-six per cent. of these are men of action, and only fourteen per cent. leaders of thought; whereas with the girls only fifty-nine per cent. are leaders of action, and forty-one per cent. are leaders of thought; the leaders of thought being in both cases mainly poets. Again, of the men of action a rather larger proportion of warriors is chosen by the boys and of statesmen by the girls; and while the boys mention nine inventors, the girls mention but one. The girls select women in only six cases, although in two of the classes, containing fifty-six girls, I expressly added the words "or woman" to the subject, making it read, Life of some Great Man or Woman. Some might think that there is little significance in this fact, as the number of famous women is small and even these not in the front rank of genius and achievement; and that the girls, therefore, show their honesty and good sense in recognizing this fact. Many of the men they choose, however, are far from being of the first rank. Dickens, Marconi, Wm. Lyon

Mackenzie, Lord Strathcona, and other men of comparatively little note have their votaries among the girls; while George Eliot, Mrs. Browning, Cornelia and Deborah are not mentioned. It is possible that co-education is to some extent responsible for the little interest shown by girls in the great of their own sex. In our returns the women admired by the girls are Queens Victoria, Elizabeth and Boadicea, Joan of Arc, Jenny Lind and Florence Nightingale; Victoria receiving two votes and the rest one. One of the boys also admires Elizabeth. It is not a little disquieting to find that the two men most admired by the youth of both sexes should be Nelson and Napoleon, each of whom receives thirty-three votes, Nelson leading slightly with the boys and Napoleon with the girls. Here the instinct of the boys is truer than that of the girls. If we must have a warrior for a hero, better a thousand times the unselfish patriot than the vain-glorious despot. The girls, however, give as many votes to Tennyson as to Nelson, and almost as many to Scott, while Wolfe stands almost as high in the boys' estimation as Napoleon. The latter have hardly taken seriously Wolfe's noble tribute to the poet Gray before the battle that made him famous. The girls' preference for Napoleon over Nelson possibly indicates a less narrowly racial and patriotic feeling than boys possess. The nine boys who mention inventors are students in the science department, and no one mentions any scientist. They are evidently learning to value the practical application of principles rather than the principles themselves, to admire an Edison rather than a Faraday. There is but a scattering of votes (one or two apiece) for religious leaders, for St. Patrick, Wesley, Luther and Moody; there are three votes for Dante, one for Milton, and one for the musical composer, Wagner. And while, as I have said, there are thirty-three votes for Nelson and thirty-three for Napoleon, there are but three for Livingstone and one for Gordon.

Of Bible characters Joseph is the favorite both with the boys and with the girls, but particularly with the latter. And this is true of all ages up to and including seventeen, except that at fourteen the girls much prefer David. After Joseph comes David, and then Moses. The predominance of these three may be partly, but only partly, accounted for by their exclusive mention in the question as examples of Bible characters. After these by a long interval come Daniel and Paul together, Daniel being especially liked by the boys. Others receive scattering votes. Christ is mentioned by five of the girls but by none of the boys. It is probable that the great majority of the pupils did not regard Christ as included in the question. Sixty of the boys and twenty of the girls failed to name any Bible character.

The position of the subject Bible Characters in both lists,

and particularly in the boys', deserves more than a passing allusion. In spite of the strong natural interest that young people have in biography and in the far-away, the great characters of the Bible, Moses, Joseph, David, the prophets, and the apostles, have much less interest for the girls than the lives of other men, and for the boys have scarcely any interest at all. The subject comes fifth on the girls' list and tenth on the boys'; and to both, Bible characters are far less interesting than the brilliant despot Napoleon. One of the two subjects placed by the boys below Bible characters is a subject of which the majority of them know very little and have been taught scarcely anything; whereas they have presumably been taught the Bible from their infancy at home and in the Sunday School. The science students placed even these two subjects ahead of "Bible characters," placing this last of all. The curves of interest for Bible characters show that this interest steadily wanes in the girls after the age of thirteen, with but a slight recovery in later adolescence. In the boys the decline is decided but less constant, and the recovery at later adolescence relatively more pronounced; though it does not reach even the low point to which this interest falls in the case of their sisters.

These facts are a startling commentary upon our methods of training youth. Is it not evident that parents in general either do not or cannot teach the Bible, and that the Sunday School lessons are altogether deficient in that they fail to give the youth a love for the Bible? Clearly our methods will have to be revised and a more psychological system substituted for the very defective one now in vogue. In a word the science of genetic psychology will have to be applied to the matter before we shall have much improvement in this deplorable condition of religious education. The Bible is a unique record of ethical and religious growth and it should be taught as such to growing youth. And we do not read the signs of the times if we fail to perceive that such training is essential to the stability and permanence of the State. It is inconceivable that a generation trained to appreciate the beauty and sublimity of Hosea's life and thought should wander so far from the true idea of sexual relationship, and in particular of the marriage tie, upon whose sanctity is founded the family and the State. It is inconceivable that a generation trained to admire the consecrated statesmanship of an Isaiah would tolerate the leadership of political and commercial bosses and grafters. It is equally inconceivable that a generation that had imbibed in youth the great hearted catholicity of the book of Jonah (which to most young people as well as old is but a Mark Twain joke) should have presented so sorry a spectacle to the world as the West has exhibited these past twelve months in their selfish and brutal treatment of a magnanimous and sensitive race.