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EDUCATION FOR PARENTHOOD

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sex is a common ground of larger and larger dimensions. It gives them more interest in each other and may be destined to bring them into a new and higher unity. The time for this scientific synthesis has of course not yet come and may be long delayed, inevitable though it seems sooner or later. Meanwhile eugenics draws upon all these domains and has pointed out many and will, let us hope, find out many more practical ways of improving the human stock and helping the world on towards the kingdom of some kind of superman to which the men of to-day may some day prove to be only a transition, a link which with all that absorbs us now may be lost sight of and possibly become a missing link.

EDUCATION FOR PARENTHOOD.

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Ex-President and Member of Council of American Academy of Medicine, and Member of Executive Committee of American Association for Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality.

We are facing certain facts. The first is that parenthood does not make wise parents; for some fathers and even some mothers deliberately teach their children vice; more by their conversation and acts carelessly teach evil; many more, while perhaps guarding their own will, in order to make money, degrade the children of other parents by employment and wages, by housing conditions, by entertainments and reading matter and pictures, by saloons and other details in city management; very many more parents neglect their children through ignorance, or in other occupations and pleasures. While there are some wise ones, nevertheless a very large part of modern social effort is struggling to undo the mistakes of parents.

We are, too, facing the facts that manhood does not always make a wise citizen, nor womanhood always an unwise citizen; that political elections do not make wise government nor wise school officials. Right education is the remedy for unwise parents and citizens, of either sex; for unwise officials in state house, city hall, and school department. The crucial education is that for parenthood.

The Creator has established certain laws for parenthood. Their violation, even ignorantly, injures future generations, burdening so-

ciety and hindering higher civilization. Our first duty is to search out His laws. Our second duty is to prepare in this scientific knowledge of parenthood teachers of children—the potential parents; for the foundations of good parenthood must be laid before the event. Neither can we have marriages according to the laws of *God* until standards are so formed that only a wholesome person and character will attract love.

COURSES FOR PARENTHOOD.

This preparation of teachers of potential parents has been developing during the last twenty years in certain places along definite lines, until paths well “blazed” by successful experimentation indicate where our efforts should concentrate. Preparing for wise parenthood is as definite a process as training for nursing, or for running a bank, or for building a bridge. As schools for nurses, one of the most beneficent undertakings of the nineteenth century, were initiated by medical women in their own hospital, so this training for parenthood was launched in the schools of Boston by the intelligent persistence of college women, and against political indifference or incapacity or opposition is winning its way in every state.

Such courses for teachers are found in twenty or more universities and academic colleges, in twice as many special institutions and high schools, and in practically every agricultural college, for the United States Department of Agriculture has been their strong supporter. The ages of pupils range from 17 to 25 or 30. These courses have minor variations; but the brief description of one will give a fair idea of the *trend* of all.

This course takes the larger part of pupils' time for four years, the remaining being given to the usual studies, language, literature, history. The wise locating, planning, and building of a house, its wise care, the care and feeding of a family, depend fundamentally on understanding certain laws of chemistry, physics, and biology, and on skill in the arts of applying them to the duties of parents. These sciences are taught as they directly concern healthfulness of premises, clothing and habits, wholesomeness of food, and, finally, the creation developed out of these factors, character and social relations. The central thought on which these four years of work is focused is “Improving the individual so that future generations may attain a higher level than those preceding them.” Education before this has stopped with more or less of improving the individual so that one may win

"success," or "happiness," or wealth. This definitely holds up an ideal of responsibility that is infinite—future generations.

A COURSE OUTLINED.

A summary of their study of social relations will be most useful. It comes after two and a half years in chemistry, physics, biology, bacteriology, physiology and household management. The development of the infant before birth from the single cell is first discussed, and as they have seen these beginnings many times in plant and animal life in their biologic laboratory, it is a simple matter to adapt that knowledge to human life. The discussion of heredity, of which they have already tested certain facts in their biology, takes up laws of inheritance of inherent characteristics, the inheritance of acquired characteristics, the effects on germ plasm of alcoholism, syphilis, drug habits. They learn the real significance of "good stock" on the father's side, and on the mother's.

Teachers with this knowledge can do much, indirectly and directly in mothers' and parents' clubs and with children to develop through the country right ideas of marriage to replace the unwholesome ones now so common among young people and among their parents, who should know and teach their children better.

There is a far-reaching significance in their enumeration of syphilis and gonococcus infection (not "gonorrhoea," one of its manifestations) among ordinary contagious diseases, and in their study of these statistics as well as the others in government and scientific reports, and their relation to the home; for they are not less than five times as prevalent as tuberculosis and all other contagions together, and they injure wives and children to an extent not possible to estimate. They are the cause of many deaths before birth (characteristic of syphilis); of the death, degeneracy, blindness of many infants in the first years of life; of many childless families and one-child families (a peculiarity of gonococcus infection); of the invalidism, surgical mutilation and death of many wives; of much insanity, rheumatism, heart disease, and other physical and mental incapacity; of much divorce, unhappiness, crime; of expenditure of large public and private funds and effort on misfortunes that can and should be prevented. They have through slow processes exterminated ancient nation and modern communities. If they increase through the next quarter century at the rate of the last, it would seem as if this nation, too, must decline. In my own professional experience, as in that of

other physicians, the fate of married sister or friend has prevented—is preventing—marriages.*

The students see logically that control of these contagions must be the same as control of smallpox, scarlet fever, and any other of the several that we have almost eliminated—every case must be reported to the board of health.

CHILD STUDY.

After this study of heredity comes study of physical and mental development of child and adolescent; the influence of city life and country life on development, with school statistics of the rates of growth of boys and girls; the kinds of education adapted to different kinds of children; infant mortality—the effect on it of women's work outside the home, and of different kinds of occupations of mothers before the child is born; governmental and social efforts to reduce infant mortality; the pension system for mothers, paying a small sum, enabling them to stay at home and nurse their babies, thus saving citizens to the state, as governments have hitherto pensioned soldiers who destroy citizens; the effects of institutional care of babies and children on death rate and on development; the cause of reduced birth rates, and the duty of the educated in the preservation of the race; children in industry, and its legislation; the housing problem; child psychology; children's vices; education of the will; a study of nervous states and their hygiene.*

Such topics in some schools are so far as practicable made vital by co-operation with neighboring nurseries, hospitals or other institutions and there are, of course, children's classes in the practice school wherever teachers are trained. One has to regret that there is not yet a course for men complementary to this in some of its details. Many of the universities and colleges giving these courses have in the winter extension courses of a week or more, which are taken by thousands of farmers' wives and other women. In elementary schools competent teachers have organized many hundred classes of mothers and of parents, where study of and home co-operation in the education of their children is steadily being developed.

* For the above and additional facts see Chapters XV, XVI, XVII, in "Medical Gynecology" by Dr. H. A. Kelly of the Johns Hopkins University; "Social Diseases and Marriage," by Dr. Prince A. Morrow (Lea Brothers and Company), containing an extensive bibliography; Educational Pamphlet No. 3, issued by the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, 29 West 42nd Street, New York. (a reprint of one of Dr. Morrow's most important chapters).

* For fuller account of this and other courses see report of Educational Session, 1910, American Association for Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality. Address 1211 Cathedral Street, Baltimore.

THE WORK IN SCHOOLS.

What some teachers are doing with children themselves can best be indicated by a few typical instances. Teachers of the youngest grades, in their study of flowers, birds and other animals, speak of mother flower or animal, father and baby flowers and animals, tracing likenesses between parents and young, comparing their ways with people's way, establishing thus indirectly the consciousness, or, better, sub-consciousness that every life is from fathers and mothers, from eggs or from the mother's body, that there are fertilized and unfertilized seeds, that heredity and environment are factors in life—not using, however, those polysyllables.

For children a little older, nine to eleven, a teacher who had studied biology began in the seventh grade a "continued story," "The Story of the World We Live In." The "first chapter" was brilliant chemical experiments illustrating gases, vapors, condensations into liquids and solids, some of the curious properties of water, light and heat—this being the "Story of Chaos." In the following lessons they saw simplest plant life, yeast cells, through a microscope, and learned how they multiplied. They took for their text, "The two objects of every living thing are to perfect itself and to reproduce itself." The text was repeated and formed the line of study for every plant through the year—how it grew and how it multiplied. The next year, in the last grammar grade, the continued story used the same text for every animal studied, how it grew, perfecting itself and how it multiplied, giving as much but no more attention to reproduction (which instructors usually omit) than to other functions. It is to be remembered that the instructor was a student of biology, and the teaching was from that viewpoint.

FOR THE CITY CHILD.

There is a grammar school in the tenderloin district of a large city. The sights and sounds of the district educate the children more hours in the year than the school. The innocently expressed ambition of the little girls was to be a "fancy lady," whose idleness and gay dresses were more attractive than their toiling mothers' lives. The little boys, too, admired the "fancy ladies." The teachers, startled by the children's standards and unconscious vulgarity in many ways, begged the superintendent of schools to have a physician talk to them. He asked a medical woman who had been a successful teacher before studying medicine to give a talk to the girls; and he asked a medical man to do it for the boys. Each, ignorant of the other's action, re-

fused, saying that one talk from a stranger would do harm, not being enough to cover so much. The medical woman offered to give twelve or fifteen talks, and include what was wanted. When she had so discussed general health habits that she had interested them, and changed their mental attitude toward their bodies and toward life in some ways, she then safely discussed sex and its duties. After a few weeks of this course the boys sent a petition to the principal, "Can't a doctor give us talks like the girls?" The medical man then gave three talks on general hygiene, and finally one on sex, beginning with laws and phenomena in plants and animals, so placing human law in relation to universal law.

The results of this experiment were highly satisfactory. Conduct, conversation, and ideals were for the time changed among those unfortunately surrounded children; but it would be a miracle if these few hours could undo the constant influence of a "red light" neighborhood; environment such as every large city permits for some of its children, centrally located for the sake of business, yielding extra high rentals to people of large means who own such real estate, and are not infrequently found among subscribers to philanthropies and to churches. These school authorities consider this as the handling of an emergency, not as what should be done regularly. They are developing systematic instruction in nature study and hygiene as rapidly as capable instructors can be found.*

In a large city is a teacher of biology for children from twelve to sixteen, who year after year for nine years has taught in her classes of both boys and girls how every plant and animal they studied not only grew, but how it multiplied. She says enough, but no more than enough to set them almost unconsciously to reasoning from these to laws of human life. They actually demonstrate principles of heredity while cross-fertilizing flowers, and of environment in other experiments. This instructor and other biologists are increasingly including the discussion of contagions which are due to minute vegetable and animal organisms, "germs"; and in the list of commonest contagious diseases enumerate syphilis and gonococcus infection along with the others, perhaps giving a few facts and statistics concerning each, without discrimination against these in particular. This is the honest and clean-minded course.

*Dr. Zenner gives a full account of this and his further personal experience in talking to pupils in a little book, "Education in Sexual Physiology and Hygiene" (The Robert Clarke Company, Cincinnati). He makes no attempt to cover the subject; but contributes what we specially need just now, "clinical evidence."

In the last few years former pupils who have become parents, and others, have told her gratefully what an illumination and help this knowledge had been to them. She says, as others also, that quite without her anticipating it in the beginning, the under current of vulgar talk among the children spontaneously ceases as they advance in the study. The normal curiosity about sex and new life, as much a part of human nature as is love for pleasure, is directed in *open* channels, where it can be enlightened healthfully, without defilement. A well known educator of large experience once said to me, reflectively passing the problem through his mind, "I know no men in the schools of my city, and but few women, that I would be willing to have talk to my boy and girl on sex matters." "Would you be willing to have them take a sensible course in elementary biology?" He replied promptly, "I not only would be willing, but glad to have that."

OUTSTANDING PRINCIPLES.

These teachings so rapidly outlined agree in certain very important points, and demonstrate certain very important principles:

1. Not all teachers should undertake this; but only those prepared to teach the elementary science of living things, and with understanding of elementary sociology. Such do little with books or talks. Pupils see and handle plants and animals, watching life processes with *minds that are guided to search for law*.

2. Direct sex instruction in class is not given, even in emergency, until there is a well-laid groundwork in the renewal of life in all nature, a scientific setting or background, *with a scientific vocabulary*, that eliminates the vulgar attitude toward facts of sex inevitable when they stand alone.

We have made the deadening mistake of omitting from education all direction of the duty of passing on the torch of life entrusted to each for a few years. Education has been limited to self-preservation. Our sins of omission can not be undone. The sorrow and suffering have been and left their blight.

We are in some danger, in our haste to get wise, of going to the other extreme, and over emphasizing what is called "sex hygiene." This can hardly do more harm than altogether omitting it; but agitation for "instruction in sex hygiene," and for societies of "sex hygiene" seem over emphasis. What we should agitate for are:

1. Compulsory control of syphilis and gonococcus infection by boards of health. A very few societies with this object exist, working

as definitely as do our many anti-tuberculosis societies on their problem.

2. Efficient teaching of home making ("domestic science," "home economics").

3. Sensible teaching of the science of living things ("nature study," "school gardening," botany, zoology, elementary biology) as a compulsory study in elementary and secondary schools.

With these must be school environment and practices that grow healthier children to become healthy parents, and that are essential factors in "teaching hygiene." Our schools encourage tuberculosis, nervous disorders and some other ills whose prevention is outdoor air and more occupations that increase the circulation, which means stronger hearts, lungs and other vital organs. If home making, gardening, and industrial training are wisely developed, they will improve the health of parents as well as their efficiency.

Schools should aim to create a national consciousness, a subconsciousness developing through childhood, that *life is a trust received from many who have gone before, to be guarded and bettered in one's turn and passed along to many after*—a simple and easily demonstrable supplement to the more vague idea of God, stimulating an early sense of responsibility that is to moral life what physical exercise is to bodily life.*

THE CHILD'S RIGHTS.

THE RIGHT OF THE CHILD TO BE WELL-BORN.

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One of the outstanding characteristics of the present generation is its scientific and philanthropic interest in children. I use the terms "scientific" and "philanthropic" restrictively, for there is another kind of interest, namely, *parental* interest, concerning which there is some reason for doubt. But as to scientific and philanthropic interest

* Further discussion of school work is in Educational Pamphlet No. 2, "For Teachers," of the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis previously mentioned.

Important popular discussions of education for parenthood are in the Report of Conference on Prevention of Infant Mortality, 1909, American Academy of Medicine, Easton, Pa.; also in the Reports of the Association for Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality, mentioned in previous footnote.