

SEX HABITS
A VITAL FACTOR IN WELL-BEING

DRS. A. BUSCHKE AND F. JACOBSON

Dr. Abraham Buschke, specialist in urology and dermatology, was Professor Extraordinary at the University of Berlin for more than twenty years; and was also Director of the Dermatological Section of the Rudolf-Virchow Krankenhaus, one of the largest and most important hospitals in Berlin. His writings on sexual hygiene and venereal disease have been widely published.

Dr. Friedrich Jacobson was Dr. Buschke's colleague at the Rudolf-Virchow Krankenhaus, himself specializing in urology. His earlier writing in collaboration with Dr. Buschke was on the subject of venereal disease. Both physicians are greatly impressed and preoccupied with the importance of healthful sex living, as will be readily apparent to readers of the present volume.

DR. G. L. MOENCH

Dr. Gerard L. Moench, who has contributed the foreword to the American edition, is Associate Professor of Gynecology, Associate Attending Gynecologist, and Associate in Pathology at the New York Post Graduate Hospital of Columbia University. He is a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons, a Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine, and former President of its Section on Gynecology and Obstetrics; a Fellow of the New York Obstetrical Society, etc. He has written extensively on medical subjects, especially on gynecological pathology, and even more particularly on sterility. His work in the latter field has made him known internationally.

SEX HABITS

A VITAL FACTOR IN WELL-BEING

By

A. BUSCHKE, M.D. *and*
F. JACOBSON, M.D.

Translated from the German by
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Foreword by
GERARD L. MOENCH, M.D.
New York Post Graduate Hospital
(Columbia University)

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The courts of our country have gone on record as sanctioning rational sex education. They did so in the Stopes case, as well as in the Dennett, during the course of which Federal Judge Augustus N. Hand asserted :

“ . . . The old theory that information about sex matters should be left to chance has greatly changed . . . It may reasonably be thought that accurate information, rather than mystery and curiosity, is better in the long run and is less likely to occasion lascivious thoughts than ignorance and anxiety.”

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FOREWORD TO THE AMERICAN EDITION

THE ancient Greek poets sang of health as the greatest gift of the gods. Today less than ever can we deny the truth of their song, though the idea of what constitutes health has developed into a very much broader concept than it was centuries ago.

Health, which usually we appreciate only when we have it not, is the most important factor in life, not to the individual alone, but to society. Health is, however, not merely a question of organs, normal in the sense that the microscope will reveal no physical aberrations; it means, as well, a proper functioning and interrelation of the various tissues of the body, and their adequate response to physical, chemical, mental and emotional stimuli. That such a definition of health includes normal sex functions is, or should be, self evident.

I believe it is not exaggerating to say that disturbances of the sexual apparatus cause more mental anguish and emotional upsets, aside from physical suffering, than any other lesions. And yet, until recently, the forces of taboo, intolerance and hypocrisy have succeeded in banishing instruction in this most important domain of sex, to the realm of chance and gossip, with the result that fancy and superstition have replaced factual knowledge.

It is high time that this state of affairs be remedied. It is high time that the warped individual to whom sex and

immorality are synonymous, be restrained from persecuting serious works on sexual problems. Of late there is indeed some hope of finally accomplishing this, for it certainly is a sign of progress that a jury conviction of Mary Ware Dennett, for selling her pamphlet "The Sex Side of Life," was overturned by the judges of the Circuit Court of Appeals. The sagacious decision handed down by Federal Judge John M. Woolsey in the Stopes case was another step forward. What we need is not a veiling and concealment of sex, but sane and unbiased instruction which, in a simple, and yet in a complete and authoritative manner, will discuss the problems of sex, and emphasize the importance of normal sex functions to the general bodily health.

It is with such a purpose in view that the present volume, now admirably translated into English, was written by two German physicians. The book offers, to my mind, one of the sanest discussions yet presented to the public. One may not agree with all the authors' views. One may wish that the deleterious influence of venereal diseases on the individual and on the offspring were stressed more. One may even consider that the discussion of the "double standard" is rather futile (because the essentially monogamous psyche of the average woman is, after all, not a product of fetters or freedom), though admittedly there is much food for consideration in the carefully measured views of the authors. These, however, are but minor points in a generally excellent volume. The anatomical chapters alone would amply justify its publication. Of course there may be some who will object to illustrations of the sex organs, in a volume

for lay consumption, on grounds of immorality. Let us gently remind such objectors that, after all, the immorality resides not in the really magnificent plates, but in their own minds.

Aside from the strictly anatomical and physiological chapters of the book, the chapter on puberty is worth learning by heart by all parents, and the discussions on the sex impulse in man and woman will give increased understanding to those contemplating marriage. That a chapter of the volume has been devoted to sex abnormalities, I consider most fortunate. There is no field where ignorance is more prevalent than here, so that sex abnormalities have become the subject of coarse jokes, or oftentimes are indiscriminately classed as crimes.

Some of the authors' remarks on the misinterpretation of the work of Freud have struck a responsive chord in my heart. Maltreated and mutilated, the theories of Freud have been bandied about by the untrained—even in best sellers—for untrained, and often half-baked readers; until the work of a really brilliant man has, for many, come to be synonymous with filth.

It is tempting to add further discussion, but the book speaks for itself. The rabid sex reformers will be disappointed, some purists will perhaps be shocked, but to the balanced reader this sane and unbiased discussion of sex, its functions and problems, will assuredly be welcome.

GERARD L. MOENCH, M.D.

New York City
August, 1933

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

SEXOLOGY, the science of the sexual life and activities of living beings, is not a sharply limited department of human knowledge, for it shades at the edges into the domains of philosophy, biology, medicine, law, political economy, and statistics. The theologian, the educationist, and the judge all need a knowledge of it in their daily work. Day by day, however, we encounter tragical examples of their ignorance in such matters. The present work, therefore, is designed, not merely to diffuse precise knowledge about the life of sex, but also to aid in preventing the mischief that so often results from injustice in the law courts where sexual matters are concerned. The authors hope to assist in reducing the extent to which natural impulses and activities are wrongly condemned. With no less emphasis, however, shall we inveigh against uncontrol and levity in sexual concerns—against the licence which many claim as the right of the younger generation.

In contrast with the views which prevailed twenty years ago, it is now frequently held that women no less than men are entitled "to gratify their impulses freely". It used to be regarded as self-evident that the right to pre-conjugal sexual activities, and also to sexual relations of a fugitive

and transient nature, must be exclusively reserved for men. What was called the "double standard" of morality then prevailed. That which was allowed to a young man was forbidden to a young woman. There were, indeed, attempts to challenge this double standard, and to declare that sexual freedom was no less permissible for women than for men; but they never gained general support. From the other side came endeavours to induce young men to renounce pre-conjugal sexual activity, the demand for "masculine purity" being voiced by groups of eccentrics, usually consisting of persons holding strict religious views, and eager to win disciples among university students. The majority of young men, however, whether of the upper, the middle, or the working class, gave free rein to their sexual impulses. Gratification was sought in the embraces of prostitutes, avowed or clandestine; or else, as far as a minority was concerned, in unions which were somewhat more lasting, but were none the less fugitive—in "intimacies".

During the war of 1914-18 and in the post-war period, the double standard in sexual matters broke down, young women claiming and exercising the same freedom as young men. The view that what was permissible to a man must be permissible to a woman as well, seemed a logical deduction to many of those who were fighting for the equal rights of women in the economic and social fields. There were many additional factors of the changes in theory and practice. The economic upheaval of the last ten or fifteen years (accentuated in Germany, above all, by inflation) brought young men and young women of all classes into closer contact one with another under conditions in which

there was far less supervision than of yore. Furthermore, the traditional standards of sexual conduct were undermined in consequence of the recognition that in many other respects the most venerable traditions were outworn. What has been called "an intoxication of uncontrol" spread through all domains of social life; there was no longer any attempt to resist impulse; the search for pleasure became universal. Young men, therefore, no longer had the smallest difficulty in finding sexual partners ready to enter into temporary relationships; with the result that, in the rising generation, it was largely taken as a matter of course that the sexes had an equal right to early indulgence. This change of outlook found expression both in public and in private life. For instance, in the course of a decade there occurred a gradual change in opinion as to what was right and proper for girls and young women in the way of dress, make-up, etc. It must not be supposed that middle-class and working-class women who follow the prevailing fashion in the use of the lipstick are fully aware that they are adopting a means of attraction which was previously left for prostitutes. There were, no doubt, other motives at work besides the instinctive desire to comply with the often perverted taste of their male companions. There was an element of convenience in the bobbing of hair and in the wearing of extremely short skirts. Still, the sexual components in these changes of fashion must not be overlooked. In the long run we think that the obliteration of all conventional standards as to what is seemly in social life will be found to be intolerable. During the period we are now considering, the dance, which essentially is symbolical of sexual self-expression and sexual self-defence

and is only incidentally a delight in rhythm, became so manifestly erotic that one did not need to be a prude to be forced into regarding this over-emphasis of the sexual as morbid. Besides, during a period of great economic stress, the devotion of so much time and energy and money to dancing becomes a serious matter. Nor must it be forgotten that private and public dances, which used to be occasions when young people could become acquainted with one another as a step to marriage, are now, rather, occasions when they become acquainted with one another in order to enter into fugitive extra-conjugal relationships.

The members of the older generation are to-day inclined to take their tone from those of the younger, parents being afraid that they will be looked upon as utterly out of date unless they share or tolerate modern principles. The upshot has been a decline in the prevalence of a healthy and exemplary family life. Necessarily, therewith, there has ensued a marked falling off in the intellectual and artistic interests characteristic of social intercourse. Indeed, the whole field of intellectual and artistic activity has been affected for the worse. Seldom has any period in history been characterised by so complete a lack of interest in philosophy. In music, as in the other arts, the public assumes a purely passive attitude. Wireless and the films occupy eye and ear without demanding active participation. In the home and at private entertainments instrumental music and singing have now become exceptional. Bridge playing has spread like an epidemic, having become the main interest of circles where at one time the cultivation of intellect was the chief concern. The delight in genuine

humour, too, seems almost to have become a thing of the past. Satire, mockery, making fun of everything, are dominant. Things are little better even in academic circles. On the whole it must be admitted that the present age has created a human type which is profoundly lacking in the power of concentration, in the power of collecting its thoughts, and which seeks "distraction" in the unrestricted pursuit of pleasure. The trend manifests itself everywhere in the loosening of conjugal ties, in the reluctance to bear children (even when potential mothers are in excellent health and in easy circumstances), and in the enfeeblement of masculine potency.

It cannot be denied that the members of the rising generation are in advance of their predecessors in respect of their bodily development, thanks to their devotion to sport. Yet in this matter, likewise, they show their tendency to excess and their lack of definite aims—even though the practice of some sport or other may have its value as a derivative for those who would otherwise be inclined to undue sexual indulgence.

The present writers are well aware that society is passing through a peculiar period of transition and transformation. History teaches us that after great wars and economic convulsions, degenerative phenomena are, during such periods of transition, especially apt to show themselves in the domain of the sexual life. In the terrible economic crisis, thanks to which the struggle for existence is daily becoming harder for us all, it may well be that sobriety is perforce following upon the mood of intoxication. Among our young folks there would seem to be trends in favour of a new disciplining of life for both sexes. A resanation is perhaps

beginning. This resanation can be aided by the widest possible diffusion of sound knowledge of sexology and sexual hygiene.

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MALE REPRODUCTIVE ORGANS

THE membrum virile or penis (there is no seemly vernacular name for this organ, the Chaucerian "yard" being obsolete) has three portions: a root, in the perineum between the thighs; a middle portion known as the body; and an anterior or terminal segment called the glans. At the proximal end of the glans is a rather prominent rim known as the corona glandis, and behind this rim, where it passes into the body of the penis, lies a furrow, the coronal furrow. Normally the glans penis is more or less completely covered by an extremely elastic fold of skin which is entirely devoid of fat and is easily retracted. This double fold of skin, known as the prepuce or foreskin, is continuous with the skin covering the body of the penis, and passes upward and laterally into the skin of the front of the abdomen, while on the back of the penis (the back when the organ is pendent) it passes into the skin of the scrotum, the sac containing the testicles. The foreskin sometimes leaves the glans partially exposed, but in many men, when the organ is pendent, it hides the glans completely. In this fold of skin we distinguish an external and an internal layer. The external layer resembles the skin covering other parts of the body, whereas the internal layer has, rather, the characteristics of mucous membrane. On the lower side of the organ (the posterior side when it is