

STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX

VOLUME I

**THE EVOLUTION OF MODESTY THE PHENOMENA OF SEXUAL
PERIODICITY AUTO-EROTISM**

BY

HAVELOCK ELLIS

THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED

1927

GENERAL PREFACE.

The origin of these *Studies* dates from many years back. As a youth I was faced, as others are, by the problem of sex. Living partly in an Australian city where the ways of life were plainly seen, partly in the solitude of the bush, I was free both to contemplate and to meditate many things. A resolve slowly grew up within me: one main part of my life-work should be to make clear the problems of sex.

That was more than twenty years ago. Since then I can honestly say that in all that I have done that resolve has never been very far from my thoughts. I have always been slowly working up to this central problem; and in a book published some three years ago—*Man and Woman: a Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters*—I put forward what was, in my own eyes, an introduction to the study of the primary questions of sexual psychology.

Now that I have at length reached the time for beginning to publish my results, these results scarcely seem to me large. As a youth, I had hoped to settle problems for those who came after; now I am quietly content if I do little more than state them. For even that, I now think, is much; it is at least the half of knowledge. In this particular field the evil of ignorance is magnified by our efforts to suppress that which never can be suppressed, though in the effort of suppression it may become perverted. I have at least tried to find out what are the facts, among normal people as well as among abnormal people; for, while it seems to me that the physician's training is necessary in order to ascertain the facts, the physician for the most part only obtains the abnormal facts, which alone bring little light. I have tried to get at the facts, and, having got at the facts, to look them simply and squarely in the face. If I cannot perhaps turn the lock myself, I bring the key which can alone in the end rightly open the door: the key of sincerity. That is my one panacea: sincerity.

I know that many of my friends, people on whose side I, too, am to be found, retort with another word: reticence. It is a mistake, they say, to try to uncover these things;

leave the sexual instincts alone, to grow up and develop in the shy solitude they love, and they will be sure to grow up and develop wholesomely. But, as a matter of fact, that is precisely what we can not and will not ever allow them to do. There are very few middle-aged men and women who can clearly recall the facts of their lives and tell you in all honesty that their sexual instincts have developed easily and wholesomely throughout. And it should not be difficult to see why this is so. Let my friends try to transfer their feelings and theories from the reproductive region to, let us say, the nutritive region, the only other which can be compared to it for importance. Suppose that eating and drinking was never spoken of openly, save in veiled or poetic language, and that no one ever ate food publicly, because it was considered immoral and immodest to reveal the mysteries of this natural function. We know what would occur. A considerable proportion of the community, more especially the more youthful members, possessed by an instinctive and legitimate curiosity, would concentrate their thoughts on the subject. They would have so many problems to puzzle over: How often ought I to eat? What ought I to eat? Is it wrong to eat fruit, which I like? Ought I to eat grass, which I don't like? Instinct notwithstanding, we may be quite sure that only a small minority would succeed in eating reasonably and wholesomely. The sexual secrecy of life is even more disastrous than such a nutritive secrecy would be; partly because we expend such a wealth of moral energy in directing or misdirecting it, partly because the sexual impulse normally develops at the same time as the intellectual impulse, not in the early years of life, when wholesome instinctive habits might be formed. And there is always some ignorant and foolish friend who is prepared still further to muddle things: Eat a meal every other day! Eat twelve meals a day! Never eat fruit! Always eat grass! The advice emphatically given in sexual matters is usually not less absurd than this. When, however, the matter is fully open, the problems of food are not indeed wholly solved, but everyone is enabled by the experience of his fellows to reach some sort of situation suited to his own case. And when the rigid secrecy is once swept away a sane and natural reticence becomes for the first time possible. This secrecy has not always been maintained. When the Catholic Church was at the summit of its power and influence it fully realized the magnitude of sexual problems and took an active and inquiring interest in all the details of normal and abnormal sexuality. Even to the present time there are certain phenomena of the sexual life which have scarcely been accurately described except in ancient theological treatises. As the type of such treatises I will mention the great tome of Sanchez, *De Matrimonio*. Here you will find the whole sexual life of men and women analyzed in its relationships to sin. Everything is set forth, as clearly and as concisely as it can be—without morbid prudery on the one hand, or morbid sentimentality on the other—in the coldest scientific language; the right course of action is pointed out for all the cases that may occur, and we are told what is lawful, what a venial sin, what a mortal sin. Now I do not consider that sexual matters concern the theologian alone, and I deny altogether that he is competent to deal with them. In his hands, also, undoubtedly, they sometimes become prurient, as they can scarcely fail to become on the non-natural and unwholesome basis of asceticism, and as they with difficulty become in the open-air light of science. But we are bound to recognize the thoroughness with which the Catholic theologians dealt with these matters, and,

from their own point of view, indeed, the entire reasonableness; we are bound to recognize the admirable spirit in which, successfully or not, they sought to approach them. We need to-day the same spirit and temper applied from a different standpoint. These things concern everyone; the study of these things concerns the physiologist, the psychologist, the moralist. We want to get into possession of the actual facts, and from the investigation of the facts we want to ascertain what is normal and what is abnormal, from the point of view of physiology and of psychology. We want to know what is naturally lawful under the various sexual chances that may befall man, not as the born child of sin, but as a naturally social animal. What is a venial sin against nature, what a mortal sin against nature? The answers are less easy to reach than the theologians' answers generally were, but we can at least put ourselves in the right attitude; we may succeed in asking that question which is sometimes even more than the half of knowledge.

It is perhaps a mistake to show so plainly at the outset that I approach what may seem only a psychological question not without moral fervour. But I do not wish any mistake to be made. I regard sex as the central problem of life. And now that the problem of religion has practically been settled, and that the problem of labor has at least been placed on a practical foundation, the question of sex—with the racial questions that rest on it—stands before the coming generations as the chief problem for solution. Sex lies at the root of life, and we can never learn to reverence life until we know how to understand sex.—So, at least, it seems to me.

Having said so much, I will try to present such results as I have to record in that cold and dry light through which alone the goal of knowledge may truly be seen.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

July, 1897.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

The first edition of this volume was published in 1899, following "Sexual Inversion," which now forms Volume II. The second edition, issued by the present publishers and substantially identical with the first edition, appeared in the following year. Ten years have elapsed since then and this new edition will be found to reflect the course of that long interval. Not only is the volume greatly enlarged, but nearly every page has been partly rewritten. This is mainly due to three causes: Much new literature required to be taken into account; my own knowledge of the historical and ethnographic aspects of the sexual impulse has increased; many fresh illustrative cases of a valuable and instructive character have accumulated in my hands. It is to these three sources of improvement that the book owes its greatly revised and enlarged condition, and not to the need for modifying any of its essential conclusions. These, far from undergoing any change, have by the new material been greatly strengthened.

It may be added that the General Preface to the whole work, which was originally published in 1898 at the beginning of "Sexual Inversion," now finds its proper place at the outset of the present volume.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

Carbis Bay,
Cornwall, Eng.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The present volume contains three studies which seem to me to be necessary *prolegomena* to that analysis of the sexual instinct which must form the chief part of an investigation into the psychology of sex. The first sketches the main outlines of a complex emotional state which is of fundamental importance in sexual psychology; the second, by bringing together evidence from widely different regions, suggests a tentative explanation of facts that are still imperfectly known; the third attempts to show that even in fields where we assume our knowledge to be adequate a broader view of the phenomena teaches us to suspend judgment and to adopt a more cautious attitude. So far as they go, these studies are complete in themselves; their special use, as an introduction to a more comprehensive analysis of sexual phenomena, is that they bring before us, under varying aspects, a characteristic which, though often ignored, is of the first importance in obtaining a clear understanding of the facts: the tendency of the sexual impulse to appear in a spontaneous and to some extent periodic manner, affecting women differently from men. This is a tendency which, later, I hope to make still more apparent, for it has practical and social, as well as psychological, implications. Here—and more especially in the study of those spontaneous solitary manifestations which I call auto-erotic—I have attempted to clear the ground, and to indicate the main lines along which the progress of our knowledge in these fields may best be attained. It may surprise many medical readers that in the third and longest study I have said little, save incidentally, either of treatment or prevention. The omission of such considerations at this stage is intentional. It may safely be said that in no other field of human activity is so vast an amount of strenuous didactic morality founded on so slender a basis of facts. In most other departments of life we at least make a pretence of learning before we presume to teach; in the field of sex we content ourselves with the smallest and vaguest minimum of information, often ostentatiously second-hand, usually unreliable. I wish to emphasize the fact that before we can safely talk either of curing or preventing these manifestations we must know a great deal more than we know at present regarding their distribution, etiology, and symptomatology; and we must exercise the same coolness and caution as—if our work is to be fruitful—we require in any other field of serious study. We must approach these facts as physicians, it is true, but also as psychologists, primarily concerned to find out the workings of such manifestations in fairly healthy and normal people. If we found a divorce-court judge writing a treatise on marriage we should smile. But it is equally absurd for the physician, so long as his knowledge is confined to disease, to write regarding sex at large; valuable as the facts he brings forward may be, he can never be in a position to generalize concerning them. And to me, at all events, it seems that we have had more than enough pictures of gross sexual perversity, whether furnished by the asylum or the brothel. They are only really instructive when they are seen in their proper perspective as the rare and ultimate extremes of a chain of phenomena which we may more profitably study nearer home.

Yet, although we are, on every hand, surrounded by the normal manifestations of sex, conscious or unconscious, these manifestations are extremely difficult to

observe, and, in those cases in which we are best able to observe them, it frequently happens that we are unable to make any use of our knowledge. Moreover, even when we have obtained our data, the difficulties—at all events, for an English investigator—are by no means overcome. He may take for granted that any serious and precise study of the sexual instinct will not meet with general approval; his work will be misunderstood; his motives will be called in question; among those for whom he is chiefly working he will find indifference. Indeed, the pioneer in this field may well count himself happy if he meets with nothing worse than indifference. Hence it is that the present volume will not be published in England, but that, availing myself of the generous sympathy with which my work has been received in America, I have sought the wider medical and scientific audience of the United States. In matters of faith, "liberty of prophesying" was centuries since eloquently vindicated for Englishmen; the liberty of investigating facts is still called in question, under one pretence or another, and to seek out the most vital facts of life is still in England a perilous task.

I desire most heartily to thank the numerous friends and correspondents, some living in remote parts of the world, who have freely assisted me in my work with valuable information and personal histories. To Mr. F. H. Perry-Coste I owe an appendix which is by far the most elaborate attempt yet made to find evidence of periodicity in the spontaneous sexual manifestations of sleep; my debts to various medical and other correspondents are duly stated in the text. To many women friends and correspondents I may here express my gratitude for the manner in which they have furnished me with intimate personal records, and for the cross-examination to which they have allowed me to subject them. I may already say here, what I shall have occasion to say more emphatically in subsequent volumes, that without the assistance I have received from women of fine intelligence and high character my work would be impossible. I regret that I cannot make my thanks more specific.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

CONTENTS.

GENERAL PREFACE.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE EVOLUTION OF MODESTY.

I.

The Definition of Modesty—The Significance of Modesty—Difficulties in the Way of Its Analysis—The Varying Phenomena of Modesty Among Different Peoples and in Different Ages.

II.

Modesty an Agglomeration of Fears—Children in Relation to Modesty—Modesty in Animals—The Attitude of the Medicean Venus—The Sexual Factor of Modesty Based on Sexual periodicity and on the Primitive Phenomena of Courtship—The Necessity of Seclusion in Primitive Sexual Intercourse—The Meaning of Coquetry—The Sexual Charm of Modesty—Modesty as an Expression of Feminine Erotic

Impulse—The Fear of Causing Disgust as a Factor of Modesty—The Modesty of Savages in Regard to Eating in the Presence of Others—The Sacro-Pubic Region as a Focus of Disgust—The Idea of Ceremonial Uncleanliness—The Custom of Veiling the Face—Ornaments and Clothing—Modesty Becomes Concentrated in the Garment—The Economic Factor in Modesty—The Contribution of Civilization to Modesty—The Elaboration of Social Ritual.

III.

The Blush the Sanction of Modesty—The Phenomena of Blushing—Influences Which Modify the Aptitude to Blush—Darkness, Concealment of the Face, Etc.

IV.

Summary of the Factors of Modesty—The Future of Modesty—Modesty an Essential Element of Love.

THE PHENOMENA OF SEXUAL PERIODICITY.

I.

The Various Physiological and Psychological Rhythms—Menstruation—The Alleged Influence of the Moon—Frequent Suppression of Menstruation among Primitive Races—Mittelschmerz—Possible Tendency to a Future Intermenstrual Cycle—Menstruation among Animals—Menstruating Monkeys and Apes—What is Menstruation—Its Primary Cause Still Obscure—The Relation of Menstruation to Ovulation—The Occasional Absence of Menstruation in Health—The Relation of Menstruation to "Heat"—The Prohibition of Intercourse during Menstruation—The Predominance of Sexual Excitement at and around the Menstrual Period—Its Absence during the Period Frequently Apparent only.

II.

The Question of a Monthly Sexual Cycle in Men—The Earliest Suggestions of a General Physiological Cycle in Men—Periodicity in Disease—Insanity, Heart Disease, etc.—The Alleged Twenty-three Days' Cycle—The Physiological Periodicity of Seminal Emissions during Sleep—Original Observations—Fortnightly and Weekly Rhythms.

III.

The Annual Sexual Rhythm—In Animals—In Man—Tendency of the Sexual Impulse to become Heightened in Spring and Autumn—The Prevalence of Seasonal Erotic Festivals—The Feast of Fools—The Easter and Midsummer Bonfires—The Seasonal Variations in Birthrate—The Causes of those Variations—The Typical Conception-rate Curve for Europe—The Seasonal Periodicity of Seminal Emissions During Sleep—Original Observations—Spring and Autumn the Chief Periods of Involuntary Sexual Excitement—The Seasonal Periodicity of Rapes—Of Outbreaks among Prisoners—The Seasonal Curves of Insanity and Suicide—The Growth of Children According to Season—The Annual Curve of Bread-consumption in Prisons—Seasonal Periodicity of Scarlet Fever—The Underlying Causes of these Seasonal Phenomena.

AUTO-EROTISM: A STUDY OF THE SPONTANEOUS MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SEXUAL IMPULSE

I.

Definition of Auto-erotism—Masturbation only Covers a Small Portion of the Auto-erotic Field—The Importance of this Study, especially To-day—Auto-erotic Phenomena in Animals—Among Savage and Barbaric Races—The Japanese *rin-no-tama* and other Special Instruments for Obtaining Auto-erotic Gratification—Abuse of the Ordinary Implements and Objects of Daily Life—The Frequency of Hair-pin in the Bladder—The Influence of Horse-exercise and Railway Traveling—The Sewing-machine and the Bicycle—Spontaneous Passive Sexual Excitement—*Delectatio Morosa*—Day-dreaming—*Pollutio*—Sexual Excitement During Sleep—Erotic Dreams—The Analogy of Nocturnal Enuresis—Differences in the Erotic Dreams of Men and Women—The Auto-erotic Phenomena of Sleep in the Hysterical—Their Frequently Painful Character.

II.

Hysteria and the Question of Its Relation to the Sexual Emotions—The Early Greek Theories of its Nature and Causation—The Gradual Rise of Modern Views—Charcot—The Revolt Against Charcot's Too Absolute Conclusions—Fallacies Involved—Charcot's Attitude the Outcome of his Personal Temperament—Breuer and Freud—Their Views Supplement and Complete Charcot's—At the Same Time they Furnish a Justification for the Earlier Doctrine of Hysteria—But They Must Not be Regarded as Final—The Diffused Hysteroid Condition in Normal Persons—The Physiological Basis of Hysteria—True Pathological Hysteria is Linked on to almost Normal States, especially to Sex-hunger.

III.

The Prevalence of Masturbation—Its Occurrence in Infancy and Childhood—Is it More Frequent in Males or Females?—After Adolescence Apparently more Frequent in Women—Reasons for the Sexual Distribution of Masturbation—The Alleged Evils of Masturbation—Historical Sketch of the Views Held on This Point—The Symptoms and Results of Masturbation—Its Alleged Influence in Causing Eye Disorders—Its Relation to Insanity and Nervous Disorders—The Evil Effects of Masturbation Usually Occur on the Basis of a Congenitally Morbid Nervous System—Neurasthenia Probably the Commonest Accompaniment of Excessive Masturbation—Precocious Masturbation Tends to Produce Aversion to Coitus—Psychic Results of Habitual Masturbation—Masturbation in Men of Genius—Masturbation as a Nervous Sedative—Typical Cases—The Greek Attitude toward Masturbation—Attitude of the Catholic Theologians—The Mohammedan Attitude—The Modern Scientific Attitude—In What Sense is Masturbation Normal?—The Immense Part in Life Played by Transmuted Auto-erotic Phenomena.

APPENDIX A.

The Influence of Menstruation on the Position of Women.

APPENDIX B.

Sexual Periodicity in Men.

APPENDIX C.

The Auto-erotic Factor in Religion.

INDEX OF AUTHORS.
INDEX OF SUBJECTS.
DIAGRAMS

THE EVOLUTION OF MODESTY.

I.

The Definition of Modesty—The Significance of Modesty—Difficulties in the Way of Its Analysis—The Varying Phenomena of Modesty Among Different Peoples and in Different Ages.

Modesty, which may be provisionally defined as an almost instinctive fear prompting to concealment and usually centering around the sexual processes, while common to both sexes is more peculiarly feminine, so that it may almost be regarded as the chief secondary sexual character of women on the psychical side. The woman who is lacking in this kind of fear is lacking, also, in sexual attractiveness to the normal and average man. The apparent exceptions seem to prove the rule, for it will generally be found that the women who are, not immodest (for immodesty is more closely related to modesty than mere negative absence of the sense of modesty), but without that fear which implies the presence of a complex emotional feminine organization to defend, only make a strong sexual appeal to men who are themselves lacking in the complementary masculine qualities. As a psychical secondary sexual character of the first rank, it is necessary, before any psychology of sex can be arranged in order, to obtain a clear view of modesty.

The immense importance of feminine modesty in creating masculine passion must be fairly obvious. I may, however, quote the observations of two writers who have shown evidence of insight and knowledge regarding this matter.

Casanova describes how, when at Berne, he went to the baths, and was, according to custom, attended by a young girl, whom he selected from a group of bath attendants. She undressed him, proceeded to undress herself, and then entered the bath with him, and rubbed him thoroughly all over, the operation being performed in the most serious manner and without a word being spoken. When all was over, however, he perceived that the girl had expected him to make advances, and he proceeds to describe and discuss his own feelings of indifference under such circumstances.

"Though without gazing on the girl's figure, I had seen enough to recognize that she had all that a man can desire to find in a woman: a beautiful face, lively and well-formed eyes, a beautiful mouth, with good teeth, a healthy complexion, well-developed breasts, and everything in harmony. It is true that I had felt that her hands could have been smoother, but I could only attribute this to hard work; moreover, my Swiss girl was only eighteen, and yet I remained entirely cold. What was the cause of this? That was the question that I asked myself."

"It is clear," wrote Stendhal, "that three parts of modesty are taught. This is, perhaps, the only law born of civilization which produces nothing but happiness. It has been observed that birds of prey hide themselves to drink, because, being obliged to plunge their heads in the water, they are at that moment defenceless. After having considered what passes at Otaheite, I can see no other natural foundation for

modesty. Love is the miracle of civilization. Among savage and very barbarous races we find nothing but physical love of a gross character. It is modesty that gives to love the aid of imagination, and in so doing imparts life to it. Modesty is very early taught to little girls by their mothers, and with extreme jealousy, one might say, by *esprit de corps*. They are watching in advance over the happiness of the future lover. To a timid and tender woman there ought to be no greater torture than to allow herself in the presence of a man something which she thinks she ought to blush at. I am convinced that a proud woman would prefer a thousand deaths. A slight liberty taken on the tender side by the man she loves gives a woman a moment of keen pleasure, but if he has the air of blaming her for it, or only of not enjoying it with transport, an awful doubt must be left in her mind. For a woman above the vulgar level there is, then, everything to gain by very reserved manners. The play is not equal. She hazards against a slight pleasure, or against the advantage of appearing a little amiable, the danger of biting remorse, and a feeling of shame which must render even the lover less dear. An evening passed gaily and thoughtlessly, without thinking of what comes after, is dearly paid at this price. The sight of a lover with whom one fears that one has had this kind of wrong must become odious for several days. Can one be surprised at the force of a habit, the slightest infractions of which are punished with such atrocious shame? As to the utility of modesty, it is the mother of love. As to the mechanism of the feeling, nothing is simpler. The mind is absorbed in feeling shame instead of being occupied with desire. Desires are forbidden, and desires lead to actions. It is evident that every tender and proud woman—and these two things, being cause and effect, naturally go together—must contract habits of coldness which the people whom she disconcerts call prudery. The power of modesty is so great that a tender woman betrays herself with her lover rather by deeds than by words. The evil of modesty is that it constantly leads to falsehood." (Stendhal, *De l'Amour*, Chapter XXIV.)

It thus happens that, as Adler remarks (*Die Mangelhafte Geschlechtsempfindung des Weibes*, p. 133), the sexual impulse in women is fettered by an inhibition which has to be conquered. A thin veil of reticence, shyness, and anxiety is constantly cast anew over a woman's love, and her wooer, in every act of courtship, has the enjoyment of conquering afresh an oft-won woman.

An interesting testimony to the part played by modesty in effecting the union of the sexes is furnished by the fact—to which attention has often been called—that the special modesty of women usually tends to diminish, though not to disappear, with the complete gratification of the sexual impulses. This may be noted among savage as well as among civilized women. The comparatively evanescent character of modesty has led to the argument (Venturi, *Degenerazioni Psico-sessuali*, pp. 92-93) that modesty (*pudore*) is possessed by women alone, men exhibiting, instead, a sense of decency which remains at about the same level of persistency throughout life. Viazzi ("Pudore nell'uomo e nella donna," *Rivista Mensile di Psichiatria Forense*, 1898), on the contrary, following Sergi, argues that men are, throughout, more modest than women; but the points he brings forward, though often just, scarcely justify his conclusion. While the young virgin, however, is more modest and shy than the young man of the same age, the experienced married woman is usually less so than her husband, and in a woman who is a mother the shy reticences of virginal

modesty would be rightly felt to be ridiculous. ("Les petites pudeurs n'existent pas pour les mères," remarks Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt*, vol. iii, p. 5.) She has put off a sexual livery that has no longer any important part to play in life, and would, indeed, be inconvenient and harmful, just as a bird loses its sexual plumage when the pairing season is over.

Madame Céline Renooz, in an elaborate study of the psychological sexual differences between men and women (*Psychologie Comparée de l'Homme et de la Femme*, 1898, pp. 85-87), also believes that modesty is not really a feminine characteristic.

"Modesty," she argues, "is masculine shame attributed to women for two reasons: first, because man believes that woman is subject to the same laws as himself; secondly, because the course of human evolution has reversed the psychology of the sexes, attributing to women the psychological results of masculine sexuality. This is the origin of the conventional lies which by a sort of social suggestion have intimidated women. They have, in appearance at least, accepted the rule of shame imposed on them by men, but only custom inspires the modesty for which they are praised; it is really an outrage to their sex. This reversal of psychological laws has, however, only been accepted by women with a struggle. Primitive woman, proud of her womanhood, for a long time defended her nakedness which ancient art has always represented. And in the actual life of the young girl to-day there is a moment when, by a secret atavism, she feels the pride of her sex, the intuition of her moral superiority, and cannot understand why she must hide its cause. At this moment, wavering between the laws of Nature and social conventions, she scarcely knows if nakedness should or should not affright her. A sort of confused atavistic memory recalls to her a period before clothing was known, and reveals to her as a paradisaical ideal the customs of that human epoch."

In support of this view the authoress proceeds to point out that the *décolleté* constantly reappears in feminine clothing, never in male; that missionaries experience great difficulty in persuading women to cover themselves; that, while women accept with facility an examination by male doctors, men cannot force themselves to accept examination by a woman doctor, etc. (These and similar points had already been independently brought forward by Sergi, *Archivio di Psichiatria*, vol. xiii, 1892.)

It cannot be said that Madame Renooz's arguments will all bear examination, if only on the ground that nakedness by no means involves absence of modesty, but the point of view which she expresses is one which usually fails to gain recognition, though it probably contains an important element of truth. It is quite true, as Stendhal said, that modesty is very largely taught; from the earliest years, a girl child is trained to show a modesty which she quickly begins really to feel. This fact cannot fail to strike any one who reads the histories of pseudo-hermaphroditic persons, really males, who have from infancy been brought up in the belief that they are girls, and who show, and feel, all the shrinking reticence and blushing modesty of their supposed sex. But when the error is discovered, and they are restored to their proper sex, this is quickly changed, and they exhibit all the boldness of masculinity. (See *e.g.*, Neugebauer, "Beobachtungen aus dem Gebiete des Scheinzwittertumes," *Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, Jahrgang iv, 1902, esp. p. 92.) At the same time this is only one thread in the tangled skein with which we are here concerned. The

mass of facts which meets us when we turn to the study of modesty in women cannot be dismissed as a group of artificially-imposed customs. They gain rather than lose in importance if we have to realize that the organic sexual demands of women, calling for coyness in courtship, lead to the temporary suppression of another feminine instinct of opposite, though doubtless allied, nature.

But these somewhat conflicting, though not really contradictory, statements serve to bring out the fact that a woman's modesty is often an incalculable element. The woman who, under some circumstances and at some times, is extreme in her reticences, under other circumstances or at other times, may be extreme in her abandonment. Not that her modesty is an artificial garment, which she throws off or on at will. It is organic, but like the snail's shell, it sometimes forms an impenetrable covering, and sometimes glides off almost altogether. A man's modesty is more rigid, with little tendency to deviate toward either extreme. Thus it is, that, when uninstructed, a man is apt to be impatient with a woman's reticences, and yet shocked at her abandonments.

The significance of our inquiry becomes greater when we reflect that to the reticences of sexual modesty, in their progression, expansion, and complication, we largely owe, not only the refinement and development of the sexual emotions,—"*la pudeur*" as Guyau remarked, "*a civilisé l'amour*"—but the subtle and pervading part which the sexual instinct has played in the evolution of all human culture.

"It is certain that very much of what is best in religion, art, and life," remark Stanley Hall and Allin, "owes its charm to the progressively-widening irradiation of sexual feeling. Perhaps the reluctance of the female first long-circuited the exquisite sensations connected with sexual organs and acts to the antics of animal and human courtship, while restraint had the physiological function of developing the colors, plumes, excessive activity, and exuberant life of the pairing season. To keep certain parts of the body covered, irradiated the sense of beauty to eyes, hair, face, complexion, dress, form, etc., while many savage dances, costumes and postures are irradiations of the sexual act. Thus reticence, concealment, and restraint are among the prime conditions of religion and human culture." (Stanley Hall and Allin, "The Psychology of Tickling," *American Journal of Psychology*, 1897, p. 31.)

Groos attributes the deepening of the conjugal relation among birds to the circumstance that the male seeks to overcome the reticence of the female by the display of his charms and abilities. "And in the human world," he continues, "it is the same; without the modest reserve of the woman that must, in most cases, be overcome by lovable qualities, the sexual relationship would with difficulty find a singer who would extol in love the highest movements of the human soul." (Groos, *Spiele der Menschen*, p. 341.)

I have not, however, been able to find that the subject of modesty has been treated in any comprehensive way by psychologists. Though valuable facts and suggestions bearing on the sexual emotions, on disgust, the origins of tattooing, on ornament and clothing, have been brought forward by physiologists, psychologists, and ethnographers, few or no attempts appear to have been made to reach a general synthetic statement of these facts and suggestions. It is true that a great many unreliable, slight, or fragmentary efforts have been made to ascertain the constitution or basis of this emotion.^[1] Many psychologists have regarded modesty

simply as the result of clothing. This view is overturned by the well-ascertained fact that many races which go absolutely naked possess a highly-developed sense of modesty. These writers have not realized that physiological modesty is earlier in appearance, and more fundamental, than anatomical modesty. A partial contribution to the analysis of modesty has been made by Professor James, who, with his usual insight and lucidity, has set forth certain of its characteristics, especially the element due to "the application to ourselves of judgments primarily passed upon our mates." Guyau, in a very brief discussion of modesty, realized its great significance and touched on most of its chief elements.^[2] Westermarck, again, followed by Grosse, has very ably and convincingly set forth certain factors in the origin of ornament and clothing, a subject which many writers imagine to cover the whole field of modesty. More recently Ribot, in his work on the emotions, has vaguely outlined most of the factors of modesty, but has not developed a coherent view of their origins and relationships.

Since the present *Study* first appeared, Hohenemser, who considers that my analysis of modesty is unsatisfactory, has made a notable attempt to define the psychological mechanism of shame. ("Versuch einer Analyse der Scham," *Archiv für die Gesamte Psychologie*, Bd. II, Heft 2-3, 1903.) He regards shame as a general psycho-physical phenomenon, "a definite tension of the whole soul," with an emotion superadded. "The state of shame consists in a certain psychic lameness or inhibition," sometimes accompanied by physical phenomena of paralysis, such as sinking of the head and inability to meet the eye. It is a special case of Lipps's psychic stasis or damming up (*psychische Stauung*), always produced when the psychic activities are at the same time drawn in two or more different directions. In shame there is always something present in consciousness which conflicts with the rest of the personality, and cannot be brought into harmony with it, which cannot be brought, that is, into moral (not logical) relationship with it. A young man in love with a girl is ashamed when told that he is in love, because his reverence for one whom he regards as a higher being cannot be brought into relationship with his own lower personality. A child in the same way feels shame in approaching a big, grown-up person, who seems a higher sort of being. Sometimes, likewise, we feel shame in approaching a stranger, for a new person tends to seem higher and more interesting than ourselves. It is not so in approaching a new natural phenomenon, because we do not compare it with ourselves. Another kind of shame is seen when this mental contest is lower than our personality, and on this account in conflict with it, as when we are ashamed of sexual thoughts. Sexual ideas tend to evoke shame, Hohenemser remarks, because they so easily tend to pass into sexual feelings; when they do not so pass (as in scientific discussions) they do not evoke shame.

It will be seen that this discussion of modesty is highly generalized and abstracted; it deals simply with the formal mechanism of the process. Hohenemser admits that fear is a form of psychic stasis, and I have sought to show that modesty is a complexus of fears. We may very well accept the conception of psychic stasis at the outset. The analysis of modesty has still to be carried very much further.

The discussion of modesty is complicated by the difficulty, and even impossibility, of excluding closely-allied emotions—shame, shyness, bashfulness, timidity, etc.—all of which, indeed, however defined, adjoin or overlap modesty.^[3] It is not, however,

impossible to isolate the main body of the emotion of modesty, on account of its special connection, on the whole, with the consciousness of sex. I here attempt, however imperfectly, to sketch out a fairly-complete analysis of its constitution and to trace its development.

In entering upon this investigation a few facts with regard to the various manifestations of modesty may be helpful to us. I have selected these from scattered original sources, and have sought to bring out the variety and complexity of the problems with which we are here concerned.

The New Georgians of the Solomon Islands, so low a race that they are ignorant both of pottery and weaving, and wear only a loin cloth, "have the same ideas of what is decent with regard to certain acts and exposures that we ourselves have;" so that it is difficult to observe whether they practice circumcision. (Somerville, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1897, p. 394.)

In the New Hebrides "the closest secrecy is adopted with regard to the penis, not at all from a sense of decency, but to avoid Narak, the *sight* even of that of another man being considered most dangerous. The natives of this savage island, accordingly, wrap the penis around with many yards of calico, and other like materials, winding and folding them until a preposterous bundle 18 inches, or 2 feet long, and 2 inches or more in diameter is formed, which is then supported upward by means of a belt, in the extremity decorated with flowering grasses, etc. The testicles are left naked." There is no other body covering. (Somerville, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1894, p. 368.)

In the Pelew Islands, says Kubary, as quoted by Bastian, it is said that when the God Irakaderugel and his wife were creating man and woman (he forming man and she forming woman), and were at work on the sexual organs, the god wished to see his consort's handiwork. She, however, was cross, and persisted in concealing what she had made. Ever since then women wear an apron of pandanus-leaves and men go naked. (A. Bastian, *Inselgruppen in Ozeanien*, p. 112.)

In the Pelew Islands, Semper tells us that when approaching a large water-hole he was surprised to hear an affrighted, long-drawn cry from his native friends. "A girl's voice answered out of the bushes, and my people held us back, for there were women bathing there who would not allow us to pass. When I remarked that they were only women, of whom they need not be afraid, they replied that it was not so, that women had an unbounded right to punish men who passed them when bathing without their permission, and could inflict fines or even death. On this account, the women's bathing place is a safe and favorite spot for a secret rendezvous.

Fortunately a lady's toilet lasts but a short time in this island." (Carl Semper, *Die Palau-Inseln*, 1873, p. 68.)

Among the Western Tribes of Torres Strait, Haddon states, "the men were formerly nude, and the women wore only a leaf petticoat, but I gather that they were a decent people; now both sexes are prudish. A man would never go nude before me. The women would never voluntarily expose their breasts to white men's gaze; this applies to quite young girls, less so to old women. Amongst themselves they are, of course, much less particular, but I believe they are becoming more so.... Formerly, I imagine, there was no restraint in speech; now there is a great deal of prudery; for instance, the men were always much ashamed when I asked for the name of the

sexual parts of a woman." (A. C. Haddon, "Ethnography of the Western Tribes of Torres Straits," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1890, p. 336.) After a subsequent expedition to the same region, the author reiterates his observations as to the "ridiculously prudish manner" of the men, attributable to missionary influence during the past thirty years, and notes that even the children are affected by it. "At Mabuiag, some small children were paddling in the water, and a boy of about ten years of age reprimanded a little girl of five or six years because she held up her dress too high." (*Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, vol. v, p. 272.)

"Although the women of New Guinea," Vahness says, "are very slightly clothed, they are by no means lacking in a well-developed sense of decorum. If they notice, for instance, that any one is paying special attention to their nakedness, they become ashamed and turn round." When a woman had to climb the fence to enter the wild-pig enclosure, she would never do it in Vahness's presence. (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Verhdlgen., 1900, Heft 5, p. 415.)

In Australia "the feeling of decency is decidedly less prevalent among males than females;" the clothed females retire out of sight to bathe. (Curr, *Australian Race*.) "Except for waist-bands, forehead-bands, necklets, and armllets, and a conventional pubic tassel, shell, or, in the case of the women, a small apron, the Central Australian native is naked. The pubic tassel is a diminutive structure, about the size of a five-shilling piece, made of a few short strands of fur-strings flattened out into a fan-shape and attached to the pubic hair. As the string, especially at *corrobboree* times, is covered with white kaolin or gypsum, it serves as a decoration rather than a covering. Among the Arunta and Luritcha the women usually wear nothing, but further north, a small apron is made and worn." (Baldwin Spencer and Gillen, *Native Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 572.)

Of the Central Australians Stirling says: "No sense of shame of exposure was exhibited by the men on removal of the diminutive articles worn as conventional coverings; they were taken off *coram populo*, and bartered without hesitation. On the other hand, some little persuasion was necessary to allow inspection of the effect of [urethral] sub-incision, assent being given only after dismissal to a distance of the women and young children. As to the women, it was nearly always observed that when in camp without clothing they, especially the younger ones, exhibited by their attitude a keen sense of modesty, if, indeed, a consciousness of their nakedness can be thus considered. When we desired to take a photograph of a group of young women, they were very coy at the proposal to remove their scanty garments, and retired behind a wall to do so; but once in a state of nudity they made no objection to exposure to the camera." (*Report of the Horn Scientific Expedition*, 1896, vol. iv, p. 37.)

In Northern Queensland "phallocrypts," or "penis-concealers," only used by the males at *corrobborees* and other public rejoicings, are either formed of pearl-shell or opossum-string. The *koom-pa-ra*, or opossum-string form of phallocrypt, forms a kind of tassel, and is colored red; it is hung from the waist-belt in the middle line. In both sexes the privates are only covered on special public occasions, or when in close proximity to white settlements. (W. Roth, *Ethnological Studies among the Northwest-Central-Queensland Aborigines*, 1897, pp. 114-115.)

"The principle of chastity," said Forster, of his experiences in the South Sea Islands in their unspoilt state, "we found in many families exceedingly well understood. I have seen many fine women who, with a modesty mixed with politeness, refuse the greatest and most tempting offers made them by our forward youths; often they excuse themselves with a simple *tirra-tano*, 'I am married,' and at other times they smiled and declined it with *epia*, 'no.' ... Virtuous women hear a joke without emotion, which, amongst us, might put some men to the blush. Neither austerity and anger, nor joy and ecstasy is the consequence, but sometimes a modest, dignified, serene smile spreads itself over their face, and seems gently to rebuke the uncouth jester." (J. R. Forster, *Observations made During a Voyage Round the World*, 1728, p. 392.)

Captain Cook, at Tahiti, in 1769, after performing Divine service on Sunday, witnessed "Vespers of a very different kind. A young man, near six feet high, performed the rites of Venus with a little girl about eleven or twelve years of age, before several of our people and a great number of the natives, without the least sense of its being indecent or improper, but, as it appeared, in perfect conformity to the custom of the place. Among the spectators were several women of superior rank, who may properly be said to have assisted at the ceremony; for they gave instructions to the girl how to perform her part, which, young as she was, she did not seem much to stand in need of." (J. Hawkesworth, *Account of the Voyages, etc.*, 1775, vol. i, p. 469.)

At Tahiti, according to Cook, it was customary to "gratify every appetite and passion before witnesses," and it is added, "in the conversation of these people, that which is the principal source of their pleasure is always the principal topic; everything is mentioned without any restraint or emotion, and in the most direct terms, by both sexes." (Hawkesworth, *op. cit.*, vol ii, p. 45.)

"I have observed," Captain Cook wrote, "that our friends in the South Seas have not even the idea of indecency, with respect to any object or any action, but this was by no means the case with the inhabitants of New Zealand, in whose carriage and conversation there was as much modest reserve and decorum with respect to actions, which yet in their opinion were not criminal, as are to be found among the politest people in Europe. The women were not impregnable; but the terms and manner of compliance were as decent as those in marriage among us, and according to their notions, the agreement was as innocent. When any of our people made an overture to any of their young women, he was given to understand that the consent of her friends was necessary, and by the influence of a proper present it was generally obtained; but when these preliminaries were settled, it was also necessary to treat the wife for a night with the same delicacy that is here required by the wife for life, and the lover who presumed to take any liberties by which this was violated, was sure to be disappointed." (Hawkesworth, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 254.)

Cook found that the people of New Zealand "bring the prepuce over the gland, and to prevent it from being drawn back by contraction of the part, they tie the string which hangs from the girdle round the end of it. The glans, indeed, seemed to be the only part of their body which they were solicitous to conceal, for they frequently threw off all their dress but the belt and string, with the most careless indifference, but showed manifest signs of confusion when, to gratify our curiosity, they were

requested to untie the string, and never consented but with the utmost reluctance and shame.... The women's lower garment was always bound fast round them, except when they went into the water to catch lobsters, and then they took great care not to be seen by the men. We surprised several of them at this employment, and the chaste Diana, with her nymphs, could not have discovered more confusion and distress at the sight of Actæon, than these women expressed upon our approach. Some of them hid themselves among the rocks, and the rest crouched down in the sea till they had made themselves a girdle and apron of such weeds as they could find, and when they came out, even with this veil, we could see that their modesty suffered much pain by our presence." (Hawkesworth, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, pp. 257-258.)

In Rotuma, in Polynesia, where the women enjoy much freedom, but where, at all events in old days, married people were, as a rule, faithful to each other, "the language is not chaste according to our ideas, and there is a great deal of freedom in speaking of immoral vices. In this connection a man and his wife will speak freely to one another before their friends. I am informed, though, by European traders well conversant with the language, that there are grades of language, and that certain coarse phrases would never be used to any decent woman; so that probably, in their way, they have much modesty, only we cannot appreciate it." (J. Stanley Gardiner, "The Natives of Rotuma," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, May, 1898, p. 481.) The men of Rotuma, says the same writer, are very clean, the women also, bathing twice a day in the sea; but "bathing in public without the *kukuluga*, or *sulu* [loincloth, which is the ordinary dress], around the waist is absolutely unheard of, and would be much looked down upon." (*Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1898, p. 410.)

In ancient Samoa the only necessary garment for either man or woman was an apron of leaves, but they possessed so "delicate a sense of propriety" that even "while bathing they have a girdle of leaves or some other covering around the waist." (Turner, *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago*, p. 121.)

After babyhood the Indians of Guiana are never seen naked. When they change their single garment they retire. The women wear a little apron, now generally made of European beads, but the Warraus still make it of the inner bark of a tree, and some of seeds. (Everard im Thurn, *Among the Indians of Guiana*, 1883.)

The Mandurucu women of Brazil, according to Tocantins (quoted by Mantegazza), are completely naked, but they are careful to avoid any postures which might be considered indecorous, and they do this so skilfully that it is impossible to tell when they have their menstrual periods. (Mantegazza, *Fisiologia della Donna*, cap 9.)

The Indians of Central Brazil have no "private parts." In men the little girdle, or string, surrounding the lower part of the abdomen, hides nothing; it is worn after puberty, the penis being often raised and placed beneath it to lengthen the prepuce. The women also use a little strip of bast that goes down the groin and passes between the thighs. Among some tribes (Karibs, Tupis, Nu-Arwaks) a little, triangular, coquettishly-made piece of bark-bast comes just below the mons veneris; it is only a few centimetres in width, and is called the *uluri*. *In both sexes concealment of the sexual mucous membrane is attained.* These articles cannot be called clothing. "The red thread of the Trumai, the elegant *uluri*, and the variegated flag of the

Bororó attract attention, like ornaments, instead of drawing attention away." Von den Steinen thinks this proceeding a necessary protection against the attacks of insects, which are often serious in Brazil. He does think, however, that there is more than this, and that the people are ashamed to show the glans penis. (Karl von den Steinen, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral-Brasiliens*, 1894, pp. 190 *et seq.*)

Other travelers mention that on the Amazon among some tribes the women are clothed and the men naked; among others the women naked, and the men clothed. Thus, among the Guaycurus the men are quite naked, while the women wear a short petticoat; among the Uaupás the men always wear a loin-cloth, while the women are quite naked.

"The feeling of modesty is very developed among the Fuegians, who are accustomed to live naked. They manifest it in their bearing and in the ease with which they show themselves in a state of nudity, compared with the awkwardness, blushing, and shame which both men and women exhibit if one gazes at certain parts of their bodies. Among themselves this is never done even between husband and wife. There is no Fuegian word for modesty, perhaps because the feeling is universal among them." The women wear a minute triangular garment of skin suspended between the thighs and never removed, being merely raised during conjugal relations. (Hyades and Deniker, *Mission Scientifique du Cap Horn*, vol. vii, pp. 239, 307, and 347.)

Among the Crow Indians of Montana, writes Dr. Holder, who has lived with them for several years, "a sense of modesty forbids the attendance upon the female in labor of any male, white man or Indian, physician or layman. This antipathy to receiving assistance at the hands of the physician is overcome as the tribes progress toward civilization, and it is especially noticeable that half-breeds almost constantly seek the physician's aid." Dr. Holder mentions the case of a young woman who, although brought near the verge of death in a very difficult first confinement, repeatedly refused to allow him to examine her; at last she consented; "her modest preparation was to take bits of quilt and cover thighs and lips of vulva, leaving only the aperture exposed.... Their modesty would not be so striking were it not that, almost to a woman, the females of this tribe are prostitutes, and for a consideration will admit the connection of any man." (A. B. Holder, *American Journal of Obstetrics*, vol. xxv, No. 6, 1892.)

"In every North American tribe, from the most northern to the most southern, the skirt of the woman is longer than that of the men. In Esquimau land the *parka* of deerskin and sealskin reaches to the knees. Throughout Central North America the buckskin dress of the women reached quite to the ankles. The West-Coast women, from Oregon to the Gulf of California, wore a petticoat of shredded bark, of plaited grass, or of strings, upon which were strung hundreds of seeds. Even in the most tropical areas the rule was universal, as anyone can see from the codices or in pictures of the natives." (Otis T. Mason, *Woman's Share in Primitive Culture*, p. 237.) Describing the loin-cloth worn by Nicobarese men, Man says: "From the clumsy mode in which this garment is worn by the Shom Pen—necessitating frequent readjustment of the folds—one is led to infer that its use is not *de rigueur*, but reserved for special occasions, as when receiving or visiting strangers." (E. H. Man, *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1886, p. 442.)

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

