

**PHYSIOLOGY FOR
YOUNG LADIES,
IN SHORT AND
EASY CONVERSATIONS**

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Physiology for Young Ladies, in Short and Easy Conversations by Anonymous

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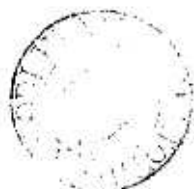
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PREFACE.

It is necessary that one, so unused to literary composition as the Author of these pages, should offer some apology for appearing before the Public.

The utter ignorance of her own sex on the important subject of Physiology has alone induced her to urge upon them the necessity of studying the laws of Nature, and of making themselves fully sensible of their importance.

The following conversations are published more especially for the rising generation—for those who are preparing to enter on the stage of life's duties, and in whose power it may be, if they will obey the laws of their Creator, to aid in the advancement and happiness of the human race.

It has been the Author's endeavour to make the subject as easily understood, and as amusing as possible; but she feels it right to add that she is a mere compiler, having done little more than epitomise from Dr. Combe's admirable Treatise on Human

Physiology. Excellent and concise as that work is, she found it too long, and too scientific for many unreflecting young ladies to whom she recommended it; and she was therefore induced to try if she could afford some easy stepping-stone to the knowledge of Physiology—something so short and simple that the young of her own sex might be made to listen with pleasure to a subject of the utmost gravity and importance.

Would that an abler pen had been found to perform the task! But, as it is, the Author ventures to hope that her intention of conferring a benefit on the younger branches of her own sex may be pleaded in extenuation of the faults, either of style or composition, and serve, in some degree, to disarm the severity of criticism. She trusts that the most fastidious can find nothing objectionable in her pages: and she cannot conclude these short remarks more appropriately than by introducing some quotations from Dr. Southwood Smith's "Philosophy of Health," who, speaking of the importance of a knowledge of physiology to every human being, says, "The possession of it seems peculiarly necessary to those who have the exclusive care of infancy, almost the entire care of childhood, and a great part of the care of the sick; and whose ignorance, not the less mischievous because its activity is induced by affection, constantly endangers, and often defeats the best con-

certed measures of the physician. The bodily organization and the mental powers of the child depend mainly on the management of the infant; and the intellectual and moral aptitudes and qualities of the man have their origin in the predominant state of sensation, at a period far earlier in the history of the human being than is commonly imagined."

"The theory of human society, according to its present institutions, supposes that the knowledge is possessed by the mother. Hence the presumed advantage of having the eye of the mother always upon the child: hence the apprehension of evil so general—I had almost said instinctive—whenever it is proposed to take the infant for the purpose of systematic physical and mental discipline from beyond the sphere of maternal influence. But society, which thus presumes that the mother will possess the power and the disposition to do this, what expedients has it devised to endow her with the former, and secure the formation of the latter? I appeal to every woman whose eye may rest on these pages. I ask of you, what has ever been done for you to enable you to understand the physical and mental construction of that human nature, the care of which is imposed on you? In what part of your education was instruction of this kind introduced? Over how large a portion of your education did it extend? Who were your teachers? What have you profited by

their lessons? Women are the earliest teachers; they must be nurses; they can be neither without the risk of doing incalculable mischief, unless they have some understanding of the subject about to be treated of. On these grounds I rest their obligation to study it, and I look upon that notion of delicacy which would exclude them from knowledge calculated in an extraordinary degree to open, exalt, and purify their minds, and to fit them for the performance of their duties, as alike degrading to those to whom it affects to shew respect, and debasing to the mind that entertains it."

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