

# **THE INFLUENCE OF SEX IN DISEASE**

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The Influence of Sex in Disease by W. Roger Williams

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**W. ROGER WILLIAMS**

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OF SEX IN DISEASE**



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OF  
SEX IN DISEASE

BY  
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LONDON  
J. & A. CHURCHILL  
11 NEW BURLINGTON STREET  
1885

*189129. d. 2*

**I dedicate**

**THIS LITTLE WORK  
TO**

**J. WHITAKER HULKE, F.R.S.**

**SENIOR SURGEON TO THE MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL AND TO THE  
ROYAL LONDON OPHTHALMIC HOSPITAL**

**IN ADMIRATION OF**

**HIS WORK**

**AS A CLINICAL TEACHER**



## PREFACE.

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I HAVE here brought together, and given definite expression to, a large number of facts concerning the influence of sex in disease.

Many of these facts previously existed in what may be called the amorphous state ; others are now given for the first time.

In the opening remarks I have introduced a brief general survey of the subject. As a rule, the tables speak for themselves, but in many instances some comment seemed necessary.

This work would have been impossible but for the valuable statistical reports published by the various Hospitals herein named. I am convinced that this method of investigating disease—which, after its author, may be called the Hippocratic method—is of real importance.

When I consider the great advances recently made in biological science, and the methods by which they have been attained ; and when I compare them with what is now being done by modern pathology, I am amazed at the attitude of the latter, which, in its blind pursuit of isolated facts in ultimate analysis, to the exclusion of all others, obstinately ignores the brilliant example to which I have alluded, so largely due to the labours of our illustrious countrymen.

W. ROGER WILLIAMS.

LONDON : *November*, 1885.





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\*It has long been known that in the vertebrate kingdom one sex bears rudiments of the various accessory parts, appertaining to the reproductive system, which properly belong to the opposite sex ; and it has now been ascertained that at a very early embryonic period both sexes possess true male and female glands.\*—  
DARWIN.

IN ORDER rightly to understand the significance of sex, we must first of all realise the highly important fact that the earliest and most primitive sexual relation was hermaphroditism ; and that the separation of the sexes, as they at present exist, was only secondarily effected, by division of labour, in the gradual progress of evolution.

All organisms, as Lamarck was the first to show, are prone to vary in consequence of ever-varying changes in the environment ; or, as Herbert Spencer puts it, life is but the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations.

In estimating the significance of sex, due allowance must be made for causes coming under this head.

But it is chiefly in consequence of sexual selection that male animals have been rendered so widely different from their females ; and that they tend to vary, anatomically and pathologically, in a different manner. Thus were developed

the so-called 'secondary sexual characters'—that is, those differences in the male and female sexes which appear not in the sexual organs themselves, but in other parts of the body, such as the beard of man and the breast of woman. Independently of selection, however, something must be allowed for inherent constitutional differences.

It is a very remarkable fact that in every female all the secondary male characters, and in every male all the secondary female characters, exist in a latent state, ready to be evolved under certain conditions.

Thus the females of many animals, when old, sometimes assume, more or less completely, the secondary male characters of their species; and it occasionally happens that morbid tendencies manifest a like peculiarity in their development.

In almost all countries where statistical records have been kept, the females are found to outnumber the males. This result is partly due to artificial conditions incidental to advanced civilisation.

Of the 25,974,439 persons in England and Wales, enumerated at the Census of 1881, 12,639,902 were males and 13,334,537 females. This shows an excess of 694,635 females. To each 100 males there were 105·5 females. In England the proportion of females to males has been slightly but steadily increasing during the last half-century.

This preponderance of females is all the more remarkable because the male births invariably outnumber the female births; they stand to one another in the proportion of 104 of the former to 100 of the latter.

The difference would be still greater if death struck both sexes equally before birth; but the fact is that for every 100 still-born females there are 140 still-born males (Faye). This original numerical superiority of the males is, however, soon lost, owing to their much higher death-rate, especially in early infancy. Thus it has vanished by the end of the first year of life;<sup>1</sup> during this period in England 126 boys die for every 100 girls. At almost every subsequent age-period, the males

<sup>1</sup> Vide Registrar-General's Report of the Census of 1881, vol. iv.