

**SEX**

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Sex by Patrick Geddes & J. Arthur Thomson

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**PATRICK GEDDES & J. ARTHUR THOMSON**

# **SEX**





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# SEX

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# SEX

## CHAPTER I

### THE STUDY OF SEX

*Objections to the study of sex—What sex has meant in the past—What sex means to-day—What sex may come to mean—Various ways of studying sex.*

OBJECTIONS TO THE STUDY OF SEX.—To many otherwise sensible people, even the word "sex" is abhorrent, still more a book about sex. They will not, therefore, be reading this volume, but their objections may be considered. (a) In some cases the repugnance expresses an organic lack of sympathy with the aim of science, for many estimable people have no use for scientific analysis. They are lacking in the curious spirit, and are not worried by obscurities. They are not interested in any theory of the internal tides that sway them. To those who are built on those lines, there is no more to be said. One feels, however, that while ignorance may be bliss when everything is plain sailing, some accurate knowledge is likely to be useful when the bark of life gets near the rocks in stormy weather. Science is for the control of life, as well as for its enlightenment.

(b) In others the repugnance comes from the poetic and artistic side, and recalls to us the warning tale of Amor and Psyche. Love, they rightly say, is the most wonderful thing in the world; to inquire into its mysterious origins and pre-human analogues repels us. Why thus dig at the roots of the Mystic Rose? Is there not risk of losing by scientific analysis far more than one gains? Even the savage mother very long ago preferred—what she sometimes still prefers—her poetic fancy of the child-spirit entering her womb from the totem-ground, where desirable qualities of strength, swiftness, endurance, and the like were actualised or symbolised, to an acknowledgment of the naked fact of physical paternity! To those who feel so strongly that "love" is an artistic preserve—a charmed corner of the Earthly Paradise—where science is a trespasser, little can be said by us biologists. Unless it be this, that from their position it is impossible to see one of the biggest facts about "love", namely its evolution. Perhaps this also, that when the steps of the evolution of love are faced and climbed, the poetic and spiritual possibilities are found to be more assured than ever, since they appear henceforth, not merely as the dreams of the poet, but as the promise of the race. And what are most dreams, after all, but tendrils—coarse and fine—groping or feeling after the hitherto unattained?

(c) For others the repugnance is more intellectual and deliberate. To talk about sex, they say, makes for morbid self-consciousness, for indelicacy, even if not impurity.