

**HEALTH AND THE
WOMAN
MOVEMENT**

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Health and the Woman Movement by Clelia Duel Mosher

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“**B**RING boys and girls up by the same method, let them as men and women have the same interests and occupations and in a few generations there will be no difference in the sexes but one of anatomy,” is a statement of a feminist advocate. In refutation Professor Sedgwick² of the Boston Institute of Technology asserts that, “Sex is a deep-seated structural difference, affecting every organ, every tissue, every cell in the body,” and goes on to say: “Women have narrower, rounder shoulders than men,

¹ Address given at the Fourth Biennial Conference of the Association of Employed Officers of the Young Women’s Christian Association of the United States of America. Asilomar, California, May 15, 1915. Revised and amplified.

² Sedgwick, Professor William T. Interview in *New York Times*, January 18, 1914.

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broader hips, more fatty tissue under the skin, smaller stature, lesser weight, smaller feet and hands. There is no reason to doubt that sex makes a difference throughout the entire structure, the brain included." After quoting from a distinguished physiologist (unnamed) he concludes: "My experience as a teacher has proved the existence of these handicaps. I have been obliged to use different methods when teaching women."¹ This is discouraging, if true. But what of the facts?

Life itself, not the feminist movement, is altering the status of women. Olive Schreiner in her book called "Woman and Labor," published only four years ago, points out that the changes in economic conditions have taken away the woman's occupation as a manufacturer in the home. Even the demands made by her profession of motherhood have been

¹This is not the experience of Dr. Simon Flexner, Rockefeller Institute, and Dr. Frederick Peterson, professor of nervous and mental diseases, Columbia University, nor of Dr. W. H. Howell, professor of physiology, and Dr. Franklin P. Mall, professor of anatomy, Johns Hopkins University. See *N. Y. Times*, February 15, 1914.

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lessened by the economic limitations in the size of the family. With these diminishing requirements there is danger that she will sink into a condition of parasitism which will result, not only in her own physical and mental deterioration, but in an injury to the race. Her book ends with, "To-day we are found everywhere raising our strange new cry—'Labor and the training which fits us for labor!'"

The European war is demonstrating that a woman may not only fight in the trenches but may receive the same rewards for bravery as her husband or brother. It has been reported that four hundred Russian women are fighting at the front, and an army of 2,000 Serbian women is serving in the trenches. In England regiments of women are being trained for home defence. In France, Germany, England, and Italy women are replacing men in all occupations, both the higher and lower, even those requiring great endurance to exposure and physical strain: we hear of women conductors and motormen, railroad laborers, cab drivers, baggage porters; we have long heard of their plowing, sowing, and reaping. In other words, while men are at

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the front the work of the world is being carried on by women.

At the present moment all professions and occupations are not only open to woman but are being successfully undertaken by her. Only yesterday women went to college at great personal sacrifice. And dire were the predictions of the evil results to her health and to the race. Characterized as "hermaphrodite in mind," and "divested of her sex," the college woman failed to develop the anticipated evils. She was found to be rather healthier than her sisters who did not go to college, to marry as other women of her class, and to bear a rather larger number of healthy children.¹ To-day women go to college as a matter of course and without comment.

The women of California, as in eleven other States and one territory in the United States, millions in number, cast their votes, perform their civic duties, even serving as election officials, without destroying health or homes. Where are the traditional handicaps of sex?

¹ See Coolidge, Mary Roberts, "Why Women are So." Chapter XI. "The Phantom of the Learned Lady."