

I will only tell you, that, in general, this stone is very hard and heavy, and that the whole city of Naples is paved with it. I have seen some of it, that will bear a fine polish, and of which they make snuff-boxes.

XIX. *A Letter to the President, concerning the Hermaphrodite shewn in London: by James Parsons M. D. F. R. S.*

S I R, Red-lion square, March 14, 1750.

Read March 14.
1750.

AS I find the French girl, now shewn at Ludgate as an hermaphrodite, makes some noise in town, and as the generality of the world are apt in this very case to take the erroneous side of the question in giving their opinions about it, for want of having a proper knowledge of the parts, I have taken the liberty to trouble you with this letter, containing some account of the matter, which is intended to undeceive such as are mistaken about it.

She is now about eighteen years old, and the true description of her *pudenda* is as follows:

What is mistaken for a *penis* and has at first sight caused the deception, is the *clitoris*, grown to an inordinate size. The prepuce of this is continued down on each side, to form the *nymphæ*: under these the natural *urethra* is in its proper place, as in all females; and just under this is a natural *vagina*. This *vagina* is concealed by a skin growing up from the *perinæum*, and continued to the *labium* of each
side

side quite over it; which, if snipp'd with scissars, would lay the orifice of the *vagina* bare, and shew the person a perfect female, having only this morbid size of the *clitoris*.

This is really the fact relating to the present subject; which any one may be satisfied of, by passing a finger down under this skin to the *perinæum*, and he will meet the orifice of the *vagina*, and find it as perfect as that of any other woman of the same age.

The *vagina* being thus cover'd, and the *clitoris* thus large, it is no great wonder, that she should at first sight be taken for a male by the vulgar: but it would seem a little too careless in any of the faculty to be so deceiv'd. However if we do but consider the following observations, we shall find it no such strange affair, as it now seems to the world: nor is it new, to find people imagine, that, since this mistaken *penis* is imperforate, the *urethra* is preternaturally directed to appear under it, without considering it to be a true female *urethra*, in its natural place.

I had the honour, on the 30th of April, 1741, to lay before the Society seven or eight female *fætus's*, from about six to somewhat more than seven months growth. Each of these had its *clitoris* bigger in proportion than the present girl, or any other whom I have ever seen; which is the case with all female *fætus's*, during the greatest part of the time of gestation. And this is nature's common rule all over the world.

Now it is impossible, that so many hermaphrodites should be formed at once, since we have so few instances

instances among the European nations of those so reputed; tho' they are common enough in Asia and Africa, in all those places especially, that are nearest the equinoctial line, where the non naturals themselves conduce much to the general relaxation of the solids in human bodies, and consequently this unseemly accretion of that part.

Now as the female *fœtus* increases in the *uterus* in a natural way, the neighbouring parts of the *pudenda* grow more in proportion than the *clitoris*, drawing away the integuments from it, whereby it becomes by degrees less conspicuous; and at length, as the child grows up, it is shrunk between the *labia*, and remains always cover'd, as it is now the common appearance in our women. But when it continues its growth, together with the neighbouring parts in the same proportion, which all female *fœtus's* have it in, maintaining its first proportional size, the person, when grown up, is call'd by the vulgar an hermaphrodite since the natural structure of this part is in a great measure like that of a *penis virilis*.

Nor is its largeness in a *fœtus* much to be wonder'd at, since there are other very similar cases in the same body, as the *gland thymus* and *glandulæ renales*; both which, as the child grows larger, diminish in their proportion.

These *macroclitorideæ* are so numerous among many nations of *Asia* and *Africa*, that the antients, *Albucasis* especially in his 7th chap. inform us of the necessary operation and method of cure, which he terms *cura tentiginis*, finding the part so call'd inconvenient from its largeness. Nor was this knowlege confin'd to men of science alone amongst the *Egyptians* and *Ethiopians*,

Ethiopians, and *Angolans*; for every parent knows, when the child has these parts longer than ordinary, and cut or burn them off, while girls are very young, and at the same time never entertain the least notion of the existence of any other nature besides the true female, in those children, who are thus deprived of that part.

The learned *De Graafe* was well acquainted with this, and gives his approbation of the operation, as highly necessary, as well as decent: “*estque hujus partis chirurgia orientalibus tam necessaria quam decora.*”

It has been said too, that this girl in town has not the least appearance of breasts; but those, who report this, must surely have never seen the breasts of the women of any other nation but our own. On the contrary, she has as large breasts as any French girl of her age, and as good a nipple; whatever care they take to squeeze and compress them with her apparel. Besides she is a thin girl, and small of her age; and really among our own young women, when they are spare, and small in stature, it will be hard to find any with breasts more conspicuous than, if so much as, hers.

I have consider'd this subject more at large in my *Critical Inquiry into the Nature of Hermaphrodites*, which the curious may see; and am, in the mean time, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

J. Parsons.