

CAN SEX IN HUMANS BE CHANGED?

By Donald Furthman Wickets

ALL the old landmarks are going, nothing is static, everything flows. Old dreams and old nightmares become realities. Life is created in the laboratory. Sex is no longer immutable. Recently the astonishing news made the rounds that

The medals awarded to him were won in good faith.

Equally sensational is Case No. Two. A native of Czecho-Slovakia, Zdenek Koubkov (née Zdeneka Koubkova) reaped athletic honors as a woman. In 1932 he won the hundred-meter championship at the Women's



Courtesy of Mr. Samuel T. Shaw and the New York Athletic Club

Was Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont man or woman? This is the famous Assaut d'armes between d'Eon and Saint George at Carlton House, London, April, 1787, before the Prince of Wales

science had actually succeeded in changing the gender of two female athletes. The miracle was accomplished by surgery and duly acknowledged by law.

Mary Weston, who held (and still holds) the shotput record for women in Great Britain, is Case No. One. In 1926 Mary won the British javelin championship of her sex. "She" also, at one time or another, represented her country's womanhood at the Olympic Games. Today, Mary Weston, now known as Mark Weston, is a young man legally and is happily married to a normal young woman. Dr. L. R. Broster, a London surgeon, certifies: "that Mark Weston, who has always been brought up as a female, is a male and should continue to live as such." Discussing his athletic records before his transformation, Weston insists that he believed at the time that he was a woman.

Olympics. Sports writers called him "the fastest woman on legs." For twenty-three years Zdenek lived as a woman—at one time as a corset fitter—an occupation which, as his nascent masculinity asserted itself, he found at times decidedly embarrassing. No one, except himself, doubted his femininity. However, in 1935, while he was wearing his running togs, suspicion as to his true sex arose. An investigation ensued.

Shortly afterward (according to his story related to Gordon Kahn in the *New York Daily Mirror*), Professor Milosh Kilcka, head of a surgical institute in Podol, decided to emphasize Zdenek's masculinity by means of an operation. The operation was so successful that the Czecho-Slovakian government officially sanctioned Zdenek's transfer from the female to the male classification.

Can the Half-Woman-Half-Man, or Both-Man-and-Woman, Ever Be Remodelled Into a Completely Masculine or Feminine Human?

The two cases led to a request at the recent Olympics in Berlin for a medical examination of all female contestants. No action was taken by the committee, but the fantastic possibility of a complete sexual metamorphosis in human beings has aroused world-wide discussion. How is such a transformation possible? Can science alter the sex of a human being? To answer this question intelligently, we must review the evolution of sex.

There are many theories as to when and how sex is determined. Three major factors are generally considered decisive. The first factor is intimately connected with the creation of life itself. Sex, it is believed by many, is determined when first the male and the female chromosomes join each other in the sex act. The chromosomes trans-

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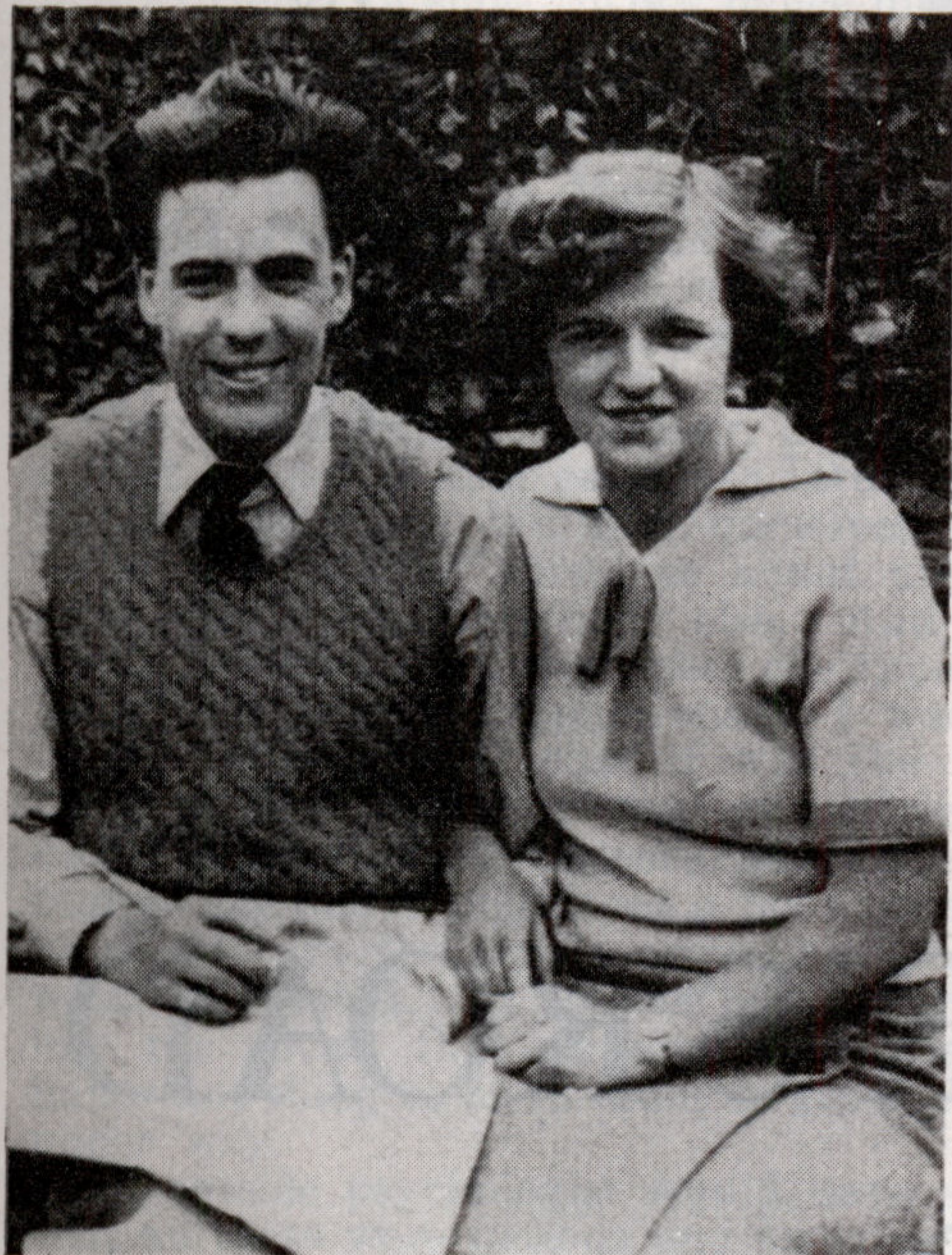


inherits certain male organs. Each sex carries within itself the potentialities of the other. Concealed from the naked eye many similarities exist in the male and female structures.

The second major factor in the evolution of sex are the glands of internal secretion. While sex is determined in the chromosomes, it nevertheless requires the proper male or female sex hormones to develop naturally. If an endocrine disturbance exists, a faulty sex development may take place. This faulty development, being of an endocrine nature, may be amenable to endocrine treatment.

The investigations of Professor Eugen Steinach and other students of biology have shown that our so-called secondary sexual characteristics are largely influenced by our hormones. Various differences in bodily structure, some

Wide World



Above, the late Miss Mary Weston, Great Britain's girl athletic champion before the surgeon's skill changed her into the manly Mark Weston, who is seen at left with Alberta Bray, a former girl chum to whom he is now married. At the right, Zdenek Koubkov, one-time girl champion of Czecho-Slovakia, who likewise underwent an operation that established him legally as a real man



mit hereditary characteristics; they preordain our nervous, mental and physical being. Although the external organs are not visible in the human embryo until the fifth week, it is probable that every cell of the unborn infant bears the stamp of its sexual constitution from the moment of its conception.

When I speak of a person's sex, I refer to his or her preponderant sex. Sex is relative. No man is 100 per cent male, no woman 100 per cent female. Every male, even the lustiest, retains certain rudimentary characteristics of the other sex. Similarly every woman

patent, some elusive, are controlled by the glands of internal secretion. Steinach has reversed the sex of animals by transplanting a female gland upon a male, or a male gland upon a female.

He has also, by similar methods, created animals having the sex equipment and the characteristics of both sexes. Men, who have been mutilated by accident or in war, have been saved from the fate of becoming human capons in appearance, behavior and feeling by such transplantations and (more lately) by injections of the male hormone, (Continued on page 83)

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which is now manufactured synthetically.

Steinach's experiments reveal that the hormones have a two-fold purpose! One, to strengthen the specific sex characteristics of the individual. Two, to inhibit the development of the characteristics of the opposite sex. For man is a bisexual animal fundamentally and when the dominant gland ceases its vigilance, the characteristics of the suppressed sex assert themselves.

Nature tends to return, within certain limits, to its original bisexual state. This does not mean a complete reversal of sex in its primary aspect. It does not imply a transformation of the sex organs themselves, but a pronounced modification of the secondary sexual characteristics and, in some instances, of the direction of the sex instinct.

Injuries to a gland which impair its inhibiting secretion produce startling changes in the appearance and the behavior of the person affected. When the damage is repaired the normal sex appearance and behavior return. The equilibrium is restored.

Dr. Oscar Riddle, of the Carnegie Institute, reports the case of a girl whose tumor, pressing upon a gland, changed her sexual characteristics. It seemed as if she had turned into a boy. After the removal of the tumor the changes which had startled her family disappeared and she became—what she was before—a pleasing specimen of her gender.

The basic bisexuality of man as a species is confirmed by another, more recent discovery. Every male produces certain female hormones, and every female certain male hormones. By increasing the supply of female hormones in the male beyond the normal percentage, the secondary sexual characteristics are profoundly affected.

SIMILARLY, by increasing the male hormones in the female beyond the amount needed for her endocrine balance, a parallel change is wrought in the female. These effects have been illustrated most strikingly in rats, guinea pigs, mice and monkeys. In human beings, experiments of this type are not feasible. It is, moreover, far more difficult to affect the constitution of men, because it is infinitely more complex than that of the lower animals.

This brings us to the third major factor in determining sex: the impressions received by the senses through the central nervous system. No person is completely male, or completely female, unless his brain has been "erotized" in a manner harmonious with the sex organs and with his glands of internal secretion.

Early experiences, psychic shocks, "fixations" (to use the term of the psycho-analysts) on the father or the mother, etc., have a powerful influence which proves frequently stronger than the inherited sexual constitution. This explains some variations of the sex instinct in persons who are physically entirely normal.

"But," the bewildered reader will ask, "who is normal?" A person may be said to be normal, if he or she reacts in harmony with his or her primary and secondary sexual characteristics.

The man or the woman who receives a balanced sexual constitution when the male and female element first join together, whose glands secrete the requisite hormones and who achieves sex maturity without being sidetracked from the path of evolution by some psychic or nervous disturbance, will be normal in his or her sexual behavior.

All human beings pass through a stage where sex is more or less undifferentiated, where they are attracted almost equally by either sex. But in 95 out of a 100 cases the bisexual or homosexual components, present in all, sink to the bottom of the stream of consciousness, not to be dislodged except by some emotional or physiological explosion, or by the analyst delving in the depths of the unconscious.

HOWEVER, any stage in the three-fold development outlined may be interrupted or impeded; the slightest variation, the slightest derangement, may, consciously or unconsciously, anatomically or psychically, affect the direction of the sex instinct and constitution. Even within the compass of the "normal" there are infinite variations. My friend, the late Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft in Berlin (suppressed by the Nazis), calculated that the number of different sexual types equals 46,046,721, or three raised to the sixteenth power.

Hirschfeld's calculations were based upon the various elements which enter into the determination of sex. He insisted that he under- rather than over-estimated the possible number of combinations. The number is equal roughly to 1/40 of all human beings. But, since no human being equals any other human being, since every thumb-print differs, however minutely, from every other thumb-print, we may assume that, theoretically, the sexual behavior and the sexual constitution of every human being differs in some manner from that of every other human being.

The vagaries, variations, vacillations, fluctuations, of the sex instinct are amazing. There is the historic case of the Chevalier d'Eon de Beaumont, who served the King of France as Ambassador to England, but who looked like a woman and spent the larger part of his life in petticoats. The public debated excitedly whether he was a man or a woman. In London more than 100,000 pounds were wagered on the subject. The question was not decided until his death when the testimony of three physicians established that, according to the tests then existing, he was in every respect a "male."

The Chevalier's bearing was not effeminate, although—physically at least—he had certain feminine characteristics. This did not prevent him from being an expert duelist. According to *The Winged Foot*, ably edited house-organ of the New York Athletic Club, he bested Saint George, the most adroit British fencer of his generation.

The Chevalier's love affairs, judged by the evidence available, were entirely orthodox. Nevertheless, some queer psychic or endocrine twist made him prefer the habiliments of the other sex. For a season he lived as a woman, then again as a man. He was (sartorially at

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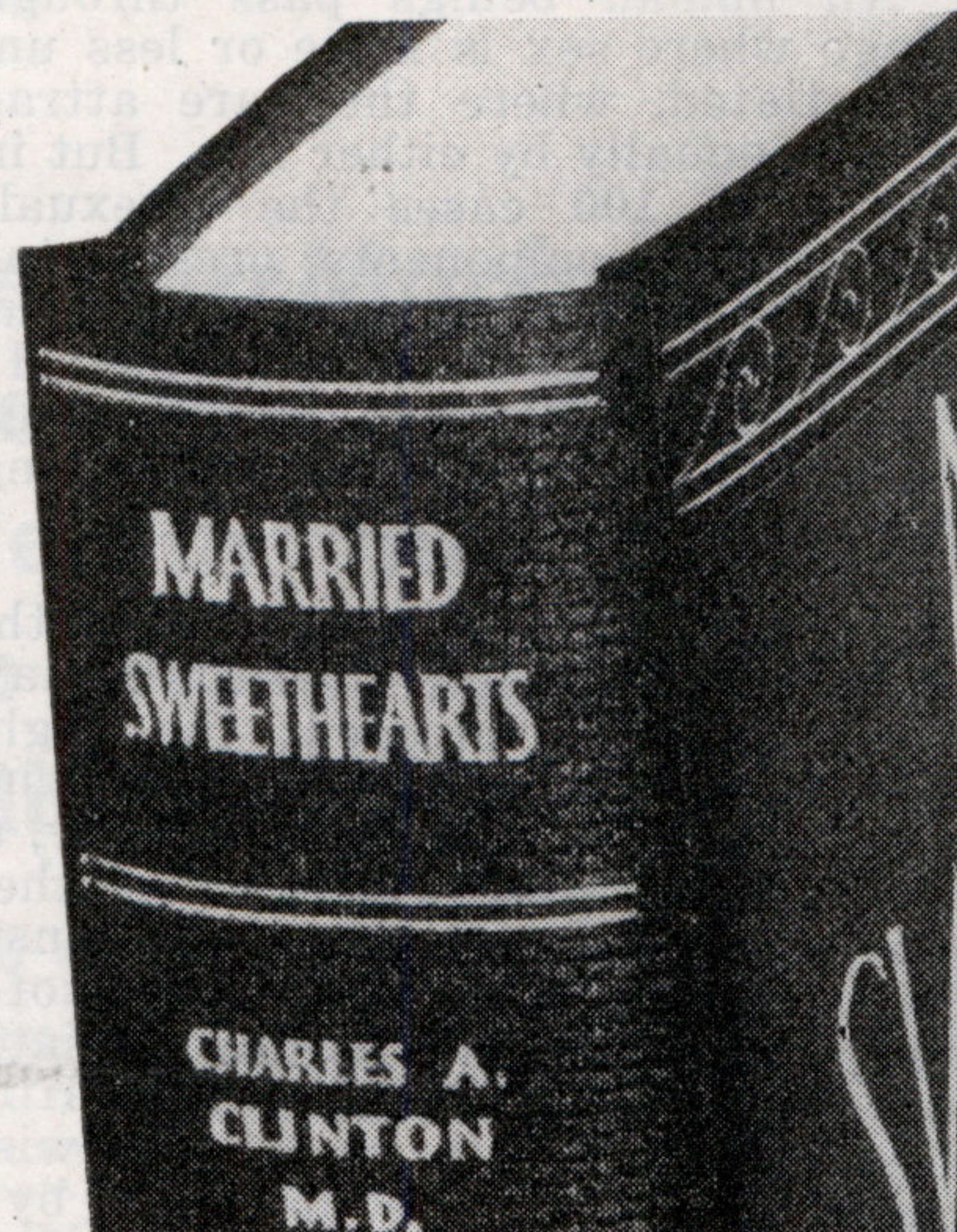
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least) a human oyster, a subject on which more will be said anon. The singular craving of one sex to garb itself with the garments of the other has been called "Eonism" after Eon by Havelock Ellis. Hirschfeld designates persons so afflicted "transvestites."

In view of the mutation of sexual characteristics and in view of the fact that both male and female elements are present in all of us, it is not surprising that nature should produce "freaks" who possess both male and female sex organs. It is only surprising that such cases do not occur more frequently! Persons who are at once male and female are "hermaphrodites." Hermaphrodites have been known from the dawn of history. They are mentioned in the lore of the ancient Greeks, in the Bible and in the Talmud. They play an important part in Hindu mythology.

The term "hermaphrodite" is derived from an ancient Greek story. The nymph Salmacis fell in love with the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, whose ancestry is perpetuated in his name. When the beautiful youth spurned her affection, she threw herself into his arms and beseeched the gods to unite him with her forever. The gods listened, and thus was created the first being possessing the attributes of both sexes. Certain rabbis of old expounded the theory that Adam was a hermaphrodite before the creation of Eve. An English poet, the late Edward Carpenter, disciple of Walt Whitman, echoes this conviction: "Was Adam perchance like this ere Eve from his side was drawn?"

Lawgivers of all nations took cognizance of the hermaphrodite. He is called "tumtim" in the Talmud. The Hebrews excluded the "tumtim" from the priesthood. According to the laws of Romulus, founder of Rome, hermaphrodites were placed in wooden caskets and cast into the sea. The Emperor Constantine ordered them to be executed. They were proscribed in Egypt. The Florida Indians imposed upon them the hardest of labors. In Prussia (under Frederick the Great) a person of dubious sex could decide to which side of the fence he wished to belong on reaching his eighteenth year. The same is, or was, French law. There is a case in French legal annals of a hermaphrodite who, after making the fateful decision, changed his mind and—was burned at the stake!

Sculptors, painters, poets celebrate the son of Hermes and Aphrodite. However, in spite of the poets and in spite of popular legend, the hermaphrodite in whom both organs are completely developed and function is practically unknown. According to two students of the subject, Professor Sauerbruch and Franz Ludwig von Neugebauer, only seven—possibly two—authentic cases are recorded in medical history.

In the animal kingdom, hermaphroditism is a frequent occurrence. It is the normal state of the snail. The oyster, too, has an interesting time, for it changes its sex every season. The tapeworm passes through various

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stages. It is at various times monosexual, asexual and bisexual. In the human species we deal principally, if not only, with "pseudo" or "false" hermaphroditism.

The hermaphrodite may be "lateral": one side of the body may be pronouncedly male, the other side pronouncedly female. He may be "complex." The internal sex organs may belong wholly or in part to one sex, and the external organs to the other. The hermaphrodite may be "male"; that is to say, he may have completely developed male organs, while the female organs—though coexisting—may be only incompletely developed. Or, he may be predominantly "female". Perfect hermaphrodites are rare in the human species, but there are cases where the real sex cannot be determined except by a post-mortem.

Cases of pseudo-hermaphroditism, or dubious sex, figure frequently in the news. Recently the newspapers reported the case of a sergeant in Warsaw, aged twenty-five, who asked for admission to a hospital—to give birth to a baby. Until his eighteenth year his sex was in doubt. He considered himself a male, entered the army and was accepted. His accouchement altered his status!

One of the most famous cases in recent years is that of the Danish painter, Einar Wegener. Wegener was married and considered himself a man. At twenty he fulfilled his marital duties. Some years later, in deference to some accidental suggestion, he disguised himself as a woman. The masquerade was so successful that he adopted it frequently. His friends, including his wife, called him "Lili". Lili's second, probably his real self, began to assert itself.

He began to suffer from disturbances which resembled the monthly cycle of woman. He finally concluded that, although his external organs—though perhaps rather undeveloped—were those of a male, his body was essentially female.

A GERMAN doctor surmised that Wegener actually possessed rudimentary female sex glands, which were unable to develop because of the inhibiting influence of the male sex glands. An investigation confirmed the doctor's theory.

In 1932, Wegener's story, based on his diary, was given to the world in a book entitled: "Man into Woman," with an introduction by Dr. Norman Haire, the celebrated London gynecologist. After many consultations Wegener's doctors embarked upon a complicated series of operations. His male sex glands were removed. A few months later, according to Dr. Haire, he went to Dresden, where the male organ was also removed, his abdomen was opened, and the presence of rudimentary female sex glands was established, and at the same time ovarian tissues from a healthy young woman of twenty-six

were transplanted into him. "A little later," I am quoting Dr. Haire, "he underwent another operation, the nature of which is not explained. By this time he felt himself to be entirely a woman. The Danish authorities issued him a new passport as a female in the name of Lili Elbe, and the King of Denmark declared his marriage null and void. With his consent, and indeed at his suggestion, his former wife married a mutual friend of theirs in Rome."

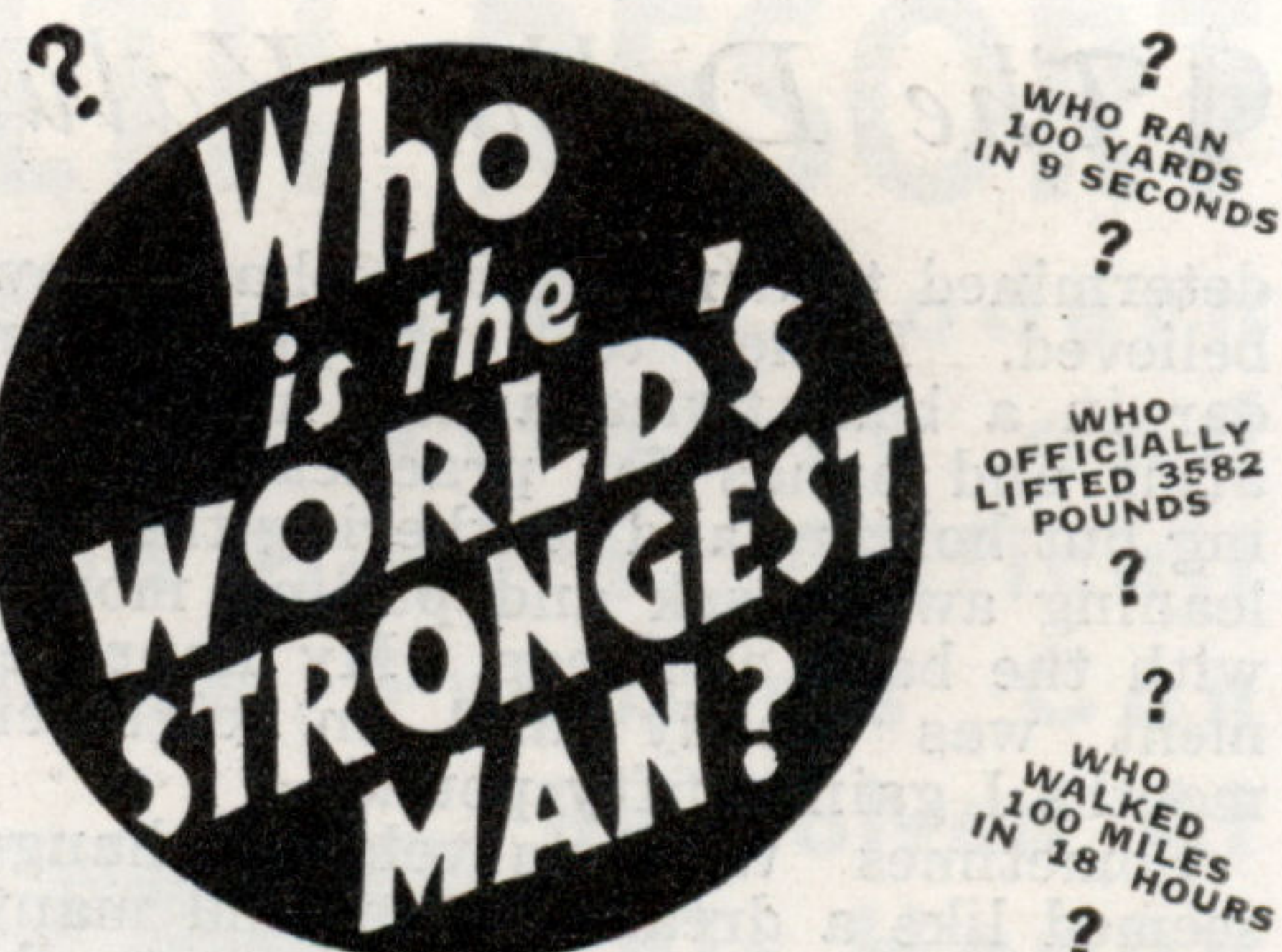
Another mutual friend now proposed marriage to Lili. "Before" (I am again quoting Dr. Haire) "consenting to the marriage, Lili made another journey to the German surgeon at Dresden to tell him that she had received the offer of marriage and to ask him if he could carry out yet another operation on her to enable her to function completely as a woman . . . and to become a mother. An operation for this purpose was carried out; but shortly afterwards Lili died in Dresden of heart trouble.

"There is," Dr. Haire goes on to say, "a small number of curious cases of this sort, but that of Wegener is the most extreme."

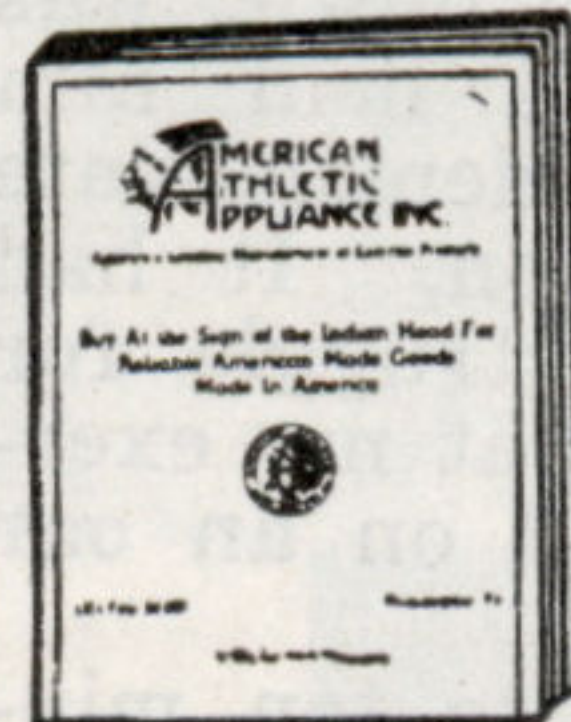
I am inclined to agree with Dr. Haire that it is unwise to perform operations, even at the patient's own request, until we know more about sexual physiology.

WE are now in the position to revert to our original query. Is it possible to change the sex of human beings? We cannot reply categorically. Our answer must be a conditional "yes" or a conditional "no." It is possible to correct certain errors of nature, but it is impossible, with the present limits of medical science, to change the sex of a mature, normally developed human being. It is possible, at least theoretically, to induce lactation in a male by stimulating the mamillary gland, if he subjects himself to the experiment before puberty. It is possible, under similar circumstances, to accentuate the growth of rudimentary male organs in the female. Science can, age may, and accident will, bring about marked changes in the secondary sexual characteristics, even of a mature individual. *But it is not possible to turn a full-fledged male into a female, or a full-fledged female into a male.* The surgeon's knife can dissolve (with certain qualifications) the marriage between Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. The endocrinologist can enhance the male or the female characteristics of the pseudo-hermaphrodite; the plastic surgeon can eradicate some malformations. But complete transformation of sex is not accomplished even in animals; Steinach's laboratory males and females are incapable of reproduction.

The two athletes cited in the beginning of this article never were normal females; if they had been, no medical hocus-pocus, no surgical miracle, could have transformed them into men.



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