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## Original Communications.

### WHAT CIVILIZATION IS DOING FOR THE HUMAN FEMALE.\*

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At the outset of this paper the writer wishes to disclaim having any grudge against civilization. On the contrary, he enjoys the luxuries and comforts which it affords him, and in return is quite willing to pay the price in shortness of life and diminished health, which it demands.

The object of this paper is merely to call attention to the fact that civilization is slowly but surely working certain changes in the human animal. His wish is to record, not to criticise. As his observations have been made upon the human female, he will limit his remarks as much as possible to that branch of the subject.

For the purposes of this essay, the word civilization will be taken to mean the ensemble of social customs, habits, refinements of manners, comforts and luxuries which are not practised or enjoyed by human beings in the savage state.

That these altered circumstances are changing the nature and health, as well as giving a different complexion to the diseases of women, is tolerably well known.

\*Read before the Southern Medical and Gynecological Association, at Nashville, Tennessee, 14th Nov., 1889.

The writer will endeavor to point out in what manner this is coming to pass. In the savage state the human female possesses a muscular system quite equal to, and in some countries where it is the custom for the women to perform all the hard work, even stronger than the men. When the tribe is moving from one point to another, in search for food, she has not only to transport herself, but also one or two, or even more, of the smaller children, while, when stationery for a time, it is her duty to grind the corn, gather fuel, carry water, and cultivate the ground in a rude way, while the men occupied themselves with warfare or the chase. In such women there are no muscles that are never called into play, and all the physiological processes are carried on with regularity and ease.

Under the influence of civilization the woman gradually exchanges her life in the open air for close confinement in the house, with its deprivation of fresh air and exercise, and instead of a light waist cloth or a simple covering suspended from the shoulders, she has gradually acquired the art of changing her form from the natural to the artificial shape, and to hang from her constricted waist not only a large amount of heavy clothing, but also many hundred yards of ornamental trimming.

In the savage state the female child is