

Explaining the Strange MYSTERY of WOMEN becoming MEN

By Dr. Morris Fishbein

WHEN authorities at the Olympic Games began demanding physical examinations of winners in women's events in order to determine that they were actually female and not male, they were not setting a precedent.

The very word we use for describing an individual of doubtful sex or of both sexes—hermaphrodite—comes to us from the ancient Greeks. Both Ovid and Virgil refer to such strangely formed human beings and most of the other Greek and Roman writers mention them. In fact, the inhabitants of ancient Athens used to throw all such babies into the sea because they were considered to be signs of bad luck. Down through the Middle Ages some medical writers after studies of the occurrence of such unfortunate human beings and describes the strange lives which they lived.

Among the earliest cases reported in the records of our own country is that of Katherine or Charles. When born in 1824 she was considered a girl until the age of 40. In fact, she lived as a woman with a man until the age of 46. She had all the characteristics of a handsome woman.

Then at 46 her character and her appearance changed so that at that age she—now he—married a woman and lived as a man until the time of her or his death.

The cases in the early literature repeat themselves with remarkable monotony and there are hundreds of them in the medical records. In practically all of them the organs of sex are duplicated—if not wholly, at least partially—so that the sex activities are not subject to much interference from either the male or the



Inez Mitrani and Nesim Mitrani look so much alike they can't be told apart—which is only natural, because they're the same person. Inez, a girl of 18, became Nesim, a normal boy, after an operation performed in Istanbul.

female point of view.

There are, of course, many cases in which the condition is not actual but spurious. In such cases the organs of sex are deformed so as to give the appearance of the female to a human being distinctly male or the appearance of the male to one distinctly womanish in character. These are not considered as actual cases of the type of double sex.

Because medicine of an earlier day understood these conditions so poorly, the reports, even by doctors, are full of doubt and misunderstanding, but in recent years there has come a better knowledge of the significance of such information and the records bring to light some astounding cases.

SOME 10 years ago a 25-year-old woman walked into a clinic in Germany. She told the doctors that as a child she had always played with boys and had never cared to play with girls. Her favorite sports were the games of battles and of robbers and detectives—just the games that little boys all over the world like to play.

When she was 11 she fell in love with a little girl, and when she was 15 she acted as a male lover might act toward another little girl. Yet, when she was 22 years old, in response to the wishes of her parents, she married a young man who tried to divorce her three



These happy newly-weds are Mark Weston of England and his wife, the former Alberta Bray. And the athletic young woman at the left is Mark Weston—who was Mary Edith Louise Weston, a champion woman athlete, until an operation—recently changed "her" to a man.

further. Now they made an opening on the right side of his body and here they found the tissues of sex belonging to the male. Since this person had always lived as a male, it was decided by the doctors to save the tissues on the right side of the body and to remove those on the left so as to determine the character of this individual definitely toward the masculine side.

The surgeons and investigators who studied this patient record him, or "it," as the first human case of true double sex ever recorded.

THERE are, however, many cases in which the degrees or proportions of each sex concerned in a single individual vary.

A college student, aged 19, had been looked on in early life as a fairly normal girl, yet when she reached the age of 13 the changes that usually develop in girls did not appear, and as she grew older she became more and more convinced that she was different from other girls.

As a child she had played with dolls and all her playmates had been girls. Moreover, like other little girls she had developed her preferences among the boys and when playing with girls had talked about the time when she would marry and have babies. Yet when she reached 19 years of age she had failed to develop as women develop, had thin hips and a moderately heavy growth of hair on her upper lip; her chest was flat and undeveloped.

An operation was done and in the abdomen there was a complete absence of the female organs of childbirth. Instead there were found the male organs of sex, hidden away in the abdominal cavity. Here was a problem for the physicians!

It became necessary after examination of the external organs to give this girl an opportunity

to live the rest of her life as a woman. The male sex glands were removed. The necessary surgery was done to give her all the external appearances of a woman, and then the psychologists went to work to reassure her of the possibilities that she might live her life as a normal woman. After all, her instincts had always been feminine.

Cases like these are repeated again and again in the pages of medical publications. Most recent is the account of Zdenka Koubek, who has suddenly found out that "to be a woman is nothing, but a man is everything."

Koubek was born in Bohemia in 1913. He was a girl then and like the Russians and the Bohemians they called him Zdenka Koubkova.

Every now and then the world goes athleticly crazy or becomes "sports minded," and all of the nations of the world vie for the dubious national honor of first place in the Olympic Games. The little European nations are particularly earnest about these affairs. Among all the girls Zdenka Koubkova was outstanding for her athletic prowess. She could run and jump like a man.

THEN it was decided that she was really a man, so an operation was performed like some of those that I already have described and now Zdenka Koubkova is able to talk, walk and shave like any other masculine being.

The most difficult cases for the doctors and the psychologists are those in which the person resembles a male physically and a female in all of his or her mental characteristics or vice versa. These are cases of pseudobermaphrodites and there are thousands of records of such occurrences. Occasionally the tissues physically resemble those of both sexes.

In recent years investigators in the laboratories of biology have been studying the question as to whether or not complete sex transformation in animals is possible. They have begun with the lowest forms of life and have studied every stage of development from the first, or egg stage, up to adult life.

Briefly, they have shown that complete sex reversal in both directions in the egg stage of the pigeon is an accomplished fact. They have shown that it is possible to make a complete sex transformation from female to male in the young chicken, and indeed they have accomplished complete sex transformation in the adult stage of both chicken and pigeon.

Dr. Oscar Riddle of the Carnegie Institute of Washington, one of our greatest authorities on experimental evolution, is convinced that the metabolic or chemical change of the body is at the base of sex determination and

Every once in a while we hear, as we have heard just recently, that some person's sex has changed from female to male. In this informative article Dr. Fishbein discusses the how and why of these peculiar cases

that maleness is related to a high metabolic rate and femaleness to a low metabolic rate. The constitution of every individual is apparently determined by the quality of male and female factors that he gets from each of his two parents.

As Prof. F. A. E. Crew has pointed out, there are two opposing views concerning the startling cases in which it is reported that some girl has become a boy and that skirts have been exchanged for trousers.

Crew believes that such individuals have never been girls. He conceives of these individuals as males in whom the necessary stimulus from the glands for the proper differentiation of the male sex equipment has been delayed. As a result the body grows without differentiation and the degree of the abnormality is determined by the degree of delay in the coming of the stimulation from the pituitary glands or the sex glands.

In exceedingly rare cases, some of which I have described here, both male and female sex glands are found. In such cases the female determining reactions which were in excess at the beginning of differentiation were overwhelmed by the male determining reactions in the later stages. We know today that the glands of the body determine these characteristics and the manner of action of the glands seems to vary in every human being.

The operations that are performed on these patients involve, first of all, a study to deter-



A fine-looking couple? Not at all—just two views of Zdenka Koubek, of Bohemia, who used to be a noted girl athlete named Zdenka Koubkova. This picture was made by laying a photograph of Koubek as he looks today over a photo showing him—or her—in the guise of a short time ago.

mine which type of sex gland predominates: then a removal of the persistent sex gland of the opposite type, and plastic surgery on the external organs of sex so as to resemble as nearly as possible the kind of organs of sex that are to predominate finally in the person concerned.

No doubt in various places in the United States today there are little girls growing up who will eventually turn out to be predominantly male and who will need the type of diagnosis and surgery that has been mentioned.

What they need most at this time is proper understanding by their parents, by their doctors and by the community in general. If the parents have the slightest doubt that the baby's sex is not fully determined as it should be, they should give themselves and the child the benefit of early scientific diagnosis at the first possible moment.



Another of the strange sex-transformation cases is reported from China, where the sex of Yao Ching-ping was changed from female to male. These pictures show Yao as a girl and as a boy.

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