

Georgiana Bruce Kirby Writes for the *Golden Gate* Spiritualist Newspaper

In the article entitled "Spiritualism, Georgiana Bruce Kirby, and Scientific Medicine in 1885 Santa Cruz" I mention that there is in the historical archives of the Santa Cruz County Museum of Art and History a copy of Kirby's two contributions to the San Francisco Spiritualist newspaper *Golden Gate*. The first of these, "Our Girls" is an article about the education of women, a topic dear to Kirby. The other is a response to an article that had appeared in the *Golden Gate* about a physician who let the powers of nature cure his patients. Kirby wondered if the doctor really achieved his results through spiritualistic powers. To facilitate research into the life of this early Santa Cruz Feminist, I am placing here the text of these two writings, which, as far as I know, have not until now appeared anywhere outside the *Golden Gate*.

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OUR GIRLS.
BY GEORGIANA B. KIRBY.

Not even the most inane mother will deny that the young are at the mercy of their circumstances, of the conditions which surround them, and those which come to meet them, as it were; and yet these very same mothers will continue, year after year, in a state of blind security about their *own* growing girls, neither instructing them in the physiology of sex, or giving them the watchful protection every girl should have. There is a certain loving suspicion felt by a wise mother in regard to her child, from his or her earliest years, until she sees that his character is firmly established. She realizes that her child is weak and afraid of the verdict of its elders; that, for instance, it is not easy for him to tell the exact truth, where he has been to blame; so she looks him in the eye, with an affectionate, steady and determined gaze (in order to help him), and says: "Now, my dear, tell me the honest truth. If you have done wrong in this matter, acknowledge it. I never punish you when you tell me the truth."

In nearly every case, the child so dealt with will not only do as he is prompted, but will, by degrees, acquire the courage to tell the truth without prompting.

The common, unthinking mother, believes at once whatever her child says, and thus encourages him in the habit of lying.

So with the little girl. As a being, conscious that she is in the power of her elders, she sometimes tries to obtain her own way by strategem. If her mother sees no need of this tender suspicion (which is concealed, and hence never wounds the child's self-respect), and imagines that this weak creature, because it is hers, is always equal to telling the truth, the girl, as she grows older, learns, it may be, to tell a lie with perfect nonchalance - - to say, for instance, that she is going to church when she is invited to go for a walk with some young fellow. We know just such a girl. She was very pretty, but constant

insincerity and coarse thoughts have destroyed all her charm. I pity her good-hearted, industrious parents, whose trustfulness was so fatal to their energetic and once promising child.

A young girl is no fit judge of her own circumstances; being youthful, she is hopeful, and neither suspects weakness in herself nor passion and selfishness on the part of the young men she knows. If she hears that a schoolmate has been imprudent, or allowed her reputation to be smutched, she immediately concludes that she must, by nature, have been a coarse girl; whereas, we know that in a large majority of such cases there was not innate sensuality; it was simply that they were neither instructed properly nor protected carefully; and, I repeat, not only should every girl be taught the physiology of sex in a pure and proper way, but she should never be permitted to go out of evenings unprotected, or to picnics either. She can secure plenty of innocent enjoyment without running any risk, and it is notorious that in this State social pleasure for the young is carried to excess.

As an instance of the danger attending ignorance and undue freedom I will relate an incident which took place in the city of San Francisco a few years ago.

A very attractive girl of fifteen, pure-minded and belonging to a good family, noticed that on her way to and from school, she always met, at about the same point, a well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking man, going in the opposite direction. It struck her as being so odd that, after a month or more, when he smiled, she was quite ready to smile too. This encouraged him to lift his hat, and presently they exchanged greetings, which as time went on, led to short chats. Finally he got in the habit of turning to walk with her a short distance.

One afternoon, when, for some reason, school had closed earlier than usual, she was more than ever amused to see him hurrying down the street, as was his wont. Coming up to her, he ventured to suggest that it was a lovely afternoon for a drive. He had a little business to attend to in the neighborhood of the Cliff House; would she not like to go with him? They could get back long before supper time.

The girl hesitated. How kind of him to be willing to take a school-girl! It was not quite right, unless she had her mother's consent, but he could not wait for her to get that. Yes, she would go, and tell her mother afterward.

"Well, let us hurry, then. I will leave you at a friend's house for a few minutes, while I go for the carriage."

The girl sat in waiting attitude, gazing round at the bric-a-brac of the elegantly furnished parlor, when a richly-dressed lady entered, and, addressing her, inquired her name, and where she lived; if she knew what sort of a house she was in, and who had brought her there. Then she said to her:

"My child, this house is no place for an innocent girl, and if you go to the Cliff House with that man you will be a ruined girl, and never be able to look your mother in the face again. One glass of wine, and you would be powerless. Come, I will put on my bonnet and take you home at once."

On ringing, and the two being admitted, the woman in question, who was the keeper of a well-known house of prostitution, asked to see the young girl's mother, and when the latter appeared she remarked:

"Madam, I am a woman whom you would consider too vile to speak to, but I have rescued your child from a fate worse than death. My name is --- --- and I keep what is known as the --- House. I never permit an innocent girl to be wronged, in my establishment. (Here she told the girl's story for her, the poor thing hanging her head.)

"Madam, teach her the risk she runs in making acquaintances on the street, but don't be severe with her."

The lady, trembling with horror at the thought of what might have befallen her darling child, took --- ---'s hand and shed over it tears of gratitude.

"Never, never shall I cease to bless you and to pray for you," she sobbed, as her benefactor, having performed her mission, bowed low and left them. It was, indeed, a rare escape, where one could not have expected assistance.

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[Editor the *Golden Gate*.]

"Old Doctor Jennings."

A few weeks ago I read a short article in the GOLDEN GATE, headed "Drug Superstition," in which reference was had to Dr. Jennings of Derby, Vermont, (if I remember rightly), who for twenty years practiced medicine most successfully in that town, and never during the whole of that time gave his patients anything but bread pills and colored water for drugs. He may have ordered a foot bath or a mustard poultice, but the stomach of those who sought his services remained uninjured by his contact with the various poisons we call medicines.

As your correspondent stated very early in his practice he came to the conclusion there was [i]vis.[sic] Medicatrix naturae[/i], or creative power inherent in the human body, which, if allowed to manifest itself on every emergency, was quite equal to overruling disease. But, just when she was making her crowning effort, the friends of the patient got frightened and sent for the Doctor, who at once prejudiced the case, by introducing a poison into the stomach which must be gotten rid of, either by purging or vomiting.

The Doctor would only test his theory by deceiving his patients. He knew well that should he undeceive them his power would be gone, so he remained the great medical authority of the region for twenty years, when having fully satisfied himself of the correctness of his theory he disposed of his excellent practice and went to Oberlin, Ohio, and bought a good farm. Returning to make the final arrangements for his removal, he gave a public lecture in which he explained his belief in nature's remedial powers and avowed the method he had used in dealing with the sick.

The lecture created immense surprise. There were "ohs!" and "ahs!" on all sides. "What! When I had those fits did I take nothing but colored water? Surely, Doctor, there was something more than bread in those pills that cured me of the terrible neuralgia?" "Not another thing, ladies. I have told you the exact truth," the Doctor replied.

Now the question is, Did this genial practitioner possess, without knowing it, the mediumistic touch which restores harmony to the system?

There is no doubt about our modern superstition concerning value of drugs. Even for the baby, instead of sending for a wise, experienced grandmother, we call a doctor, who will write a prescription for any mite of humanity, and the poor, little stomach has to stand its chance. Illiterate youths can be made over into physicians, in two, or at most, three years, and thousands shrinking from the inferior status to which they see honest labor doomed rush into the professions to avoid what they are best fitted for. Naturally, belief in the efficacy of drugs is on the increase, while the trade not only certain but lucrative. There are not many Dr. Jennings' in the work, though he published his experience nearly forty years ago.

G.B.K.

(Paul Tutwiler, October, 2007)