

The numerous foreign bodies found in the urethra and bladder attest the tendency that men of all ages have to meddle with their genitals. Dr. J. R. Wood, of New York, has a long, thick, leather thong which he was called upon to remove from a patient, who had introduced it through his urethra into his bladder, and amused himself by working it backward and forward until the free end in the bladder became knotted, and Dr. Wood was called upon to extract it, finding the patient with several inches of the thong projecting from his meatus.

The use of tobacco, alcohol, and, it might be added, tea, is as widespread as is the habit of masturbation; and each of these habits, or certainly the first two, inflict as much injury upon the human race as, in all probability, does the secret vice; yet who would affirm that every man who smoked would have headache, dyspepsia, heartburn, neuralgia, intermission of the heart-beat, etc., would become thin, depressed, nervous, sleepless—effects all of which may be produced by an excess of tobacco; or that another who drank liquor would necessarily have delirium tremens, cirrhosis of the liver, fatty kidney, and die with ascites and Bright's disease? As it is with whiskey and tobacco, so is it with masturbation carried to excess. It is capable of producing, it must be recognized, the most serious results, among which idiocy, insanity, epilepsy, dementia, physical prostration, hypochondria, impotence, and sterility, are prominent, but these are practically very rare—so rare, indeed, that they are encountered, as a rule, only by the specialist, and very rarely by him; and, finally, even when these serious results can be traced to masturbation as a first cause, it will often be found that some other cause has acted in conjunction with the masturbation, such as a blow on the head, hereditary tendency to the disease in question, natural feebleness of nervous tone, irregular and self-indulgent habits, abuse of stimulants, syphilis. Hence it becomes plain that, while the intelligent physician must recognize the possible physical evils produced by masturbation, he should oppose himself boldly to that sickly sentimentality which shrouds in mystery one of the failings of our physical nature, because it involves the sexual function, and should try to look the subject honestly in the face, and handle it as if it were a problem in mathematics.

Looking at masturbation in this way, the truth is, that the majority of mankind who indulge in it do so just before and after puberty. Most of them are ignorant at first that they are harming themselves, but they soon find it out by one means or another, and then sooner or later give it up. The longer and the more frequently they yield to the vicious habit the stronger does its hold become, so that in case they escape the mental and physical disorders to which excessive venery in extreme cases may give rise, still they may pay the penalty of excess by some diminution of vigor in after-life, by throwing confusion into their sexual hygiene, and establishing sexual necessities which they find it difficult to meet suitably; and, finally, they may continue on through life victims

to a perverted sexual sense, shunning women, from whom they aver that they derive no pleasure, totally wrecked as to their *morale*, often hypochondriacs, and suffering from all sorts of functional distress, physical and intellectual, real and fancied.

The chief reason why so much is said of venereal excess by masturbation, and so little of sexual excess, in the natural way, is, that the former is so much more common, and not that the act itself is physically more harmful. The solitary vice, as it is aptly styled, may be practised on all occasions, even in company, by the hand in the pocket, or by friction against some prominent object. In schools, not infrequently, boys practise it upon each other; but, generally, masturbation is performed in bed, and in solitary places, where there is no possibility of disturbance. Hence the frequency of its performance is, in some cases, very great, and the effects of often-repeated nervous shock more pronounced. Sexual intercourse, on the other hand, requires the consent of two individuals, and opportunities which, relatively, are hard to find. Moreover, a man's moral sense will often keep him from committing excess with a woman, when nothing will restrain him while alone. In married life, excess is the exception; sexual hygiene is more apt to be correct, man is in his natural condition, other emotions enter largely into his daily life, and it is rare that the surgeon encounters in his practice a man happily married complaining of any disorder of the genitourinary system, except those of a purely physical nature.

Symptoms of Masturbation.—A young child, who has been taught to masturbate, will be seen constantly at work at his genitals, and observed to have erections with unnatural frequency. No further signs are needed. Such children become fretful, peevish, thin, nervous, excitable. They sleep badly, have a haggard look, seem to be prone to convulsions, and, it is said, are apt to have epilepsy.

Boys who masturbate to excess usually have a long prepuce (they may have none, for Jews masturbate); they get a sallow look, have a sheepish, hang-dog expression; their eyes are deep-set, they incline to melancholy broodings, to sitting by themselves, and reading over a fire rather than to joining their companions at play. They become absent-minded, and their memory seems defective. The hand is apt to be cold and moist in the palm. The skin is often pallid; the innocent frankness of youth is absent.

The young man is over-shy, unambitious, he shrinks from a steady gaze, blushes readily, and seems to be conscious of having done something unmanly and little.

Men who masturbate often show no sign of the habit. They are apt to be cowardly, mean-spirited, poor specimens of humanity; but it is rare for adults to practise masturbation to great excess, and, if they suffer from any of the supposed evil consequences of the habit, it is either on account of excess in earlier life, on account of imperfect

sexual hygiene, or irregularly gratified sexual desire, their symptoms assuming a multiplicity of expression, and generally being such as are arranged under the term hypochondria, and manifestly not dependent entirely upon masturbation, since the same symptoms are very common in patients who do not masturbate, who, indeed, are perfectly continent, and since they are not infrequently relieved by marriage. As to atrophy of the genitals, varicocele, chorea, epilepsy, idiocy, insanity, it is quite doubtful if these are often due to masturbation, acting alone; and although this vicious habit may be the most important cause in a given case, and should always be sought for, and if possible corrected, yet undoubtedly usually some other obscure cause of disease is in action, and is, perhaps, to blame for the masturbation as well as the idiocy or epilepsy, as may be inferred from the following (personal) case:

CASE XL.—A young lad, whose intellect was beginning to fail, was frequently caught in the act of masturbation. All moral, physical, and medical means to correct the habit having proved ineffective, as idiocy was becoming more pronounced, the parents demanded castration as the only means of saving the intellect of the child. Instead of cutting out the testicle, it was decided to excise a portion of the vas deferens on either side, which was accordingly done. The operation was of no advantage, the intellect failed until idiocy became complete, and the testicles both went on to atrophy. When last seen, the idiot was sitting in the corner of a cell in the institution to which he had been sent, fingering himself vigorously, and crying because he could not get an erection.

If it had been loss of semen, in this case, which was producing the loss of mind, the cutting of the seminal ducts would have arrested the progress of the idiocy; furthermore, there must have been some cause at work, which was not apparent, for atrophy of the testicles followed excision of the ducts, of which physiologists have proved it is not the result (Curling). The same cause which produced the atrophy of the testicles was in this case undoubtedly to blame for the idiocy. Sometimes, after a severe blow on the head, the intellect fails, epilepsy comes on, the boy approaches nearer to the brute and is found to masturbate in excess, and this result of his injury frequently is blamed as the cause of all his troubles.

The foregoing remarks are not intended to palliate, in the least degree, the baseness of the practice of self-abuse, or to deny that lack of physical and sexual vigor, spermatorrhœa, neuralgia of the urethra, etc., may be frequently caused by its excessive indulgence, but they are intended to oppose the idea, seemingly so prevalent, that very few men indulge in the secret vice, and that all who do so suffer; and they are also intended to advance the proposition that in the vast majority of instances masturbation does little harm to the individual, except in regard to his *moralé*. It unmans him, makes him untrue to himself, and cowardly; and most sensible boys find this out before a great while, and give up the practice, which they feel to be sapping their manhood and self-esteem.

Treatment.—It is infinitely better that a boy should never mastur-

bate, if he can be saved from it. Prophylactic treatment may save him. In the case of babies who do not do well, nurses should be watched, and discharged as soon as there is any evidence that they are handling the child. If the infant have already acquired the habit, his hands must be tied when he sleeps, and at all other times he must be watched, until he grows out of the habit. Boys should always be made to sleep alone, never allowed to consort habitually with any other boy, especially if the latter be the older; all close intimacies between boys of different ages should be broken up, and, on the appearance of any of the signs of masturbation, a close watch should be kept up.

It is not good policy in most cases to ask a boy if he fingers his privates. He will be pretty sure to say no, and then to tell other lies to substantiate the first. It is the safest course to assume the fact after a careful study of the case, and the boy, thrown off his guard by the statement that he does masturbate, will rarely deny it, or will do so in such a feeble manner—occasionally with such over-positiveness—that he will convict himself. Finally, when the patient has confessed his folly, it is not wise, in most cases, to try to terrify him out of his habit by brilliant and exaggerated statements of the possible misery he may bring upon himself if he does not stop. This is appealing to a base motive, fear of an indefinite evil in the future, and, although sometimes successful, it is often inadequate to the proposed end, for a healthy boy cannot realize what it means to be sick; he cannot understand it, and consequently is not afraid of it. The method of treatment which is most effective, but at the same time the one which requires the most force to carry out, is to elevate the boy out of his bad habit, to shame him, to make a man out of him, to reason with him, and talk to him honestly and openly, without reserve or mysticism; to sympathize with him, not to wound him; to study him and treat him morally. This course will succeed with the greatest number, provided only sufficient time and attention be given to it.

When a man comes complaining of the results of masturbation, an attentive study of his symptoms will not infrequently disclose his disease to be hypochondria, and his malady ungratified sexual desire, with often some neuralgia of the vesical neck. His training should consist in encouragement and continence, with absolute purity of thought, and subsequently marriage, to regulate his sexual hygiene. After marriage it is rare to hear any further complaint from these cases—always provided there is really nothing more than functional derangement at the bottom of the patient's complaint, as is the case in the vast majority of instances.

As for medicines, they are of little or no value; camphor, bromide of potassium, or lupulin, might be given as placebos, but it is doubtful if they are of any efficacy. Cold sponge-baths, out-door sports, physical fatigue, sleeping in a cool room on a hard bed, with a light covering,

are all useful; eating lightly at night, not retiring until very sleepy, and rising immediately on waking in the morning, are powerful assistants in breaking up the habit, but all will be of no avail unless the *morale* of the patient be elevated, unless he keep his thoughts pure, and desire, for the manliness of it alone, to be rid of his bad habits.

POLLUTION.

Pollution is a term applied to involuntary emissions of semen in ejaculation, attended by a venereal orgasm, more or less marked. Pollutions are nocturnal or diurnal.

Nocturnal pollutions are exceedingly common. They usually accompany an erotic dream, and the patient wakes just as the ejaculation is occurring. Sometimes, when sleep is profound, the patient does not wake, or, if he does, he forgets his dream. The sensation of pleasure undoubtedly accompanied ejaculation in these cases, but was faint, and forgotten. Nocturnal emissions in moderation are entirely natural, and by no means a sign of disease. Their frequency compatible with health varies with the purity of mind and the sexual vigor of the patient. A man who is happily married rarely has nocturnal emissions while living with his wife, but, if he leaves her for several weeks, it is natural, and entirely the rule, that there should be a formation and collection of semen which, distending the seminal vesicles, excites erotic fancies, and, in the relaxed condition between sleeping and waking, escapes at the conclusion of a dream. Any man suffering from ungratified sexual desire is normally in a condition demanding relief for his over-distended seminal vesicles, and, if that relief be not afforded in some way by the patient, it will come spasmodically during sleep. This is all the more certain to be the case if the patient has established a habit of rapid formation of semen by frequent calls for a supply of the same in excessive sexual intercourse, or masturbation practised as a habit for a considerable length of time: and especially if, when natural or unnatural gratification is given up, lascivious thoughts are indulged in, and impure associations continued. Occasionally nocturnal emissions may be over-frequent, and indicate a condition of irritation in the deep urethra—some modification of neuralgia of the vesical neck which requires treatment.

Treatment.—When emissions do not exceed three times weekly they should be disregarded, and attempts made only to purify the thoughts of the patient, elevate his tone, and get him, if possible, happily married. Where they become very frequent, as nightly or several times a night for a considerable time, besides the employment of all known tonic and hygienic means and the measures detailed above, certain special attempts to correct the habit are advisable. The patient should exercise and develop his muscular system. He should endeavor to sleep soundly, by tiring himself out through the day by physical work. Dry frictions,

cold bath, cold douche, locally, are useful. He should sleep on a hard bed, lightly covered. The stomach should not be full on retiring. Most patients have involuntary emissions toward morning, and, waking, find themselves lying on their back. This position, with the bladder somewhat distended, tends to beget erection, and, by avoiding it, pollution may be escaped. This is accomplished by causing the patient to tie a towel round his waist on retiring, with a hard knot in the back over the spine. When he lies upon this knot it will wake him. Besides these means, among all of which purity of thought comes first, bromide of potassium, camphor, and lupulin, may be given internally, with strychnine and a mineral acid, or such tonic as the physical conditions seem to call for, and locally decided advantage may be derived from the gentle use of the steel sound, as in neuralgia of the vesical neck, and finally the cupped sound with tannin, as in spermatorrhœa, or possibly a stimulating prostatic injection.

Diurnal pollution is rare. In some impressionable patients, especially if suffering from prostatic irritability due to venereal excess, the sight or thought of certain women will produce ejaculation, as may a touch upon the glans penis. Ejaculation of semen may be produced by a variety of causes. Lallemand¹ speaks of a man who could produce it by striking his head with his knuckles. Sudden injuries to the spine sometimes produce the same effect. Lallemand quotes from Hedelhofer that a man fell upon the sacrum, and immediately had an ejaculation. In decapitation by the guillotine, unless the neck is severed too low, ejaculation is quite common.

The treatment of diurnal pollution is by steel sounds and local astringents to the prostate, together with most of the means detailed for nocturnal emissions. Circumcision should be performed if the glans penis is sensitive.

SPERMATORRHŒA.

Few terms are more abused and distorted in their significance than spermatorrhœa. The young man into whose hands some pamphlet on "Manhood Restored" has fallen, imagines himself hopelessly doomed to impotence, paralysis, and idiocy, because he has spermatorrhœa, which spermatorrhœa consists in nocturnal pollution, escape of mucus during prolonged erection, appearance of amorphous phosphates in his urine—often in a gleet discharge, due to stricture or a damaged patch of mucous membrane in the urethra, and sometimes, where the diseased mind of a youth suffering from ungratified sexual desire can find nothing else to confirm its suspicions, the natural, healthy, flocculent cloud of mucus collecting normally in all urine, after it has stood a while, is pointed to, in dejected triumph, as a demonstration of the never-ending loss of seminal fluid. Occasionally a patient will even bottle his urine and keep

¹ "Des Pertes seminales," Montpellier, 1836, 1842.