

thing so abject and filthy as is carnal copulation, but that the venereous ticklings raised in those parts relax the severity of his mind; or reason admonisheth him that the memory of his name ought not to end with his life, but to be preserved unto all generations as far as may be possible by the propagation of his seed or issue."

I. ORIGINAL ABSENCE OF ALL SEXUAL DESIRE.—

That there are persons in apparent good health who have never experienced sexual desires is undoubted, though the number of such individuals in the male sex is exceedingly small. It is said that Sir Isaac Newton never had sexual intercourse, and the fact has been brought forward as an illustration of the point in question, but I think unwarrantably. In all my experience but two cases of the kind have come under my observation, and these are of so interesting a character that I do not hesitate to give the details in this place.

Mr. W., aged 33, a strong, well-built, and apparently healthy man, consulted me, December 11, 1860, in order, as he said, to ascertain if anything could be done for him. He stated that he had never experienced the slightest desire for sexual intercourse nor any venereal excitement, though the latter he had repeatedly, by reading libidinous books and association with lewd women, endeavored to produce. So far, however, from the wished-for effect resulting, the consequence was always the opposite, his repugnance increasing, and if the attempts were persevered with, nausea and vomit-

ing, accompanied with nervous and physical prostration, ensued. He declared that he had never practiced masturbation, but that since he had attained the age of seventeen he had had in his sleep what he supposed were seminal emissions, about once in two or three months. Upon one occasion he had persisted in the attempt at intercourse, notwithstanding the absence of desire and the unpleasant mental and physical phenomena which were produced; but though there was a vigorous erection caused by manual solicitation on the part of the Circe upon whom the attempt was made, this was at once dissipated as soon as entrance was attempted. He was then about twenty-two years of age and the experiment taught him that there might be pleasure in masturbation. As I have said, however, he was very emphatic in declaring that he had never indulged in this vice; and as his language and manner were frank in the extreme I have no reason to doubt the truth of his declaration. Frequently, as he had informed me, he had endeavored to excite desire by imagining erotic scenes of various kinds, but though erections were produced, there was no desire. On the contrary, feelings of repugnance and disgust were at once excited.

Here apparently there was the ability to experience erections from psychical and tactile excitations, but the sexual appetite appeared to be undeveloped, and in addition there was the remarkable idiosyncrasy of disgust instead of pleasure being excited at the idea of copulation. But, for this latter circumstance, the



patient could undoubtedly have mechanically gone through the act of intercourse, and perhaps have experienced pleasure from the operation.

There were many reasons why this gentleman should marry. There was a considerable property held in trust for any children he might have, but which without offspring of his would go from his family partly to people strangers to him and partly to certain charitable institutions. And again, strange as it may seem, he liked the companionship of women and was anxious to have a home of his own, and a wife with whom he might at least associate in a platonic way. In his present condition, he felt that all these things were impossible, and so he had come to me hoping that in the resources of medicine there might be something that would alter his nature so as to make sexual intercourse possible to him, even if the development of desire were out of the question.

I saw no way of doing this, however, unless it might be possible for him to accomplish the sexual act notwithstanding the disgust, the faintness, the nausea and vomiting, and by perseverance to overcome the idiosyncrasy. He promised to make the attempt repeatedly, but he reported about a month afterward that the plan of treatment was impossible. He went into the civil war, and was killed at either Antietam or Gettysburg.

In the other case the patient, a man 27 years of age, had never experienced sexual desire, though the or-

gans were of full size and well-formed. Erections were readily produced by frictions of the penis, or by the application of heat, or even by lying on the back; but, instead of the ordinary venereal desires being excited, there was an overwhelming inclination to drink alcoholic liquor in large quantities, and a drunken debauch was the consequence. Towards women there was a strong feeling of disgust, and a still more powerful disinclination to sexual intercourse. Many times the attempt to effect entrance had been made while an erection existed, but at once the penis became flaccid. In this instance, there was the reciprocal effect of erections being produced by the desire for alcohol, and under such a circumstance masturbation had often been practiced. This patient eventually died comatose during a severe attack of cerebral congestion.

II. ACQUIRED ABSENCE OF DESIRE.—There are various circumstances which exert an influence in abolishing the natural sexual desire of the individual. Among these are :

*a. Mental preoccupation.*—It is well known that when the mind is intensely engaged with engrossing subjects of a character foreign to the animal passion, venereal excitement is not experienced. Every man is, more or less, familiar with this fact from his own experience, and in the majority of cases the impotence thus induced is of a temporary character—the desire returning with the cessation of the mental preoccupation. But, in some instances, the mind is so continuously ab-



sorbed with other thoughts and emotions that the sexual appetite is altogether abolished, and does not return even if there be periods of intellectual or emotional relaxation. Sir Isaac Newton, it is said, never had sexual intercourse. Perhaps it would be going too far to say that he never experienced the desire; but, occupied as his mind was with subjects requiring the most severe and continuous thought, it is quite probable that he was from this cause practically incapable of copulation. The mere diversion of the mind, even for an instant, is sufficient, as Sterne has ludicrously reminded us, to render a man temporarily sexually impotent.

Of this temporary impotence from a sudden cessation of the desire by the thoughts being suddenly diverted into another channel during the act of sexual intercourse, several interesting cases have come under my observation.

A gentleman, a married man, and the picture of robust health, consulted me for a trouble of the kind under which he labored. He had been recently married and was much attached to his wife, but for a year past whenever he had attempted sexual intercourse some thought often of a ludicrous character would take possession of his mind, and extinguish all desire at the very moment that the orgasm was beginning. At once the penis became flaccid and the act remained unaccomplished. As an instance, he informed me that the previous night he had made an effort to have connection with his wife. The erection was vigorous, but just as

the acme was being reached a funny story he had read that day in a comic newspaper flashed through his mind. His desire at once vanished, the penis lost its turgescence and the emission did not take place. On a previous occasion, under similar circumstances, the thought of a purchase he had concluded occurred to him, and a like result ensued.

These repeated failures and disappointments had created a great deal of mental disturbance. He had become low-spirited almost to the point of melancholia, and had several times entertained serious thoughts of suicide.

In another case, the patient, a young man, whose mind was severely taxed by the nature of his occupation, which was that of a professional gambler, experienced when his nightly work was over strong sexual desires which he was unable to gratify, for in the act of intercourse some technical matter connected with his business was sure to come up in his mind with the effect of extinguishing all desire and with it all power. In both these cases and in others which have come within the range of my personal experience, I found that the subjects were extremely impressionable individuals, and that the first occurrence of the kind which in most other persons would have made no lasting impression on the mind produced with them such an effect that at the next attempt at intercourse the fear was excited that a repetition of the disturbance would ensue, and as a consequence the apprehension was rea-



lized. After that, on every similar attempt, there was a like fear that some thought would obtrude itself, and owing to the exercise of the principle of "expectant attention," the thing upon which the mind was concentrated and which was so greatly feared occurred with painful punctuality. It is an essential feature to the due performance of sexual intercourse that the man should have confidence in himself. If this is weakened, and still more if it is destroyed, disappointment is sure to result, and a condition of impotence is established.

In the treatment of cases of this nature, it is necessary in the first place to rid the patient of his apprehension, so that he will make the attempt without experiencing the slightest fear that anything is going to occur to interrupt the normal performance of the act. The only way with which I am acquainted by which this can be done is for the patient to abstain absolutely from all attempts for several months. By this course the appetite usually becomes so strong, in a man otherwise vigorous, that the desire overrides all possible fears, and when once this result can be attained there is no longer any danger of a recurrence of the trouble.

I therefore advised the married gentleman to occupy a separate room from that used by his wife, and on no account to attempt intercourse for three months; I expected by this course to break up the habit into which his brain had fallen of associating incongruous ideas with the act of intercourse, as well as to allow

the center for the sexual appetite, to acquire, by repose, increased strength. With similar objects in view, I advised the other patient to take a sea voyage which he had in contemplation, and not to attempt intercourse till his return, which would not be for a period of nearly four months. The treatment was so perfectly successful with both subjects that there was not the least difficulty when the periods of probation had expired.

In another case, the patient, a civil engineer, and engaged in work requiring extensive mathematical calculations, found that his desires were altogether extinguished. There was nothing very astonishing in this, for such studies are of all things most calculated to divert the mind from sexual matters and to extinguish desire. So powerful is this influence, that MM. Grimaud de Caux and Martin Saint Ange\* advise the reading of mathematical treatises as one of the most effectual means of subduing excessive venereal excitement. Moreover, Broussais† has observed that the genesic power is weakened by the mental concentration required in mathematical studies. In his lectures on phrenology delivered before the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, he not only insisted upon this point, but he exhibited two heads of eminent deceased mathematicians who not only were never married but who had\*an

\* "Histoire de la génération de l'homme," Paris, 1847, p. 294.

† "Cours de phrénologie," Paris, 1836, p. 183.



aversion to the female sex and who had never, as was said, had sexual intercourse.\*

But to return to the case of the engineer: while occupied with the calculations requisite to the higher performance of the extensive work on which he was engaged, and which required about fourteen hours daily of severe mental labor, he experienced no sexual desire and did not for over a year, though a married man, attempt intercourse. Indeed, his repugnance thereto was so great that for fear he might be tempted he had induced his wife to make a visit to Europe, and she had been absent several months, and had just returned when the case was brought to my attention.

Soon after her reappearance in his home, he had, so he informed me, more as a matter of duty and affection, than from any venereal inclination on his part, attempted sexual intercourse, but had miserably failed. There was no desire, and it was impossible to reawaken an appetite that had long been extinguished. Such a state of affairs could not long continue without the peace and harmony which had hitherto existed in his family being in great danger of disturbance. Already he was fearful that his wife would attribute his impotence to excesses with other women, and so he had determined to take medical advice in regard to his disorder.

I found, on examination, that there was no trouble

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\* *Op. cit.* p. 180.

with the functions or structure of the genital organs. The penis was of full size, and the testicles were large, firm and free from disease. Nocturnal emissions occurred on an average about once a month, generally with, but sometimes without, lascivious dreams. Erections often took place during the night, and were painful, but were unaccompanied with desire. Apparently they were the result of congestion of the cord from lying on the back, and from distension of the bladder with urine. The patient was satisfied that if his desires could once be awakened there would be no difficulty in the physiological performance of the sexual act, and he was now anxious that they should be restored to their former degree of activity. For while there had never been excesses, there had, up to the beginning of the period mentioned, been a full degree of sexual inclination and power. Conversation, however, with him, convinced me that there was no anxiety on his part for the restoration of his sexual health based upon any other feelings than a regard for the proprieties of the situation and a fear of the ultimate consequence to his health and his domestic felicity. As to venereal appetite there did not appear to be a vestige.

Upon mature reflection I saw no way of materially benefitting the patient except by his giving up his work for a time and devoting himself entirely to the society of his wife. At the same time I advised the application of statical electricity to the nape of the neck with the view of obtaining its counter-irritant action, as well as its



expectant effect on the mind of the patient. So strong were the motives by which he was actuated that he at once resigned his very lucrative situation and submitted himself to the treatment advised. He purchased a little villa near the city, moved into it with his wife, and practically renewed his courtship of seven years previously. In accordance, further, with my advice, he made no attempts at intercourse, but waited patiently for the revivification of his desires. His restoration to health was not long postponed, for within three months he began to experience propensities to which for so long a time he had been a stranger, and after that the complete recovery was well assured. Aided by the good sense of his wife, to whom I fully explained the situation, and who, confident of possessing her husband's affections, acted throughout with rare kindness and discretion, there was no interruption to the course of his restoration. He will not soon forget, however, that Urania is a more exacting and exhausting mistress than Venus herself.

A case is cited by Grimaud de Caux and Saint Ange in which a celebrated mathematician was always diverted from the complete performance of the sexual act by the recurrence to his mind of problems of geometry, or of equations which had occurred to him during the day. The treatment was different from that which I have recommended in similar cases, and consisted in his wife being advised not to allow the approaches of her husband unless he was in a state of semi-intoxication. It

was hoped that by this means his intelligence would be sufficiently weakened to allow of the exclusive empire of the sexual appetite over his mind. It is stated that entire success was the result. It appears to me, however, that the plan I have advised is on every account altogether preferable, especially as it has been uniformly successful.

There is a good deal of sexual indifference, and consequently of impotence, existing among men whose whole heart and soul are in exciting business occupations requiring all their mental energy and consequently leaving nothing for the mere animal passions. Such individuals have no pleasures in life beyond those connected with the acquisition of wealth—society, the dining-table, the card-table, the theatre, the opera, literature, amusements; good or bad, never allure them. If they are married they go to bed to sleep, if they can, for they are exhausted with the excitements and the anxieties of the day. If unmarried they return at evening to their solitary apartments to study the markets and to devise new combinations. Sexual intercourse is a matter of utter indifference; their desires are extinguished.

It is rarely the case that the physician is consulted by such people till, having accomplished their business objects, or failed in them, they find not only that they have no desire, but that it is impossible to re-arouse the sexual appetite. While it is true in other things that a man does not regret the loss of that which he does not



value it is very different as regards sexual matters. And though a person such as that referred to cares nothing for his virile power as such, there are secondary considerations which he feels he cannot disregard. Among these are the fear that in losing his sexual appetite he is laying the ground-work for future paralysis, even if the loss be not one of the early signs of the approach of that disease, the desire for offspring to whom he may transmit his wealth, and if single the wish for the comforts of a home and the society of some cultivated and refined woman.

Such cases are, however, difficult to manage. The thoughts, the emotions, the appetites even, have for so long a time been concentrated toward one particular point, that the task of diverting them into other channels is almost insurmountable. A second nature has been formed with objects in life and desires different from those originally inherent in the individual. Besides, with the diminution of the natural inclination for sexual intercourse there is very often, in these instances, a veritable loss of generative power, and the two conditions reacting on one another render the prognosis still more unfavorable. Still there are cases in which the power is simply deteriorated from its normal standard. To such the society of agreeable and virtuous women may be recommended as constituting an efficient aid to the other measures proposed. These should consist of entire change of habits and the devotion of a considerable portion of the time to amuse-

ments, physical exercise, and pursuits tending to the development of emotions different from those which have previously actuated him. Nothing can be better than the entire cessation of business pursuits and the undertaking of a course of foreign travel.

The treatment must be mainly moral and hygienic, but I think if there is the least suspicion of any impairment of the general health strychnia in small doses taken for a long time will be of service. I am quite sure I have derived benefit from the administration of a prescription consisting of one grain of the sulphate of strychnia to the ounce of water, the patient taking ten drops three times a day shortly before meals.

Usually, even in mild cases, several months are required before the extinguished sexual feeling is rekindled, and there is a still longer period before the normal degree of desire is obtained. In those instances in which there is also a loss of sexual power the prospect of recovery is, as I have said, still more remote; but the further consideration of this class of cases is more appropriate to the following chapter.

*b. Desire Extinguished by Masturbation.*—The normal sexual appetite and a condition of impotence are induced by masturbation when carried to excess, and this altogether independently of the loss of power which in such cases eventually ensues. The imagination is always a more potent excitor of the sexual desire than the physiological incentive supplied by nature. The masturbator relies on the fertility and extravagance of



the lewd images presented to his mind for the increase of the pleasure derived from his act, and frequently he adds to the vividness by reading obscene books or looking at filthy pictures. As he goes on he finds, in obedience to a law of the organism, that gradually the visions which once sufficed to produce the requisite venereal excitement have lost their power, just as some strongly savored substance would, if eaten for a long time, fail to produce pleasant impressions on the gustatory papillæ. Still more libidinous and unnatural representations are conceived by his mind and brought before his mental vision, and so on, till at last, should he attempt sexual intercourse, he finds that the reality is so much less than his imagination had led him to believe, that it is incapable of sufficiently rousing his appetite. He is, in fact, impotent to women; he no longer desires intercourse, but abandons himself to his fatal habit, knowing the almost limitless resources of his imagination in providing excitations to his desires. Such persons shun the society of women, become often true misogynists, and suffer an entire extinction of the sexual feeling.

Such cases are to be discriminated from those, much more common, in which there is a loss of the power of erection, a condition which sooner or later is the consequence of continued masturbatory excesses. The one is altogether a mental, the other a physical phenomenon, though very often both states exist in the same individual.

A young man, whose father wished him to marry, had been continually putting off, on one pretext or another, acceding to the paternal wishes, till at last he confessed that he had no desire for sexual intercourse, and begged that in future he might be let alone. The father, alarmed for his son's health, insisted on his consulting a physician, and at last, through much importunity, succeeded in getting his consent, and he came under my observation. At his first visit to me the young man requested that his father would leave the room, and then as soon as we were alone he confessed that for several years he had practiced masturbation, but only in moderation, that occasionally he had had sexual intercourse, and, as he said, under circumstances favorable to the due physiological performance of the act, but that after a mature consideration of all the points bearing upon the case, he had arrived at the conclusion that masturbation gave greater pleasure and was altogether less troublesome. In fact, that he had no desire whatever for sexual intercourse, but preferred to go on in the way he had begun and which he was frank enough to say was entirely satisfactory to him.

I endeavored to point out to him the inevitable consequences of the course he was pursuing, so far as his sexual power was concerned, as well as the mental degradation that was certain to ensue; but all in vain, and when he left me I had made up my mind that his was one of those cases of sexual perversion, to the consideration of which I shall presently come, and that a