

on the part of her husband at intercourse, and lasted for some time afterward."

It is therefore an undoubted fact that masturbation is in itself more injurious to the integrity of the virile power than sexual intercourse, not only because it is more frequently repeated, but because it is generally effected through the influence of an exalted imagination, and not by the reflex irritation of distended vesiculæ seminales, the only physiological incentive to copulation.

But it is not only, as is generally supposed, to the loss of semen that the injurious effects of masturbation or of excessive indulgence are to be attributed. This is undoubtedly of some influence, but it is not, I think, the chief factor in causing impotence or other disturbances of the healthy condition of the system. The frequent production of the orgasm is of much more consequence, and it is to this cause that the various derangements of the nervous system, as well as weakness of the virile power, or its entire loss, are mainly to be ascribed. An idea is extremely prevalent that the loss of a few drops of seminal fluid causes more weakness of the system than the abstraction of a pint of blood: nothing could be more absurd. The seminal fluid is not secreted with any degree of rapidity, and if the orgasm be produced several times in the course of a brief period, it is after the second or third time, at furthest, unaccompanied by any emission of true semen. A patient of my own had intercourse eleven times during a period of less than eight hours. The first

three times were accompanied by emissions, but the last eight were entirely free from any discharge, though the orgasm was complete in each. Shortly after the eleventh time he had an epileptic fit, and became permanently impotent, never again experiencing an erection.

A young man, during an orgie at a house of prostitution, masturbated nine times in the course of about an hour. The first three times there were emissions, the fourth time only a little thin fluid escaped. The other five times the orgasm was experienced, unaccompanied by the slightest discharge of any kind.

The next morning he had incontinence of urine, and subsequently locomotor ataxia was developed. The penis was completely paralyzed.

These cases are sufficient to show that the evil effects of excess are not due to seminal loss, which in neither of the instances could have exceeded a teaspoonful in quantity.

Moreover, masturbation in boys before the age of puberty, is unattended by emissions of semen, and yet the injury to the system is greater at this period than at any other.

And in women the evil results of masturbation are fully as great as they are in men, and with them it is the orgasm alone that can do any damage, as there is no seminal discharge. Swediaur* cites the case of a

* "Traité complet des maladies vénériennes." T. i., p. 160.

woman under his care who suffered from frequent venereal orgasms in her sleep, and who in consequence became affected with *tabes dorsalis*.

When we call to mind the immense disturbance of the nervous system consequent upon the development of the sexual orgasm, the mental vertigo, the muscular convulsion, the cardiac and respiratory excitement, the resemblance which all the phenomena have to those of an epileptic paroxysm into which they not infrequently pass by an almost imperceptible gradation, we can understand how the too frequent repetition must lead not only to an extinction of the natural desire and power, but to a long train of other disorders of much greater importance to the life and health of the individual. The idea of ascribing all these deleterious results to the loss of a few drops of seminal fluid is absurd. They would take place equally certainly, and probably with almost equal severity, if there were no seminal fluid at all; and, indeed, in some extreme cases of masturbation there is no seminal secretion in the true sense of the term, and yet the process of mental and physical decay goes on with even more sureness than in the early days of the victim's practice of the vice.

There are several conditions which may be induced by the immediate action of the orgasm which are in fact continuations of it, and which can in no sense be ascribed to the loss of semen. For the semen is as much out of the system when in the *vesiculæ seminales*

as the urine is out of the blood when in the bladder. The mere discharge of this from one receptacle to another cannot produce any effect upon the organism, the deleterious results being caused by the demand for the secretion of repeated quantities of semen, and not by the emission of a collection already secreted. When, therefore, we see, in addition to epilepsy, cerebral hemorrhage, chorea, insanity, neuralgia, and certain forms of spinal paralysis following the orgasm immediately, and, indeed, sometimes supervening synchronously with it, we cannot doubt its influence over the mind and body, or fail to perceive that its too frequent repetition must indubitably lead to grave disturbances of one or the other, or both.

Probably the act of masturbation or of sexual intercourse is somewhat more injurious to males than to females. More cases of disturbances caused thereby in boys and men than in girls and women come under the observation of physicians, but this is to a great extent due to the fact that females do not indulge in the vice of masturbation to anything like the extent to which it is practised by males—that is, so far as number is concerned. In individual cases, when it is once begun, I am inclined to think *mulieres* and women carry it to a fully as great, if not a greater, extreme than do boys and men. The demoralization is greater, the sense of shame is more thoroughly abolished; but the other effects are certainly less than in the male sex. Still, disorders of body and mind do occur in them as the

results of continued excess, and not infrequently as the direct and immediate results of repeated orgasms within a short period. I have had two cases of paralysis of motion in both lower extremities occurring in women as the results of excessive coition during a single night, and very many of spinal irritation and other affections of the nervous system, the immediate effects of a like cause.

Sexual excesses in adult life, though often leading to impotence more or less permanent in character, are not so certain to result in that condition as those which are practised before the age of puberty, or before the body has attained to maturity. Still, cases of the kind are common enough, and undoubtedly the fact that almost every man who indulges in sexual intercourse does so to excess, is the cause of the supervention of impotence at an age when the individual ought to be in the full possession of all his powers. It is no uncommon thing to meet with men of fifty, forty, or even thirty, years of age, whose desires are as strong as they ever were, who are absolutely incapable of intercourse, or else possess the faculty in a very faint degree, and in whom the existing condition is clearly the result of excess.

It often happens that excess is committed without the individual being at all aware that he is exceeding the normal limits. The question then arises, what is excess? There are men who think it entirely within bounds to have intercourse once every twenty-four hours; others, again, indulge regularly twice a week; others once; still, others who think once a month suffi-

cient. It is exceedingly difficult to lay down any rule in the matter which will be applicable for all men; indeed, the task would be insuperable, for all men are not alike, and what would be excess for one would be moderation for another. But it may be said unhesitatingly that intercourse to the extent of once every twenty-four hours is excess for the strongest men who ever lived. There are many who can practise it without marked deterioration of their powers for several years, but the time inevitably comes, in advance of the normal period of diminution of power, when impotence begins to make its appearance. Twice a week is certainly excess for the majority of men, and will certainly lead to earlier than normal extinction of the sexual powers. Once a week is more generally applicable, and can as a rule in healthy men be taken as a guide from the twenty-fifth to the fortieth year. Previous to the twenty-first year sexual intercourse should not be practised at all; and between that age and twenty-five, if indulged in, it should certainly not be more frequently than once in ten or twelve days; and it is a law to which there are no exceptions that the greater the excess the sooner will the natural power be lost. If the individual desires to retain his ability to a green old age, he will not tax it too severely in his youth.

That the civilized man is in general excessive in the matter of sexual intercourse admits of no question, and we see the effects constantly in the early loss of the power. The reading of obscene books, the witnessing

of sexually suggestive plays, the very impediments which society necessarily places in the way of the unrestrained indulgence of the passions, act with some men as direct excitations to sexual indulgence. In civilized communities it will always happen that such causes act with much greater force than among savages, where, in fact, they are scarcely exhibited at all, and where the promptings of nature are alone the incentives to the act of copulation. The consequence is, that, other things being equal, the civilized man becomes impotent at a much earlier age than his uncivilized brother.

How many men of sixty years of age in the city of New York are capable of natural and satisfactory intercourse? Not one in twenty, and yet the power ought to be retained, and is, in the cases of those who have been temperate in its use up to, and even beyond, the age of three score and ten. Indeed, it is rare to find a man of fifty who has so husbanded his powers as to admit of his having sexual intercourse once a fortnight, and then the act is neither satisfactory to him nor the recipient. But at times a more serious evil than the comparatively early decay of the sexual power is observed as the consequence of excess, and this is the supervention of impotence either suddenly, after some extraordinary indulgence, or more gradually, in consequence of repeated excesses. In these cases the desire remains in as active a condition as it ever existed; attempts at intercourse are made, these fail; renewed efforts are made, with extraordinary excitants to erec-

tion; but all in vain, the penis remaining limp and flaccid to every normal and abnormal stimulus, and the condition becoming more profound with each failure.

The effect is by no means restricted to the generative organs. The patient becomes morbid, both from chagrin which follows his futile attempts at intercourse, and the apprehension, which is generally entertained, that some serious mental disease—insanity or imbecility, for instance—will result from the “softening of the brain” which he thinks has taken place, or is about to be produced. Besides this, he is the subject of regrets and remorse for his past offences against the laws of his being, and is just in that frame of mind which makes him an easy prey to the wiles of quacks and other medical impostors. He therefore runs from one to the other of these knaves and frauds: mesmerizers, clairvoyants, “natural healers,” anatomical museums, layers on of hands, faith-curiers, etc., etc., in the vain search for something that will enable him to recover the power he has lost, with no other result than to deplete his pocket, in the meantime making constant attempts at sexual intercourse by experimenting with one woman after another, and always with the same issue—failure.

A careful examination of these cases, and full inquiry into the circumstances attending the condition, reveal the facts that there has been no erection at all, or else so feeble a one as to render the intromission of the penis into the vagina an impossibility. Sometimes an emission of semen has taken place, but this has been ex-

ternal to the vulva, and has only served to render the state still more deplorable, for it has occurred without an erection, and only as a consequence of the extreme debility of the whole generative apparatus.

And this brings us to the consideration of that *partial impotence* which is one of the most frequent results of sexual excesses, and in which the erection is so feeble and the erethism so great that emission and an imperfect orgasm ensue either before an entrance has been effected, or so soon thereafter that the act of intercourse is unsatisfactory to both parties. This condition is often preliminary to the more complete loss of power, and again it may continue for an indefinite period, or may disappear under treatment.

In other cases there is an erection, and the individual thinks, till he learns better by experience, that there is going to be no difficulty in accomplishing the act of sexual intercourse; but just as the attempt is made to effect entrance, although there may be no loss of desire and no mental difficulty in the way, the penis becomes flaccid, and again disappointment is the result, there being no emission and no orgasm.

These states of partial impotence are very common, especially in those persons who have arrived at middle age, but in whom normally there ought to be almost as great a degree of power as there ever was. For it is to be noted that when in the course of advancing years the period is approaching in which, according to physiological laws, the individual may expect to undergo the

natural loss of sexual power, which is the common lot of all men, the failure is shown, not by any imperfection in the act, but by the healthy demand for its repetition coming less frequently. Besides, in this physiological impotence the desire disappears *pari passu* with the power, and the individual accordingly yields gracefully to the merciless law of his being. In that impotence, however, which is brought about by the imprudence of the individual in committing the act of intercourse more frequently than he ought, or with extraneous accessories, which heat the imagination for the time being and leave it a blank thereafter, the desire often remains unimpaired, while the power is diminished or altogether lost, and there are consequently regrets, chagrins, disappointments, and a constant state of warfare between the flesh and the spirit. It may be laid down as a law, to which there are few, if any, exceptions, that whenever there is desire, without full power, the resulting impotence is a veritable disease, and not a physiological condition coming in the regular course of life.

In regard to the character of the excess that may result in complete or partial impotence, it is generally, though by no means always, in adults, sexual intercourse rather than masturbation. The latter is more especially, as we have seen, a habit of childhood and youth, though there are many men who practice it to the exclusion of sexual intercourse, or in connection therewith. In all these cases the same remarks may

be made in regard to it as were made in the previous chapter, with the additional observation, that it is equally as destructive to sexual power as it is to sexual desire, not, however, from any circumstance inherent in the act itself, but because it is certain to be more frequently repeated than it is possible generally to repeat the act of intercourse.

In addition, some men who find themselves impotent in all attempts to perform the sexual act, not from lack of desire, but from failure of power, are very apt to enter upon a systematic course of masturbation, a proceeding in which, to a still greater degradation of the sexual instinct and abolition of power, an emission and an orgasm can be procured without erection.

The same plan may be adopted by elderly men in whom natural desire and power have faded, but who reawaken both in an imperfect degree by lascivious practices of various kinds or even by indulgence in libidinous thoughts. These cases are among the most lamentable that come under notice, especially when the act is practiced so frequently and under such very disgusting accompaniments or excitants as tend to the production of various affections—such as epilepsy or cerebral hemorrhage, for instance, of the nervous system. I have had under observation, the case of an old man of seventy-three, who every afternoon had two young girls visit him, and practice buccal masturbation upon him one after the other, with scarcely a quarter of an hour's interval. Upon one occasion, on which the pro-

cedure was being effected, he suddenly became paralyzed on one side, and deprived of the power of speech as the result of the rupture of a blood vessel in his brain.

In another case, the patient, a man of over seventy, was affected with paralytic tremor due probably to disseminated sclerosis of the brain, which was clearly the result of excessive masturbation of which he had been guilty for several years. In this instance the appetite was unnaturally excited by lascivious books and pictures, and although he never obtained an erection, he succeeded by this system of over-stimulation in causing such a state of erethism that an imperfect emission and orgasm were produced. One day, while engaged in the act, he experienced a slight sensation of vertigo, and at once tremor began in the right hand. This became more severe, and gradually extended to the other hand, and the head and neck. Eventually both legs were similarly affected, and now he walks with a festinating gait and is evidently passing into a state of senile dementia.

In my experience, in every case in which masturbation is practiced to any considerable extent—and excess in these cases is the rule—by persons in whom the natural desire and power are in a state of physiological decline, more or less injury of the nervous system is entailed, and the life of the individual is materially shortened.

Sometimes, however, it is the case that the tendency to such acts is the consequence and not the cause of the

existing mental derangement. In several forms of insanity the proclivity in question is exhibited in an extreme degree and constitutes one of the most distressing manifestations. Many of the cases of sexual depravity witnessed in old men are prodromata of senile dementia, and in younger persons of general paralysis.*

Another cause of impotence in adult life, the operation of which may begin in youth and continue till the individual is well advanced in years, or engages in sexual intercourse, is the *nocturnal emission of semen*. The influence of this factor is, however, in general very much overestimated, it being rarely the case that it of itself is productive of any serious disturbance of the health of the reproductive organs. On the contrary, it is in the great majority of cases a perfectly normal phenomenon, and one more calculated to do good than harm to the system, but when too frequent or when existing in conjunction with sexual excesses, nocturnal emissions are capable of causing marked deterioration of the sexual power or adding to that which is already present.

A few words in relation to the physiology of the subject will not be out of place, inasmuch as they may serve to place the matter in its true light, and relieve the anxiety which many physicians not infrequently feel in regard to patients in whom the condition exists, and which all their medical treatment does not suffice to abolish.

*A Treatise on Insanity in its Medical Relations. By William A. Hammond, M.D. New York, 1883.

In young men of entirely chaste habits it generally happens that soon after the supervention of puberty nocturnal emissions begin to occur. So long as they are not more frequent than once in a fortnight, they are strictly within the limits of health, at least the health of civilized man. They show that in the course of the development of the reproductive system semen is being secreted, and that when the vesiculæ seminales become full, nature steps in, and in her own way empties them. If the young man keeps his thoughts pure, avoids late suppers and exciting amusements, which create emotional disturbance, and does not sleep on his back, nocturnal emissions would be unusual in their occurrence, and would, probably, in a young man past the age of sixteen, not occur as often as once in six months. But in practice it happens almost invariably that the thoughts are not kept pure, amorous romances and plays, the intermingling of the sexes, the sight of suggestive statues and pictures, association with other boys who indulge in lascivious conversations, the sight of animals copulating, and many other factors, are all so many excitants of the genesic function which cannot be avoided, and which in many cases it is not proper to avoid, unless we would have our boys grow up without any emotional development. The chaste and well instructed boy does not masturbate. The idea of such an act is disgusting to him, but he goes to bed, and in his sleep has a dream in which the impressions made through the day are revived, and the cerebrum not then having