

by the most ungovernable debauchery and libertinage, which, so far from curing sterility, cause this condition. Let those deceitful attitudes which seem to offer the image of pleasure to corrupt and withered hearts, remain in the places where love has never entered without horror; in those places, where pleasure is a monster to which sacrifices are made, with the transports of madness. Hymen, more anxious to give energy to pleasure than to multiply the sacrifices which are demanded, banishes from his mysteries everything that can give umbrage to modesty and decency—for they are one, whatever the cynic may say. Every position that tends to take away from pleasure the fruits that belong to it is contrary to natural laws, and every one which diminishes the obstacles to conception ought to be advised in those cases that require them.*

This appears to me to be sound doctrine and at the same time in accordance not only with the laws of nature but with those of common sense and propriety. Physicians are sometimes consulted in regard to this matter, and it is well that they should be prepared to give advice which is in accordance with physiology and decency. Undoubtedly all positions other than that which appears to be instinctive in man, are inimical to fertility, but if that posture be impossible by means of physical impediments it is strictly in accord-

* "De l'Homme et de la Femme Considérés Physiquement dans l'État de Mariage." 1784, t. i. p. 389.

ance with science to assume that which is least removed from the one which propriety and nature indicate when they are free to choose.

At the same time, it appears proper to point out that some of the attitudes assumed during the act of intercourse are in the highest degree injurious as liable to induce diseases of great severity. In regard to this point the citation of a few authorities will perhaps give additional weight to this statement.

MM. Grimaud de Caux and Martin Saint-Ange,* in regard to the subject, say :

"The generative act absorbs all the physical and moral faculties; it is that in which nature expends the greatest possible amount of vitality and innervation; it is a transitory convulsion, a short accession of epilepsy, which for the moment overpowers all the muscular forces. Consequently it is dangerous to indulge, without taking into account all individual conditions of time, circumstance, and even of place and position.

"Let us see what the treatises on physiology tell us in regard to the muscular power put in action in order to keep an individual in the erect posture. First, there is the head, which by its weight tends to fall forward. It is necessary to restrain it by attaching muscles to its posterior part. Then there is the vertebral column, which, besides carrying the head, supports also the chest and abdomen. These organs, like the head, tend to fall forward, and so are held in position

*"Histoire de la Génération de l'Homme," etc. Paris, 1847, p. 257.

by the vertebral column. Muscles, the most powerful in the whole range of animal mechanics, occupy the posterior and inferior part of the trunk to oppose this tendency, and there is, besides, the pelvis, which, in addition to the weight of its own organs, carries also that of the vertebral column and the head, and which, with all its burden, has no other points of support than the two round heads of the femurs inserted into corresponding round cavities. The situation is manifestly precarious, for the relations of these cavities with the heads of the bones are such as to render every movement easy of execution. We perceive, then, that the trunk is only maintained in the erect attitude by the observance of a perfect equilibrium, and this equilibrium is the result of the combination of a great number of muscular actions. If the power which acts on the anterior part were to yield, the vertebral column would at once fall backward, and a like movement would be made to the front if the posterior actions were to fail. It is not necessary to pursue further the exposition of the system of animal mechanics: what we have said is sufficient for our object. It will be readily seen that to maintain the erect position the co-ordinate action of a great number of muscles is necessary, and that the failure of any one of them would inevitably lead to a fall. It is therefore a matter of great imprudence to exercise, while in this position a function which so materially depresses the muscular strength as does the act of sexual intercourse.

"The sitting posture presents inconveniences less numerous but quite as real and as serious. In the horizontal position, on the contrary, there is no muscular effort, the body rests in its entire weight on the plain which supports it, and it is this attitude which should be preferred in sexual intercourse. To resume: the act of generation is one in which all the forces tend towards a single aim, and the recumbent posture is the most favorable, by reason of the fact that it diverts no muscular strength and imposes no muscular fatigue."

Sanctorius,* who, notwithstanding the fact of his holding many absurd notions, enunciated many sound ideas, says:

"The use of coition after meat, and standing is doubtful. After meat it diverts the offices of the entrails; standing it diverts the muscles and diminishes their beneficial perspiration."

Tissot † makes the following observations in regard to this subject:

"An able surgeon spoke to me one day of a man who indulged in a singular taste, and who worshipped those daughters of Venus who belong to the lowest strata of life, only when he could approach them in the street corners and then in a standing posture. The patient became greatly debilitated, had severe pains in

* "Medicina Statica; or, Rules of Health," etc. Englished by J. D., London, 1676. Aphorism, xl. p. 154.

† "L'onanisme: Dissertation sur les Maladies produites par la masturbation." Paris, 1805, p. 88.

the regions of the kidneys, and atrophy, or wasting of the thighs and legs, and paralysis of these parts. These phenomena appeared to be due to the attitude assumed in his acts of sexual intercourse. He died after having been confined to bed for six months, and in a condition equally calculated to inspire pity and fright. . . .

"When an individual loses his forces by two channels at the same time the weakness is very much increased. A person who is standing or sitting has need in order to maintain himself in these positions, especially the first, to make use of a great many muscles, and this lessens the animal spirits. Weak persons, who cannot stand erect for an instant without experiencing fatigue, sick persons who cannot even sit without experiencing the same result, prove this beyond a doubt. In lying, no expenditure of strength is necessary. It is very certain that the act of sexual intercourse performed in either of the first-named postures will cause much more exhaustion than when the attitude is that of lying at full length."

Relative to the special effects produced by the standing position in sexual intercourse, Morgagni,* Gaultier de Claubry,† Leudet,‡ and Ollivier (d'Angers)§

* *Opera*. Ep. 62.

† *Journal Générale de la Société Médicale de Paris*.

‡ "Recherches cliniques sur la congestion de la moëlle épinière à la suite d'efforts violentes." *Archives générales de Médecine*, Mars, 1863.

§ "Traité des maladies de la moëlle épinière," etc. Troisième édition, Paris, 1837, t. ii. obs. lxxiii. p. 44.

have expressed themselves with decision, and the latter gives the case of a man who was excessive in the matter of sexual indulgence, during which he always assumed the erect posture. Since two months, observing that he was injuring himself, he became more moderate, but still continued the same fatiguing posture. As a consequence, he was affected with congestion of the spinal cord, with its ordinary concomitants of paralysis of the lower extremities, lumbar pains, etc.

Carre* assigns the factor in question as one of the causes of locomotor ataxia, when he says:

"Excess in venereal indulgence, especially in the vertical position, acts in the same manner [causing congestion of the cord, as the first step towards locomotor ataxia]. In the horizontal position, on the contrary, the flow of blood is more easy, and the effect less marked."

In my own experience I have known, several times, serious results to follow the constant use of the position in question during sexual intercourse. In one of these instances the patient, an elderly gentleman, who had long been addicted to the employment of the erect posture in his amatory indulgences, was, on one occasion (and, I may add, the last), seized with a violent tremor in both lower extremities at the occurrence of the orgasm, and this continued, without intermission, for forty-eight hours. At the end of that time he ascertained that his lower extremities were semi-paralyzed,

* "Nouvelles recherches sur l'ataxie locomotrice," etc. Paris, 1865. p. 257.

and that he had lost all sexual power. Under the use of strychnia he recovered to a great extent the use of his limbs, but he has never been able to have intercourse since.

In another case the patient, who had never before adopted that posture, was induced to do so by a rather lascivious woman with whom he was cohabiting. The effect was a sudden loss of power in both lower extremities, syncope, lasting several minutes, and on recovery from this, a partial paralysis of both lower extremities with incontinence of urine, owing to insufficiency of the sphincter of the bladder. In the course of a few weeks recovery took place under the use of electricity and strychnia, except as regarded the bladder, the sphincter of which still, after five years, remains weak.

From these remarks it will be seen that though we are justified in recommending or sanctioning any posture in sexual intercourse which bodily peculiarities may render necessary for the accomplishment of the act of procreating the species, yet, that all changes from the position that physiology teaches is most suitable for the purpose are made with risk, and that all such deviations are otherwise not to be countenanced.

CHAPTER IV.

ABSENCE OF THE ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE PLEASURE DURING THE ACT OF COPULATION AND DURING THE EMISSION OF THE SEMEN.

The essential parts of an act of sexual intercourse are the emission of semen and the experiencing of a sensation of physical pleasure for a short period before the ejaculation takes place, during its continuance, and for a short time after its cessation. This sensation, originating in the glans penis, is not confined to that part of the body, but extends to the neighboring regions, and in some persons is felt as a voluptuous thrill through the spine and upper and lower extremities. But for the experience of these voluptuous sensations, which the average adult man acquires, it is quite certain that he would abstain, to a great extent, if not altogether, from sexual intercourse. But it sometimes happens that, while the desires are in general strong and the sexual power all that can be desired, there is a deficiency of pleasurable feeling attendant on the ejaculation of the semen, and that at times there is a complete absence of such feeling. This may be either relative or absolute; that is, it may exist only as regards some particular woman or women, or it may be a permanent condition present at all times of sexual intercourse and with all women.