

# A Treatise On The Crime of Onan;

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Illustrated with A Variety of Cases,  
Together with The Method of Cure.

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M. TISSOT, M. D.

*Author of*

*Advice to the People in general with regard to  
their Health.*

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Translated from

*The Third Edition of the Original.*

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LONDON,

Printed for B. Thomas, in the Strand.

MDCCLXVI

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ON  
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— *Proprièr extinctum vivere criminislar.* GALL.

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## PREFACE

*While I was composing in Latin the Original of this small Production, I was sensible of its defects, and, in the Preface to it, made my apology for them. But, after the Performance appeared in print, they struck me much more forcibly; and when I came to examine the French translation of it, which I had been desired to revise, I judged them intolerable.*

*Besides a number of new observations necessarily to be added, there were faults to be remedied, in the method, and some articles which, being no more than the first outline, insufficient to convey what I had to say, required a fuller extent to be given them.*

*So many corrections rendered the Work almost a new one, and made it considerably longer. The difficulty of carrying on this undertaking in a living language, and all the disagreeable circumstances that must cleave to it, did not escape me. Nothing could have determined me to engage in it, but the prospect of the utility to mankind of such an undertaking well executed, which is, however, what I dare not boast of. It is only my intention that I can warrant. The crimes of one's fellow creatures afford but a melancholic object to concern one's self with: the consideration of them can only afflict and mortify one: a sentiment ballanced by no pleasure but that of hoping to contribute to the diminution of their frequency, and to alleviate the sufferings which are the consequences of them.*

*But what has given me much more trouble, in this Work, than if I had written it in Latin, is the embarrassment of expressing images, of which the terms and descriptions are declared indecent by use. A dispensation, however, from a due attention to these scruples would have been very disagreeable to my own disposition, with which I could never have reconciled any labor at the expence of what I pride myself on, a due regard for the laws of decency. Yet to this duty it is that are owing the great difficulties that stopped me at every step. I dare aver, then, that I have neglected no precaution for giving to this Work all the modesty in the expressions that the subject would admit. There are, indeed, certain objectionable images inseparable from this matter; but how could I avoid them? Was it fit for me, on such important objects, to keep silence?*

*Doubtless not. The sacred Authors, the Fathers of the Church, who almost all wrote in living languages; the Theological Writers, have not thought themselves obliged to pass over in silence the crimes of obscenity, because they could not be pointed out without naming them, without words, in short. I judged myself authorised to follow their example, and I dare say, with St. Augustin, "If what I have written scandalizes any vitious persons, let them rather blame their own turpitude than the words which I have been obliged to make use of, for explaining my thoughts on the act of generation in mankind. I hope that the truly modest and virtuous reader will easily forgive the expressions which I have been forced to employ." I will add to what this great Divine says, that I hope to merit the grateful acknowledgment and approbation of the moral and the sensible, who know the general proneness of the world to wicked practices, and who will approve, if not my success, at least the intention of my undertaking.*

*I have not in this, no more than in my first edition, touched upon the moral part, and that for Horace's reason,*

Quod medicorum est

Promittunt Medici

*I have proposed to myself to write on the diseases produced by self-pollution, and not on the crime of self-pollution, considered as a crime; is it not proof enough of its being one, the demonstrating that it is an act of self-murder? Whoever knows mankind, will not be difficultly persuaded, that it is easier to give them an aversion against a vice, by the fear of a present evil, than by reasons founded on principles, of which there is not care enough taken to inculcate to them all the truth and solidity. I have applied to myself what an author, whose name will pass to the remotest posterity, as an honor to the age in which he lived, makes a Clergyman say: "We are put upon undertaking to prove the utility of prayer, to a man who does not believe there is a God; and the necessity of fasting, to one who has, all his life, denied the immortality of the soul: such an attempt is rather difficult, and the laugh is not on our side<sup>1</sup> ." Marphurius doubted*

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<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu, *Persian Lett.* 49.

*of every thing till Sganarelle broke his bones; and then Marphurius believed.*

*These Zoiluses of society and literature, who themselves do nothing, and blame every thing that is done, will have the assurance to say, that this Work is fitter to spread than to stop this vice, and that it will make it known to such as would otherwise have remained in ignorance of it. I shall make them no answer; they deserve none; it is debasing one's self to do them that honor: but there are those of weak though virtuous minds, upon whom these objections might make an impression: to these I owe a general reflexion, it is this, that, in that point of light, my Book is liable to no worse exception than what might be made to all books of morality: they must be all prohibited, if pointing out the dangers of a vice was the way to multiply it. The sacred writings, those of the Fathers, those of the Casuists, ought all to be forbidden before mine is so. Besides, what young person is likely to think of reading a Treatise of Physic on a matter of which he does not so much as know the name? It is to be wished, indeed, that this Book were become familiar to all persons to whom the education of youth is committed; it might be of service to them to set an early watch; and detect, in time, any practice of this detestable habit; it would enable them to take the precautions they should judge necessary for preventing the consequences.*

*Those who do not understand Latin, will, perhaps, find fault with there being too many verses in that language; my answer is, that there are none which are not connected with the subject, since there is not one that was not recalled to my mind by the chain of ideas. I have, however, so disposed them, that they may be skipped without any injury to the thread of the discourse. Those who understand them, will rather be pleased with me for them: a traveller is, in the midst of a dreary barren heath, rejoiced at the sight of a spot of verdure. In short, if it is a fault, it is not, I hope, more than a venial one, and on so disgustful a subject, some relaxation from it may be forgiven the author. If there are no quotations from the Poets in our own language, which would have been more natural, that is no fault of mine; I knew of none to be quoted.*

*This Work, however, has nothing in common with the English one upon this subject, under the title of Onania; and except about two pages and a half, which I have extracted from it, that rhapsody has been of no use to me. Those who shall read both performances will, I hope, be sensible of the total difference there is between them. Those who shall only read this one of mine, might, without this advertence, be deceived by the affinity of the titles<sup>2</sup>, and be led to imagine some resemblance between the two books; happily there is none.*

*This new edition, is, by the additions, augmented almost a third, and I hope they will meet with a favorable reception from all competent judges. There will probably be two objections made to me: the one, that I have added a great number of observations and authorities, which are little more than repetitions of those that were already in the first edition; the other, that in some places I have too much departed from my leading or principal title, and that I have considered the danger from the pleasures of love under a general point of view.*

*To the first objection, I answer, that in a matter of this nature, where there is less hope of convincing by reasons than of terrifying by examples, one can hardly accumulate too many.*

*To the second, I say, first, that when two matters are intimately connected, the more you endeavour to detach one, the worse you treat of it; secondly, that I was glad to render this Work of as much general utility as possible.*

*I have been told, that it is the reading of that part, that caused horror to an illustrious Professor: I do not believe it. But if it should be true, I would desire him to peruse this Preface, which I must suppose had in such case escaped him.*

*In writing upon Inoculation, I had proposed to myself to propagate the method that I judged the properest to stop the ravages of that murderous distemper; and I have had the satisfaction of doing, at least, some good: in composing this Work, I have been encouraged by the hope of checking*

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<sup>2</sup> The title of the Original French is Onanisme, which is changed in this translation, to avoid the mistake of the one work for the other.

*the progress of a corruption more rife, more destructive perhaps than the small-pox itself, and so much the more to be dreaded, for that its operations being carried on in the shades of secrecy and mystery, it undermines without noise, without even those, who are its victims, suspecting its malignity. It was of the greatest importance to make its dangers known. May that Power, to whom every thing is subordinate, vouchsafe to my views that blessing without which our best endeavours can be of no avail!* Paul plants, Apollos cultivates, but increase is from God alone.

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## INTRODUCTION

Man is every instant losing something of himself, and if he was not continually repairing that loss, he would soon necessarily fall into a weakness productive of death. This reparation is effected by aliments. But these aliments must undergo in the body different preparations, which are comprehended under the name of nutrition. But when that nutrition is either not performed, or deficiently so, all these aliments become useless, and do not hinder the falling into all the evils which are the consequence of atrophy or inanition. Of all the causes that may hinder nutrition, there is not perhaps a more common one than over-abundant evacuations. Such is the fabric of our machine, and in general of all human machines, that for aliments to acquire the degree of preparation necessary to repair the body, there must remain in it a certain quantity of humors well elaborated, and, if I may use the expression, naturalised to it. If this condition of them is defective, the digestion and coction of the aliments remains imperfect, and so much the more imperfect, as the humor that is needed requires the most elaboration, and is of the most importance.

A healthy robust nurse, from whom the taking some pounds of blood in twenty-four hours, would probably kill, would furnish to her child the same quantity of milk, for four or five days running, without any sensible inconvenience to her, because milk is, of all the humors, that which requires the least elaboration, being, a secretion almost distinct from the humors of the body; whereas blood is an essential of life. There is another humor, the seminal liquid, which has so great an influence over the forces of the body, and over the accomplishment of the digestions which repair them, that the Physicians of all ages have unanimously believed, that the loss of one ounce of this humor weakened more than the loss of forty ounces of blood.

Some idea may be gathered of its importance, from observing the effects which it operates on its first beginning to form itself: the voice, the aspect of the physiognomy, even the lineaments themselves of the face undergo an alteration: the beard appears, the whole body often takes another air, from the muscles acquiring a largeness and firmness that constitute a

sensible difference between the body of an adult and, that of a young man who has not passed the season of pubescence. All these developements are stopped or hindered by the loss of the organ which serves for the separation of that liquid which produces them; very just observations having proved, that the amputation of the testicles, even in the age of virility, has occasioned the shedding of the beard, and the return of an infantine voice<sup>3</sup>. After that, can there be any doubt of the power of its action over the whole body? Does not it sensibly give reason for apprehending the multitude of evils which must arise from the waste or profusion of so pretious an humor? Its natural destination determines the only allowable means of its evacuation. Disorders will sometimes occasion its efflux. It may be involuntarily lost through the effect of lascivious dreams. The author of *Genesis* has left us the history of the crime of Onan, doubtless in order to transmit with it that of his punishment; and we learn from Galen, that Diogenes was guilty of the like pollution.

If the dangerous consequences of the over-abundant loss of this humor depended only on the quantity, or were the same, quantity for quantity, with the other humors, it would not, in a physical light, be of much importance, in which of the above ways the evacuation was made. But the manner or form here is as essential a point, as the substance of the thing itself, if I may be indulged this expression, my subject authorising such licence of language. Too considerable a quantity of the seminal humor, lost in the natural way, brings on very grievous disorders, but which are much worse when the same quantity has been wasted out of the course of nature. Those disorders, which such as exhaust themselves in the natural commerce of the sexes, bring upon themselves, are dreadful; but those are much more so which are produced by self-pollution. It is these last that are properly the objects of this work; but the intimate connexion which they have with the first, hinders the separation of them in the description. It is then the description common to both, that shall form the *first Article*. This shall be followed by the explanation of the Causes, a *second Article*, in which I shall state those that render the consequences from self-pollution the most dangerous: The Means of

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<sup>3</sup> Boerhaave *Prælectiones ad Inst.* §. 658. 1. 5. p. 444. Edit. Goett.

Cure, and Remarks on some Diseases that have an affinity to that cause, shall conclude the Work. I will add throughout, the Observations of the best Authors to those which I have myself made.

# ARTICLE 1

## *The Symptoms*

### SECTION 1

#### *Description drawn from the Works of Physicians*

Hippocrates, the most antient and the most exact of all the observers of Nature, has already described the evils produced by excessive venery, under the name of the Dorsal Consumption, in Latin, *Tabes dorsalis*<sup>4</sup>.— “This disease (says he) proceeds from the spinal marrow. It attacks young married folks, or those addicted to lustful excesses. They have no fever, and though they eat as much as usual, they turn lean, and waste away. They imagine they feel something, as it were like ants, descending from the head, and creeping down the back-bone. In their evacuations by stool or urine, they lose abundance of the seminal liquid much thinner than it naturally is. They are unfit for generation, and are often busied in the act of it, in their dreams. Walking, especially in any bad road, soon puts them out of breath, weakens them, brings on heavinesses of head; they have a kind of tingling in their ears; at length an acute fever (*lypiria*) terminates their days.”

Some Physicians have attributed to the same cause, a disease which Hippocrates describes elsewhere<sup>5</sup>, and which has some affinity to the first: this last they call “the secondary *tabes dorsalis*.” But the continuance under it of the bodily strength, which he particularly specifies, appears to me a convincing proof, that this last disease does not acknowledge the same cause as the first. It seems rather a rheumatic affection. For example, Celsus, in his excellent book on the preservation of health, says, “the pleasures of coition are always pernicious to weak constitutions, and the frequent use of them enfeeble the strong.”<sup>6</sup>

Nothing can be conceived more dreadful than the description which Aretæus has left us of the evils produced by an over-abundant evacuation of that humor. “The young (says he) contract the looks and the

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<sup>4</sup> *De Morbis*, Lib. ii. cap. 49. Foes. 479.

<sup>5</sup> *De glandulis*. Foes. p. 273.

<sup>6</sup> *De re medica*, Lib. i. cap. 9 & 11.

infirmities of old age; they become pale, effeminate, torpid, inactive, stupid, and even drivellers; their bodies are bent, their legs refuse their office; they have a general distaste, and grow unfit for all the offices of life; many fall into a palsy<sup>7</sup>.” In another place he sets down the pleasures of venery among the six causes that produce the palsy.

Galen has seen the same cause produce diseases of the brain and nerves, and destroy the vital force<sup>8</sup>.

He says in another place, that a man who was not thoroughly recovered of a violent disorder, died on the same night that he acquitted himself of the nuptial function with his wife.<sup>9</sup>

Pliny the Naturalist tells us, that *Cornelius Gallus*, a Prætor advanced in years, and *Titus Ætherius*, died in the act itself of coition.<sup>10</sup>

“The stomach (says Ætius) is weakened; the transgressor falls into a paleness, leanness, dryness; his eyes are hollowed in his head<sup>11</sup>.”

These attestations of the most authoritative among the antients, are confirmed by a crowd among the moderns.

Sanctorius, who has, with the greatest accuracy, examined all the causes that act upon the human body, has observed, that this one weakened the stomach, ruined the digestions, hindered the insensible perspiration, the interruptions or disorders of which are attended with such bad consequences, produced a heat in the liver and kidneys, disposed for the stone, diminished the natural heat, and commonly drew after it a weakness of the eyes<sup>12</sup>.

Lommius, in his excellent Commentaries on the passage I have quoted from *Celsus*, seconds the testimonies of his author, with his own observations. “Too frequent emissions (says he) of the seminal liquid

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<sup>7</sup> *De signis et causis dict. morb.* Lib. ii. cap. 5.

<sup>8</sup> L. i. c. 7. p. 34. Edit. Boerhaave.

<sup>9</sup> Comm. tert. in Lib. iii. Hipp. *De morb. vulg.* Oper. Omn. tom. iii. p. 583.

<sup>10</sup> *Historia mundi*, Lib. vii. cap. 53. p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> *Tetrab.* Serm. iii. cap. 34.

<sup>12</sup> *Medic. Static.* Sect. 6. Aphor. 15. 19. 21. 23 & 24.

relax, drain, weaken, enervate, and produce a multitude of evils; apoplexies, lethargies, epilepsies, a dozingness, maladies of the eyes, loss of sight, tremors, palsies, convulsions, and of all the kinds of gout, the most painful one<sup>13</sup>.”

There is no reading without horror, the description left us by Tulpius, that celebrated Burgomaster and Physician of Amsterdam. “Not only (says he) the spinal marrow wastes away, but both body and mind languish alike; the individual perishes miserably. *Samuel Vespretius* was attacked with the defluxion of an excessively acrid humor, which first seized the back part of his head and the nape of his neck: thence it passed to the spine, the loins, the haunches, and the joints of the thigh, occasioning to the unhappy patient such acute pains and tortures, that he became totally disfigured, and fell into a slow fever, that kept consuming him, but not so fast as he could have wished, his condition being so intolerable, that he frequently invoked death before it came to his deliverance from his sufferings *Obs*<sup>14</sup>.”

Nothing (says a celebrated Physician of Louvain) so much weakens the vital faculties, and abridges life<sup>15</sup>.

Blancard had seen simple gonorrhœas, consumptions, and dropsies all acknowledging this cause<sup>16</sup>.

Muys had seen a man as yet unbroken with age, attacked with a spontaneous gangrene in the foot, which he attributed to venereal excesses<sup>17</sup>.

The *Memoirs of curious Naturalists* mention the circumstance of a loss of sight, the observation of which deserves a recital at large. “It is (says the author) unconceivable, what a sympathy the repositories of the seminal humor have with the whole body, but especially with the eyes. *Salmuth* saw a learned hypochondriac run raving mad, and another

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<sup>13</sup> *Commentar. de sanitate tuenda*, p. m. 37.

<sup>14</sup> *Obs. Medic.* L. iii. c. 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Zipæus, Fundam. Med.* Part. ii. Art. 6.

<sup>16</sup> *Instit. Medic.* Part. ii. cap. 28.

<sup>17</sup> *Praxis Chirurgic.* Decur. i. Obs. 4.

man, whose brain was so dried up, that it might be heard shaking as it were loose within the skull; both owing to their having abandoned themselves to excesses of venery. I myself saw a man of fifty-nine years of age, who, three weeks after marriage with a young woman, fell into sudden blindness, and died at the end of four months<sup>18</sup>.”

The over-dissipation of the animal spirits weakens the stomach, palliates the appetite, and nutrition no longer proceeding in its due course or degree, all the parts languish, and an epilepsy is sometimes the consequence<sup>19</sup>.

We cannot, it is true, say that the animal spirits and the seminal humor are the same thing, but observation has taught us, as will be subsequently seen, that these two fluids have a great affinity.

M. Hoffman has seen the most dreadful accidents follow a waste of the seed.

“After a long course of nocturnal pollutions (says he) not only the strength diminishes, the body is emaciated, the face turns pale, but moreover the memory fails, a continual sensation of cold seizes all the limbs, the sight dims, the voice grows hoarse<sup>20</sup>; the whole body insensibly decays; the sleep, disturbed by uneasy dreams, brings with it no refreshment, and one feels pains like those which follow a severe beating<sup>21</sup>.”

In his consultation for a young man, who, among other disorders, had brought upon himself a weakness in the eyes, by self-pollution: “I have (says he) seen many examples of persons, who, even in the age of full growth, that is to say, when the body is come to the plenary enjoyment of its vigor, had drawn upon themselves not only a redness and extreme pains in the eyes, but also so great a weakness of the sight, as to be no longer able to read or write. I have even seen two instances of a *gutta serena* produced by this cause<sup>22</sup>.”

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<sup>18</sup> Decur. ii. Ann. 5. Append. Obs. 88. p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> Schelhammer *Ars medendi univers.* Lib. ii. Sect. ii. Cap. iv. §. 23.

<sup>20</sup> *Consult. Cent.* 2 & 3. Cas. 102. T. iii. p. 293.

<sup>21</sup> Same place, Cas. 103.

<sup>22</sup> Same place.

It will probably not be displeasing here, the specifying the history of the disease which gave rise to the consultation precedently quoted.

“A young man having, from the age of fifteen, abandoned himself to the practice of self-pollution, had, by the frequency of that act till the age of twenty-three, brought upon himself such a disorder of the head, and especially such a weakness in the eyes, that they particularly were seized with violent convulsions at the time of the seminal emission. If he attempted to read, he felt a dizziness somewhat like that of drunkenness. The *pupilla* was extraordinarily dilated. He suffered extreme pains in the eye; his eyelids felt heavy, and glewed up every night; his eyes were always suffused with tears, and in the two corners of them, both very painful, there was constantly gathering a whitish matter. Though he ate his meals chearfully, he was reduced to extreme leanness, and as soon as he had eaten, he would fall into a kind of drunken stupor.”

The same author has preserved to us another observation on a case, of which he himself had been an ocular witness, and which deserves a place here. “A young man about eighteen years of age, having had an over-frequent intercourse with a servant-maid, fell all on a sudden into a great faintness, with a general tremor in all his limbs; his face flushed, and a very weak pulse. He was recovered out of this slate, in about an hour’s time, but he remained under a general languor. The same fit frequently returned, with an intolerable anguish, and in eight days time brought on a contraction and a tumor of the right arm, with a pain at his elbow, which redoubled at every fit. This disorder proceeded for some time augmenting, notwithstanding all the remedies that were used. However, M. Hoffman cured him at length<sup>23</sup>.”

M. Boerhaave paints these disorders with that energy and exactness which characterise all his descriptions.

“An excessive profusion (says he) of the seminal humor produces lassitude, feebleness, immobility, convulsions, emaciation, desiccation, pains in the membranes of the brain; it obtunds the senses, and

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<sup>23</sup> *De morbis ex nimia venere*, § 18. Oper. Omn. Suppl. sec. Pars prim. p. 496.

especially the sight; it brings on the *tabes dorsalis*, a general torpor, and various other diseases which have an affinity to those<sup>24</sup>.”

It would not be right here to omit the observations which this great man communicated to his hearers, on his explaining this aphorism to them, and which turn upon the different means of evacuation.

“I have (says he) seen a patient, whose illness began by a languor and weakness all over his body, especially towards the loins; it was accompanied with such a motion of the tendons, such periodical convulsions, and wasting away, as were enough to destroy the whole body: he also felt a pain in the membranes of the brain, a pain which the patients call a dry burning heat, with which the noble parts are, in this case, continually affected.

“I have also seen a young man seized with a *tabes dorsalis*. He had been an extremely pretty figure, and though he had been often admonished against the over-indulgence of venery, he would still abandon himself to it, and became so deformed before his death, that all that muscular roundness, which appears over the spinal apophyses of the loins, was entirely sunk and flattened. In this case the brain seems to be consumed, and, in fact, the patients become stupid. The body loses all its suppleness to such a degree, that I never saw such immobility produced by any other cause. The eyes also contract a notable dimness, or difficulty of seeing<sup>25</sup>.”

M. de Senac, in his first edition of his Essays, set forth the dangers of self-pollution, and denounced to the victims of this infamy all the infirmities of the most languishing old age, in the flower of their youth. In the following editions may be seen his reasons for the suppression of this passage, and of some others.

Mr. Ludwig, in his description of the evils attending over-abundant evacuations, does not forget the seminal one.

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<sup>24</sup> *Institut*. § 77. Translated into French by M. D. L. M.

<sup>25</sup> *Comment*. on the foregoing quotation, T. vii. p. 214.

“The young (says he) of either sex, who abandon themselves to lasciviousness, ruin their health, by a dissipation of that strength which by nature was designed to bring their body to its greatest point of vigor. In short, they fall into a consumption<sup>26</sup>.”

M. de Gorter enters into particulars of the most dreadful accidents deriving from this cause; but as it would be of too great a length to copy him, I refer to his work those who understand the language in which he wrote<sup>27</sup>.

M. Van Swieten, after a recital of the above-quoted description of the *tabes dorsalis* by Hippocrates, adds:

“I have seen all these symptoms, besides many more, befall those who had abandoned themselves to the infamy of self-pollutions. During three years, I employed, in vain, all the aids of the medical art, for a young man, who, by this vile habit, had brought on himself erratic, surprizing, and general pains, with a sensation sometimes of heat, sometimes of a very irksome cold all over his body, but especially towards the loins. These pains having, afterwards, been a little diminished, he felt so great a cold in his thighs and legs, although those parts seemed to the touch to have preserved their natural warmth, that he was continually warming himself at the fire, even during the greatest heats of the summer. But what more particularly astonished me, was a continual motion of rotation in the testicles, and the patient complained grievously of a like motion which he felt in his loins<sup>28</sup>.”

This narration does not inform us whether this wretched object terminated his life at the end of the three years, or, what is worse, yet continued to languish on, for some time longer; for there could hardly be a third issue.

M. Kloekoff, in a very good work on those distempers of the mind which depend on the body, confirms, by his observations, what has been here advanced on this subject.

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<sup>26</sup> *Institut. physiol.* § 870. 872.

<sup>27</sup> *De insensib. perspir.* cap. ult.

<sup>28</sup> Aphor. 586. T. ii. p. 46.

“Too great a dissipation of the seminal humor weakens the springs of action in all the solids; thence arise weakness, laziness, listlessness, hectics, the *tabes dorsalis*, a torpor, and depravation of the senses, stupidity, madness, epilepsies, convulsions<sup>29</sup>.”

M. Hoffman had already remarked, that young people who abandoned themselves to that shameful practice of self-pollution, “lost, little by little, the faculties of the understanding, especially the memory, and became intirely unapt for study<sup>30</sup>.”

M. Lewis describes all these evils: but I shall only transcribe from his work, what relates to the detriment occasioned to the intellectual faculties.

“All the evils which arise from excesses committed with women, are also effected in early life, by that abominable practice in school-boys, a practice which I cannot describe in terms odious enough, *pollutio sui*, which, actuated more by viciousness than by sense and reason, and ignorant of the mischievous consequences, they repeat, &c. &c.<sup>31</sup> ... So intimately are the mind and body blended together, that there cannot be any disease of the one which will not influence the other; but in none is the *mind* more deeply affected than in this. To add to his infelicity, a melancholy gloom attends the patient, and silence and solitude are anxiously sought after.—The chearful haunts of men no longer delight him; he is absent in company, and will have no part of the conversation. He is not happy even in his friend: a sense of his misfortune, and perhaps the aggravating circumstance of having brought it upon himself, for ever hang on his mind. The company of the female sex he loves indeed, but the apprehensions that he may be cut off from nuptial felicity, interrupts the fruition of their pleasing converse. Thus deeply dejected, he excludes himself from society, wanders in retirement, and it is well if he seeks not to destroy himself at last<sup>32</sup>.”

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<sup>29</sup> *De morb. anim. ab infirm. medull. cer.* p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> *Opera Omnia*, fol. T. iii. p. 295.

<sup>31</sup> Lewis's *Tab. Dorf.* p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis's *Tab. Dors.* p. 16.

Fresh observations, subsequently introduced, will confirm the truth of the preceding dreadful description. That one furnished by M. Storcke, in the valuable work which he has published on the history and cure of diseases, is not less terrible: but I refer the curious to the work itself, which no physician would wish to be without. The passage I allude to is in his *Medicus annuus*, T. ii. p. 215, &c. But before I terminate this Section, I shall here conclusively add a passage in that excellent work, with which M. Gaubius has lately enriched the medical art. He not only paints the evils, but points out the causes of them, with that force, that truth, that sagacity, that exactness, which can belong to none but so great a master. It is a most valuable extract; and that the coloring of it may appear in its true lustre, I subjoin to the translation the original of it, in the language of the author's expression.

“An immoderate profusion of seed is pernicious, not only through the waste of that most useful humor, but also through the over-frequent repetition of that convulsive motion which is produced by the emission. For the highest pitch of that pleasure is immediately succeeded by so universal a relaxation of the animal strength, as cannot be borne often without a consequential enervity. The more frequent a draught there is on the secretory ducts of the body, the greater is the derivation of the respective humors of the secretions; so that in the case of the liquid being repeatedly attracted to the parts of generation, the rest of the secretions are depauperated: thence, from excesses of venery follow, weariness, weakness, immobility, a tottering gait, pains of the head, convulsions, a hebetation of all the senses, and especially of the sight, blindness, intellectual imbecillity, a feverish circulation, dryness, leanness, a phthisis, a *tabes dorsalis*, an effeminate habit of body. These evils are liable to augment and become incurable through that perpetual pruriency for venery which the mind does not less than the body at length contract; and from which it follows, that obscene imaginations haunt even the dreams of persons so affected, and that the parts prone to the libidinous turgescence are, on every occasion, impetuously sollicitated, while the quantity of the repaired seminal fluid, were it never so small, occasions constantly a troublesome stimulation, and is ready to start from its relaxed repositories with any the least endeavour, or even without

any endeavor at all. Whence it is clear why an excess of this nature is so capable of blasting the flower of youth<sup>33</sup>.”

## SECTION 2

### *Observations communicated*

I shall preserve no other order than that of the dates of my receiving these observations.

“I have (says my illustrious friend M. Zimmermann,) seen a man of twenty-three years of age, who became epileptic, after having weakened himself by frequent self-pollutions. As often as he had nocturnal pollutions, he fell into a complete fit of epilepsy. The same thing happened to him after any commission of that act, from which however he would not abstain, notwithstanding those consequences, and all the admonitions against it. Having, however, abstained from it for some time, I cured him of the nocturnal pollutions, and had even hopes of removing his epilepsy, of which the fits were already gone off. He had recovered his strength, his stomach, his sleep, and a very good color, after having looked like a corpse. But being returned to his acts of self-pollution, which were always followed by an attack of the epilepsy, he came at

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<sup>33</sup> *Immoderata seminis profusio, non solum utilissimi humoris jactura, sed ipso etiam motu convulsivo, quo emittitur, frequentius repetito, imprimis lædit. Etenim summam voluptatem universalis excipit virium resolutio, quæ crebro ferri nequit, quin enervet. Colatoria autem corporis quo magis emulgentur, eo plus humorum aliunde ad se trahunt, succisque sic ad genitalia derivatis reliquæ partes depauperantur. Inde ex nimia venere, lassitudo, debilitas, immobilitas, incessus delumbis, encephali dolores, convulsiones sensuum omnium, maxime visus, hebetatio, cæcitas, fatuitas, circulatio febrilis, exsiccatio, macies, tabes & pulmonica & dorsalis, effeminatio. Augentur hæc mala, atque insanabilia fiunt, ob perpetuum in venerem pruritum, quem mens non minus quam corpus tandem contrahit, quoque efficitur ut & dormientes obscæna phantasmata exerçant, & in tentiginem pronæ partes quavis occasione impetum concipiant, onerique & stimulo sit quamlibet exigua reparati spermatis copia, levissimo conatu, & vel sine hoc, de relaxatis oculis relapsura. Quo circa liquet quare adolescentiæ florem adeo pessundet iste excessus.*

Institutiones Pathologiæ Medicin. Auctore H.D. Gaubio, Leyden, 1758.

length to be taken with fits in the street, and he was found one morning dead in his chamber, fallen out of his bed, and bathed in his own blood.”

May I be allowed one question, which occurred to me when I read this observation? It is this: Can such as blow their brain out with a pistol, who drown themselves in a river, or cut their own throats, be accounted more guilty of self-murder than this man?

My friend adds, without entering into particulars, that he knows another who is in the same case: I have since learnt, that he ended his days in the same manner.

“I knew (says Mr. Zimmermann) a man of great genius, and of almost universal knowledge, whom frequent pollutions had reduced to lose all the activity of his understanding, and whose body was exactly in the condition of the patient that consulted Boerhaave<sup>34</sup>.”

Of this case I shall hereafter take notice.

I owe the two following facts to M. Rast, junior, an eminent Physician of Lions, with whom I had the pleasure of passing some months at Montpellier.

A young man at Montpellier, a student of physic, perished by his excesses in the practice of self-pollution. His imagination was so horror-struck, that he died in a sort of despair, fancying that he saw hell open, on the side of him, to receive him.

A child of that town, not above six or seven years old, taught, I believe, by a servant-maid, practised it so frequently; that a hectic fever coming on, soon cut him off. His fury of passion for this act was so great, that there was no hindering him to the very last days of his life. When it was represented to him that he was hastening his death, his comfort, he said, was, that he should the sooner rejoin his father, who was dead a few months before.

M. Mieg, a celebrated physician of Basil, well known in the literary world by some excellent dissertations, and to whom his country is obliged for

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<sup>34</sup> *Consult. Med.* T. ii. p. 16.

his introduction of inoculation, of which he continues the practice with great ability and equal success, has communicated to me a letter of the Professor Stehelin, a name ever dear to literature, in which I have found many interesting and useful observations. Some I reserve for properer places in the course of this work. Here I shall but subjoin two instances.

The son of M. —, aged about fourteen or fifteen years, died of convulsions, and a kind of epilepsy, of which the original cause was self-pollution. In vain was he attended by the most experienced physicians of the town.

I also know a young lady of twelve or thirteen years old, who by this execrable practice has drawn upon herself a consumption, together with a tympanous abdomen, the *fluor albus*, and an incontinence of urine. Though medicines have alleviated her complaints, she is still but in a languishing condition, and I dread fatal consequences.

### SECTION 3

#### *Descriptions taken from the book entitled Onania*

Since the publication of this work, I have learnt, from a very respectable quarter, that an entire faith ought not to be given to the English collection, and that this reason, together with certain calumnies, some obscenities, and the forgery of an imperial privilege, had made the German translation be prohibited in the Empire. These motives would have determined me to suppress all that I had extracted from that work, but some considerations have induced me to preserve it, under the modification of this præ-advertisement. The first is, that some of these reasons concern only the German edition. Another is, that though there may be some facts invented, as indeed some of them plainly enough appear to carry with them a stamp of falsity, it is yet proved, that the greatest number of them are but too true. In short, a third consideration which determined me, is what I find in the above-mentioned letter of M. Stehelin. "I have (says he) received a letter from M. Hoffman of Maestrich, in which he acquaints me of his having seen a practiser of self-pollution, who had already drawn on himself a *tabes dorsalis*, which he had, without success, attempted to cure, and the patient was afterwards cured by the remedies of the *Onania*, of which Dr. Beckers of London is supposeably the author,

and so well cured, that he has recovered his corpulence, is strong and healthy, and has four children.”

The English book of *Onania* is a perfect chaos, and the most indigested work that has been produced a long time. It is only the observations that can bear reading. All the reflections of the author, whom I could not believe a physician, are nothing but theological or moral trivialisms. I shall not extract from all this work, which is rather of the longest, any thing but a description of the most common accidents, of which the patients complain. The vivacity, the pathetic expressions of pain and repentance, which are found in a few of the letters in that book, I omit in this extract; but the want of them ought not to weaken the impression of horror which the reading of the facts themselves should inspire, as it is on the facts that the impression depends; and the readers will rather have to thank me for sparing him the perusal of a much greater number of others, without order or diction. I shall class under six heads those evils of which the English patients complain, and begin with the most grievous, those of the soul.

*First.* All the intellectual faculties are weakened; the memory fails; the ideas are confused or clouded; the patients sometimes even fall into a slight degree of insanity; they are continually under a kind of inward restlessness, and feel a constant anguish, with such pangs of confidence and remorse, as make them shed tears in bitterness of heart. They are subject to giddiness; all the senses, and especially those of seeing and hearing, grow weaker and weaker; their sleep, if sleep they can, is disturbed by disagreeable or frightful dreams.

2. The bodily strength entirely fails; the growth of those who have not done growing, and who abandon themselves to this detestable practice, is considerably checked. Some can get no sleep at all, others are in a state of continual dozing. All of them almost become hypochondriacs, or hysteric, and are overwhelmed with all the evils that attend those dreadful disorders; melancholy, sighs, tears, palpitations; suffocations, fainting fits. Some have been known to spit calcareous matter. Coughs, a slow fever, consumptions, are the punishments which some find in their own crimes.

3. The most acute pains are another subject of complaint in the patients. One complains of his head, another of his breast, the stomach, the intestines, aches of external rheumatisms; some are affected with an obtuse sensation of pain in all the parts of the body, on the slightest impression.

4. There are not only to be seen pimples on the face, which is one of the commonest symptoms, but even blotches, or suppurative pustules, on the face, nose, breast, thighs, with cruel itchings on those parts. Nay, one patient complained of fleshy excrescences on his forehead.

5. The organs of generation come in also for their share of the sufferings, of which they are themselves the primary cause. Many patients become incapable of erection; in others, the seminal humor comes away in the moment of the slightest stimulation, and of the weakest erection; some will even evacuate it on going to stool. Numbers are attacked with an habitual gonorrhœa, which intirely destroys constitutional vigor, and the matter of it resembles a fetid *sanies*, or foul mucosity. Others are tormented with painful priapisms. Dysuries, stranguries, heat of urine, a weakening of its spirt, put the patients to cruel inconveniences and pains. Some have very painful tumors in the testicles, in the penis, the bladder, the spermatic string. In short, either the impossibility of coition, or the depravation of the seminal humor, renders incapable of procreation almost all those who have long abandoned themselves to this crime.

6. The functions of the intestines are sometimes totally disordered, and some patients complain of an obstinate costiveness, others of the piles, or of the running of a fetid matter from the fundament.

This last observation reminds me of a young man, who, after every act of self-pollution, was attacked with a diarrhœa, which must be an additional cause of a diminution of strength to him.

#### **SECTION 4**

##### ***The Author's Observations***

The object of description occurring in my first observation is dreadful; I was myself frightened at the first time of my seeing the unfortunate sufferer, who is the subject of it. Then it was that I felt, more than I had ever before

done, the necessity of pointing out to young people, all the horrors of that precipice down which they voluntarily cast themselves.

L. D——, a watchmaker, had been clear of vice, and enjoyed a good state of health, till the age of seventeen, when he gave himself up to self-pollution, which he repeated every day, and often thrice a day, when the ejaculation was always preceded and accompanied by a slight fainting fit, or privation of the senses, and a convulsive motion of the exterior muscles of the head, which drew it strongly backward, while his neck swelled prodigiously. There had not passed a whole year, before he began to feel a great weakness after each act: this warning was not sufficient to draw him out of the mire. His soul, wholly ingrossed by the filth of this obscenity, was no longer capable of any other ideas, and the reiterations of his crime became every day more frequent, till he found himself in a condition, that gave him apprehensions of death. Sensible of his danger too late, the mischief had made too great a progress to admit of a cure. The parts of generation were become so irritable, and so weak, that there did not need any fresh act on the part of that wretched object, to make them let go the seed. The slightest irritation procured, instantly, an imperfect erection, which was immediately followed by an evacuation of that liquid, and this daily augmented his weakness. That convulsion, which before he was not used to experience but just at the time of the consummation of the act, and which ceased at the same time, was become habitual, and often attacked him without any apparent cause, with such violence too, that during the time of the fit, which sometimes lasted fifteen hours, and never less than eight, he suffered, in the nape of his neck, such violent pains, that commonly his outcries sounded like piteous howlings, and it was impossible for him, while the fit lasted, to swallow any thing whatever, liquid or solid. He had contracted a hoarseness of voice, but I did not observe it more so out of the fit than in it. He totally lost his strength. Incapable of every thing, overwhelmed with misery, he languished, almost without any assistance, for some months; being the more to be pitied, for that some remains of memory, which however it was not long till that was abolished, only served constantly to recall to him the causes of his wretchedness, and to augment to him the horrors of remorse. I was told his condition. I went to him, and found him

less a living creature than a cadaverous figure, lying upon straw, meagre, pale, sallow, sending forth an infectious smell, and himself almost incapable of any motion. He bled at the nose a pale and watery blood, and was continually foaming at the mouth: attacked too with a diarrhœa, his excrements came from him without his perceiving it; the flux of his seed was continual; his eyes bleared, dim, or extinguished, had lost their faculty of motion; his pulse was extremely low, yet quick and frequent; his breathing very laborious, his leanness excessive, except just in his feet, which began to be œdematous. The disorder of his mind was not less than that of his body; without ideas, without memory, without reflections, without anxiety about his fate, without any other sensation but that of a pain which returned with every fit, at least once in three days. A being much below that of a brute; a sight, of which there is no conception can reach the horror. It was not easy to make out that he had ever belonged to the human species. I procured for him quickly enough the relief of destroying those violent convulsive fits, which recalled him to the power of feeling, only by the pain they brought with them; but satisfied with having mitigated his tortures, I discontinued remedies, which could have no efficacy on the main of his disorder. He died at the end of a few weeks, in June, 1757, œdematous all over his body.

Not all those who give themselves up to this odious and criminal habit, are, it is true, so severely punished; but there are none that do not suffer for it in a less or greater degree. The frequency of the act, the difference of constitutions, many adventitious circumstances, may occasion considerable differences.

The pernicious consequences that have fallen under my observation, are, *first*, a total disorder of the stomach, which in some discovers itself by loss of appetite, or by a depravation or irregularity of its cravings; in others, by acute pains, especially in the time of digestion, by habitual nauseas or vomitings, which resist all remedies, while the cause, the bad practice, is continued. *Secondly*, A weakening of the organs of respiration, whence frequently result dry husky coughs, almost always a hoarseness, a failure of voice, and a shortness of breath, on any little violence of motion. *Thirdly*, A total relaxation of the nervous system.

It does not require a very deep knowledge of the animal œconomy, to be sensible that the three prementioned causes are capable of producing all the diseases of languor, and experience every day proves their producing them. The first ill consequences of them, to such as are guilty of self-pollution, besides those I have just pointed out, are a considerable diminution of strength, a less or greater paleness, sometimes a slight but continual jaundice, often pimples, which come and disappear only to make room for fresh ones, and are constantly reproducing themselves all over the face, but especially in the forehead, the temples, and about the nose; a notable leanness; an astonishing sensibility to the changes of weather, especially to cold; a languor in the eyes, a weakening of the sight, a great impairment of the faculties, especially of the memory.

“I am sensible (a patient writes me) that this wretched practice has diminished the strength of my intellectual faculties, and especially of my memory<sup>35</sup>.”

I beg leave to insert here the fragments of some letters, which, combined together, will form a complete enough description of the natural disorders produced by self-pollution. The language in which I wrote (the Latin) hindered me from making use of them in the first edition of this work.

“I had the misfortune (says the same person, who was by this time arrived at the age of maturity,) like too many other young people, to suffer myself to be carried away by the violence of a habit, as pernicious for the body as for the soul. Age, indeed, assisted by reason, has, for some time past, corrected this wretched inclination: but the ill is done. The disorder and extraordinary sensibility of the nervous system, and the accidents resulting therefrom, are accompanied with a weakness, a restlessness, a *tædium vitæ*, a sense of distress, that all seem to vie with each other to afflict me. I am consumed by an almost continued loss of seed. My face is become as it were cadaverous, so pale, so livid. The weakness of my body renders all my motions laborious: that of my legs is often so great, that they can hardly support me, and that I dare not go out of my room. My digestions are so ill performed, that my aliments come from me,

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<sup>3535</sup> Dated the 15th September, 1755.

scarcely more altered, three or four hours after I have taken them, than when I took them into my stomach. My breast gets stuffed with phlegm, the load of which throws me into a state of anguish, and my expectorations into a state of faintness. Here you have a succinct account of my causes of complaint, which are still aggravated by the melancholic certainty I have acquired, that every day will yet be worse than the precedent ones. In a word, I cannot conceive that a human creature can be afflicted with greater evils than I am. Without the particular grace of Providence, I could hardly bear up under so heavy a load.”

It was not without shuddering that I read, in another patient’s letter, the following terrible expressions, which reminded me of some in the (English) treatise of *Onania*.

“If religion did not restrain me, I should have already put an end to a life, which is so much the more miserable for its being my own fault that it is so.”

There cannot surely be in the world a more intolerable condition than that of anguish: a state of pain is nothing in comparison with it; and when it is superadded to a croud of other evils, it is not at all strange that the sufferer should wish for death as his greatest good, and regard life as a real misfortune, if the name of life can be given to so deplorable a state.

*Vivere cum nequeam, sit mihi posse mori;*

*Dulce mori miseris, sed mors optata recedit.*

M.

The following description is less long, and not quite so terrible as the first one.

“I had the misfortune, in my tenderest youth, being, to the best of my remembrance, not above eight or ten years of age, to contract that pernicious habit of self-pollution, which very early ruined my constitution; but especially, for some years past, I find myself under an extraordinary oppression: my nerves are extremely weak, my hands without strength, always shaking, and in a perpetual sweat. I have violent

pains in my stomach, arms, legs, sometimes in my loins, and in my breast. I am often troubled with a cough; my eyes are always weak and dim; I have a devouring appetite, and yet I grow very lean, and never but look extremely ill.”

In the Section on the method of cure, will be seen the success of the remedies in this case.

“Nature herself (says a third correspondent) opened my eyes to the cause of that languor under which I found myself, and to the danger of that abyss into which I was precipitating myself. Pimples or eruptions on the part which was the instrument of my crime, and the faintness I felt in the midst of the act itself, left me no room to doubt of the cause of my suffering.”

I might add here a great number of cases of this nature, on which I have been consulted since the second edition of this work, but they would be useless repetitions. I shall only confine myself to two or three of the most recent.

A man in the flower of his age wrote to me, but the other day, in the following terms.

“In my early youth I contracted a most dreadful habit, which has ruined my health. I am overwhelmed with stoppages and giddinesses of my head, which give me room to apprehend an apoplexy. I have been bled for them; but those who advised me, are sensible they were in the wrong of it. I have a contraction of my breast, and consequently a difficulty of breathing. I have frequently pains of the stomach, and I suffer successively almost all over my body. In the day-time I am heavy, inclined to doze, and restless; in the night my sleep is disturbed and agitated, and does not refresh or repair me. I have often itchings; I am pale, my eyes are weak and sore, my complexion is jaundiced, and I have an offensive breath, &c.”

Another writes me thus: “I cannot walk two hundred paces without resting. My weakness is extreme. I have continual pains all over my body, but especially in my shoulders. I preserve my appetite, but that is rather a misfortune to me, as I have pains of the stomach the moment I have

eaten, and throw up whatever I have got down. If I read a page or two, my eyes water, and are sore. I often sigh involuntarily. *Filo xylino flaccidius veretrum, omnisque erectionis impotens, semen quidem, manu sollicitum effluere sinit, nequaquam vero ejaculat, adeo cæterum imminutum et retractum, ut oculi de sexu vix judicare possint.*”

The particulars of this case, with the success of my method of treatment of it, will appear, in their place, in this work; and I furnish them with the more reason, for that he was the most weakened and the most governable of any patient I have seen.

A third, who had abandoned himself to this detestable practice, at the age of twelve years, appeared to have suffered even more in his intellectual faculties than in his bodily health. To the following purpose was the account of himself: “I feel (says he) my warmth sensibly diminish. My sensations are considerably dulled; the fire of my imagination greatly slackened; the sense of my existence infinitely less quick; every thing that passes at present before me appears to me like a dream; I have difficulty of conception, and less presence of mind; in short, I feel I am perishing, though I preserve my sleep, my appetite, and am not much altered in my looks.”

A consequence, and not a rare one, of this practice, is the Hypochondriac, and if those who are Hypochondriacs, from other causes, abandon themselves to it, all the symptoms of that disorder are exasperated by it, and it becomes incurable. I have seen the most cruel inquietude, agitations, anxieties result from these two causes united; and repeated observations have proved to me, that, in those Hypochondriacs, who are subject sometimes to attacks of delirium, or frenzy, self-pollution always hastens on the fits. The brain, weakened by this double cause, successively loses its faculties, and the patients fall at length into a state of an idiotism, which is never interrupted but by some attacks of madness.

The *Memoirs of curious Naturalists* mention a melancholic man, who, in pursuance of Horace’s advice, used, sometimes, to seek in wine, a diversion from his melancholy, and who, in the honey-moon of his second

marriage, having indulged excessively the pleasures of coition, fell into so dreadful a frenzy, that it was necessary to chain him down<sup>36</sup>.

Jakin, in his Commentaries upon Rhazes, has preserved to us the history of a melancholic man, whom excesses of that kind threw into a consumption, attended with a frenzy, which made an end of him in a few days<sup>37</sup>.

It is well known that the epileptical paroxysms, accompanied with an effusion of the seminal liquid, leave a greater faintness and stupor than other fits, without that symptom. Coition will provoke and bring on the fits of that disorder, in those who are subject to it; and it is to this cause that M. Van Swieten imputes the great faintness into which those fall, who have frequent returns of those fits<sup>38</sup>. The late M. Didier knew a merchant of Montpellier, who never performed the act of coition without having immediately after it an attack of the epilepsy<sup>39</sup>. Galen makes the like observation<sup>40</sup>. The Observations of Henricus ab Heers, not to mention many others, attest the like effect<sup>41</sup>.

M. Van Swieten knew an epileptic patient, who was attacked with a fit on his wedding night<sup>42</sup>.

M. Hoffman knew a woman, who was very lewd, and who, for the most part, had a fit of the epilepsy after every act of venery<sup>43</sup>.

And here it may not be improper to introduce what M. Boerhaave says, in his treatise on the Disorders of the Nerves, that in the venereal ardor, all the nerves are affected, sometimes even to death. He mentions the example of a woman, who, after every coition, fell constantly into a pretty long fainting fit; and that of a man, who died in the act of his first coition,

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<sup>36</sup> Decur. ii. ann. 4. Obs. 166. p. 327.

<sup>37</sup> Schenckius, L. i. Obs. 2. 36.

<sup>38</sup> §. 1077. T. iii. p. 429.

<sup>39</sup> *Quæst. med.* An Epilepsiæ Merc. util.

<sup>40</sup> *De locis affectis*, L. v. c. 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Observationes medicæ (oppido raræ,)* Obs. 18.

<sup>42</sup> §. 1075. T. iii. p. 412.

<sup>43</sup> *De morb. nerv.*, p. 462.

the force of the spasm having instantaneously thrown him into a total palsy. And I find in the excellent work with which M. de Sauvages has lately enriched the physical world, a most singular, and perhaps before unheard of, case of a man, who, in the midst of the act used to be attacked (and this disorder lasted twelve years) with a spasm, which threw his whole body into a state of rigescence, with loss of sense: *Ita ut illum præ oneris impotentia in alteram lecti partem excutere cogeretur uxor, ut evacuatio spermatis lenta flaccidoque veretro demum succedebat, remittente corporis rigiditate*<sup>44</sup>.

I know several cases which have some affinity to this. M. de Haller has specified a great many, in his remarks on the Institutes of Boerhaave<sup>45</sup>; and there are numbers to be seen in the works of other observers.

It has precedently been remarked, that self-pollution would produce this dreadful disorder, and that happens oftener than is imagined: Can it then be surprizing, that the acts of it should recall the fits, as I have more than once seen it in persons subject to the epilepsy; or is it strange that they should render it incurable?

This total rigescence or inflexibility of the body, of which M. Boerhaave makes mention, is one of the most uncommon symptoms; I never saw it above once, but then it was in the most consummate degree. The ill had begun by a stiffness of the neck and spine, and successively spread to all the limbs: this was the case of an unfortunate young man, whom I saw some time before his death. Uncapable of lying on the bed in any other posture but the supine one, and without power to move hand or foot, immoveable, in short, and reduced to receive no aliments but as they were put into his mouth; he languished a few weeks in this deplorable condition, and died, or rather went out like a taper, almost without any indication of pain.

I have since seen another terrible example of this total and mortal rigescence, which will deserve a specification here.

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<sup>44</sup> *Nosologia methodica, seu classes morborum*, t. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Ad. §. 658. n. f. c. 5. p. 446.

On the 10th of February, 1760, I was called to visit, in the country, a man of about forty years of age, who had been very strong and robust, but who had been guilty of great excesses with women and wine, and who had moreover often exercised himself at trials of bodily strength. It was some months precedently that his disorder had begun by a weakness in his legs which made him stagger as he walked, as if he had been drunk. Sometimes he would actually fall down, though on the plainest ground. He could not descend any steps without a great deal of trouble, and hardly durst stir out of his apartment. His hands shook terribly; it was with much difficulty he could write a few words, and those sadly scrawled. But he could dictate readily enough, though his tongue, which had never had any great volubility, began to have rather somewhat less. His memory was good, and the only thing that could make any detriment to his intellects to be suspected, was, that he was less attentive to the *game of draughts*, and that his countenance was a good deal altered. He had an appetite, and slept; but it was with difficulty he could turn himself in his bed.

It appeared to me, that his excesses with women and wine were the primary cause of his disorder, and I judged, that his straining in his trials of bodily strength might be the reason why his muscles were more particularly attacked. The season was rather unfavorable to the employment of remedies, and yet it was requisite, in the mean while, to stop the progress of the disease. I advised him frictions of the whole body, with flannel, and other corroboratives; proposing to myself to augment the doses with the adjunction of the cold-bath, in the beginning of the summer. At the end of some weeks the tremors of his hand appeared some what abated. In the month of April there was a conciliation held on him, in which his disorder was imputed to an accident of his having, about two years before, written, for some months, in a room newly plaistered and damp. Upon this there were applied warm baths, unctuous frictions, powders said to be diaphoretic and antispasmodic; but no alteration for the better followed. In the month of June, a second consultation decided for his going to the baths of Leuk, in Valais: he went, and on his return he had more tremors, and a greater stiffness. Since then (September, 1760) till the month of January 1764, I have not seen him above three or four times.

In 1762, on the credit of some advertisement, he sent for, from Frankfort, the medicines of the *Onania*, which did him no service. Last year, he took others from some foreign physician, but with as little success. His disorder had, from the beginning, made slow but daily advances, and many months before his death, he could no longer support himself on his legs, nor could he so much as move his hands or arms. The embarrassment of his tongue increased, and his voice failed him to such a degree, that there was no hearing easily what he said. The extensor muscles of the head let it continually fall on the breast. He had constantly an uneasiness in his back: his sleep and appetite successively diminished: the last months of his life he could hardly swallow any thing. Since Christmas an oppression came on him, with an irregular fever. His eyes grew dim in a singular manner. When I saw him again in the month of January, he used to pass the whole day, and a great part of the night, in an elbow-chair, leaning backward, his feet extended on a chair, his head falling down every instant on his breast, having always a person standing near him, and constantly employed in changing his attitude, lifting his head up to feed him, to give him snuff, to blow his nose; and to make out, by listening attentively, what he said. The last days of his life he was reduced to pronounce his words letter by letter, which were taken down in writing just as he could articulate them. Finding that I gave him no hopes, and that I only employed some lenitives for his oppression and fever, urged, at length, by a desire of living, he opened himself in, confidence to one of his friends, for his immediately acquainting me of it, as the cause to which he imputed all his illness, and which was his self-pollution, having begun that infamous practice many years ago, and continued it as long as he could; adding, that he had felt this disorder increase in proportion to his delivering himself up to it. This confession he confirmed to me some days afterward, and withal, that it was on this account that he had been determined to send for the medicines of the *Onania*.

Excess of venery does not only produce the languors of chronical diseases, but sometimes throws into acute ones, and always aggravates any disorders that proceed from other causes; it easily produces

malignancies, which, in my opinion, are but a failure of the forces of nature.

Hippocrates, in his histories of epidemical diseases, has, of old, left us his observation on a young man, who, after excesses of wine and venery, was seized with a fever, accompanied by the most vexatious and irregular symptoms, and which proved mortal<sup>46</sup>.

All that M. Hoffman says on this head deserves a reference to it. After having spoke of the danger of the pleasures of love, for wounded persons, he examines that of such as, having a fever, will nevertheless venture upon them. He begins by quoting an observation of Fabricius Hildanus, who says, that a man having had a commerce with a woman, the tenth day of a pleurisy, which had had a favourable crisis from a profuse sweat, was attacked with a violent fever and remarkable tremors, and died the thirteenth day. He gives you afterwards the history of a man of fifty years of age, gouty, and much addicted to venery and wine, who, in the first days of his recovery from a false pleurisy, was attacked, immediately after a coition, with a general tremor, an excessive flushing in the face, a fever, and all the symptoms of the disorder from which he was recovering, but much more violent than the first time, and was in a much greater danger. He tells you too of a man, who never indulged any venereal excesses without having, for many days afterwards, fits of an intermittent fever. He concludes with a case from Bartholinus, who saw a new-married man attacked, on the next morning of his wedding night, after conjugal excesses, with an acute fever, a great lowness of spirits, faintnesses, nauseas of the stomach, an immoderate thirst, lightness of head, want of sleep, and anxieties; but who was cured by rest and some restoratives<sup>47</sup>.

M. Chesneau saw a young married couple, attacked, the first week of their wedding, with a violent continual fever, with a flushing in the face, which was also considerably swelled: both of them had a great pain in the small of their back, and both perished in a few days<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> *Epidem.* L. iii. sect. 3. æg. 16. Foes. p. 1117.

<sup>47</sup> *De morb. ex nim. ven.* § 20, 21.

<sup>48</sup> Nic. Chesneau *Observ. medic.* lib. v. Obs. 36, 37.

M. Vandermonde describes a fever produced by the same cause, a very tedious fever, and attended with the most dreadful symptoms, but of which the issue was more happy than in the case adduced by Hippocrates. I will not here recite the description of it, because of its length; but I earnestly recommend to physicians the reading it in the work itself, which is now easily to be come at any where. I shall subsequently and in another place speak of the method of cure.

M. de Sauvages describes this disorder under the title of the *burning fever of the exhausted*: the pulse is sometimes strong and full, at others weak and low. The urines are red, the skin dry and hot, the thirst considerable. They have nauseas, and cannot sleep<sup>49</sup>.

In 1761 and 1762 I saw two young men both very healthy, very strong, and vigorous, who were attacked, the one on the next morning the other on the next night of their respective weddings, with a violent fever, without any shudder, their pulse quick and hard, lightness of head, many slight convulsive motions, an intolerable restlessness, and the skin very dry. The second was extremely thirsty, and made water with great difficulty. I imagined, at first, that an excess of wine might have some share in these accidents, but I was fully convinced to the contrary, at least by the second. They were both of them cured in about two days time, a circumstance, which, joined to the epoch of their disorder, and to its symptoms, leaves no doubt about the cause of it.

Careful observations and sad experience have taught me, that acute disorders were always very dangerous in persons accustomed to self-pollution; their progress is commonly irregular, their symptoms unaccountable, their periods interverted. The constitution affords no resources; Art is obliged to do every thing, and as it never procures perfect *Crises*, when, after a great deal of pains, the disease is got under, the patient remains rather in a state of languor than of recovery, which exacts a continuation of the most assiduous care, to hinder him from falling into some chronical disorder.

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<sup>49</sup> *Nosol.* T. ii, p. 262.

I find that Fonseca has already stated this danger. “Many young persons (says he) and those very robust ones, are either attacked, after excesses with women, on the same night, with an acute fever that kills them, or fall into grievous disorders, of which they find it a difficult matter to be cured; for when the body is weakened by venereal excesses, if it should be attacked with an acute distemper, there is no remedy<sup>50</sup>.”

A young lad, not quite sixteen, had abandoned himself to self-pollution, with such a rage, that, at length, instead of seed, he only brought blood, of which the emission was soon followed by excessive pains, and by an inflammation of all the organs of generation. Happening to be in the country, I was consulted. I ordered extremely emollient cataplasms, which produced the effect I expected from them: but I have since learnt, that he died soon after of the small-pox; and do not in the least doubt of the hurt he did his constitution by the fury of that infamous practice, having much contributed to render that distemper mortal. What a warning should not this be to young people!

All those who have sometimes occasion to have the venereal disorder under their cure, know that it frequently becomes mortal, in such as have had their constitution impaired or worn out by frequency of debauchery. I have seen the most deplorable objects in that way.

## SECTION 5

### ***Consequences of self-pollution to the female sex***

The preceding observations appear, all of them (except that from Mr. Stehelin, which concludes the second Section,) to concern principally the men: but it would be an essential imperfection, in a treatise on this subject, to omit an admonition to the female sex, of their exposing themselves to the same dangers, on their pursuing the same depraved course. There are numerous examples of their having drawn upon themselves all the evils I have set forth, and women but too often perish miserably the victims of this detestable lewdness. The English treatise upon *Onania* is full of confessions of this kind, which there is no reading without being seized with horror and compassion; the malignity

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<sup>50</sup> *De sanitate tuenda*, p. 110.

of the disorders occasioned by it, seems even to have a superior degree of activity among the women, to what it has among the men.

Besides the symptoms which I have already described, the women are particularly exposed to hysteric fits, or dreadful vaporous affections; to incurable jaundices, to cruel cramps of the stomach and back; to sharp prickings of the nose, to the *fluor albus*, of which the acridity is a perpetual source of the most torturous pains; to the procidentia, and ulcerations of the womb, and to all the infirmities which are the consequences of these two disorders; to elongations of the clitoris, and eruptions on it; to the *furor uterinus*, which, depriving them at once of modesty and reason, puts them on a level with the most lascivious brutes, till a desperate death delivers them from pain and infamy.

The face, that faithful mirror of the intellectual and bodily affections, is the first to give outward signs of the inward disorders. Then that plumpness, that fresh color, whose union constitutes that air of youth, which alone can supply the place of beauty, and without which beauty itself can produce no other impression than that of a cold unconcerned admiration; that plumpness, I say, that fresh color, are the first to fade away and disappear: leanness, a sallow complexion, a coarseness of the skin succeed immediately to them; the eyes lose their lustre, tarnish, and express, in their languor, that of the whole machine, the lips lose their vermilion, the teeth their whiteness; in short, it is not rare that the whole figure receives a considerable damage by the total deformation of the shape.

The *Rickets* is a disorder, as to which Boerhaave is mistaken, when he says, it does not attack persons after the age of three years. It is not uncommon to see young people of both sexes, but especially the female, who, after their having been well-shaped to the age of eight, ten, twelve, or fourteen, and even sixteen years, fall, little by little, into a distortion of shape, through the curvature of the spine; and this disorder sometimes becomes very considerable. It is not here the place for entering into particulars of this ailment, nor into an enumeration of the causes which produce it. Hippocrates has pointed out two<sup>51</sup>. I shall have, perhaps,

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<sup>51</sup> *Aphor.* sect. 6. 46.

occasion of communicating, in another work, what several observations have taught me on that subject; but what I ought not to omit here, is, that self-pollution holds the first rank among the causes that produce it.

M. Hoffman having already observed, that young persons, who give themselves up to the pleasures of venery before they have attained their full growth, could not thrive, and must rather go back than advance in their stature<sup>52</sup>, I only add, that it is obvious to sense, that a cause which can hinder growth, must, *a fortiori*, disturb the order, and produce those irregularities in the course of it, which contribute to the disorders of which I am treating.

One symptom common to both sexes, and which I place under this head, because it is the most frequent among women, is that indifference which this infamous habit leaves for the lawful pleasures of the marriage-bed, even while the desires of sensuality, and strength are not yet extinguished; an indifference, which does not only attach numbers to a single life, but which often pursues even to the nuptial couch.

In the collection of cases made by Dr. Beckers, a woman confesses, that this vile habit had got such an ascendant over her senses, that she had an aversion against the lawful means of satisfying the desires of nature, in the natural way.

I myself know a man, who being taught these abominations by his tutor, had the like distaste, on the first of his marriage; and his anguish at this situation, joined to the faintness contracted by that habit, threw him into a profound melancholy, which yielded, however, at length, to the nervous and restorative remedies.

Here, before I proceed farther, let me entreat fathers and mothers to make their own reflections on the occasion of the misfortune of this last mentioned patient; and there are more examples than one of the like case. If one may, to such a degree, be deceived in the choice of those to whom the important care of forming the head and heart of young persons, what ought one not to fear from those, who, being only designed

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<sup>52</sup> *De ætate conjugio opportuna*, Sect. 10. Suppl. 2do. p. 340. The whole Dissertation deserves perusal, though it might have been better written.

to give the corporal graces and talents of education, are less scrupulously examined as to their morals? And what ought not one still more to fear from servants, too often hired without any character of their morals at all.

The young boy, or rather merely a child, of whom I made mention from M. Rast, was, as has been remarked, seduced into that vice by a maid-servant.

The English collection of cases of self-pollution is full of the like examples; and I could produce many instances of young plants blasted and lost through the villainy of the gardeners intrusted with their cultivation: and, in that light, there are such gardeners of both sexes.

What remedy, will it be said, is there for such evils? The answer is out of my sphere; I shall then make it a short one. The most scrupulous attention ought to be given to the choice of a preceptor; nor ought the care to end at that, but a watchful eye be kept over him and his pupil; that sort of watchful eye, which belongs to a sensible and careful father of a family, and which discovers the most hidden doings in every corner of the house; that eye, I say, which discovers those antlers of the stag, which escaped all other eyes, a penetrative vigilance, in short, from which nothing can be concealed, and which it is possible to have, when one is in earnest in it.

*Docuit enim fabula Dominum videre plurimum in rebus suis.*

Phæd.

Young persons ought never to be left alone with masters liable to any suspicion; and all intercourse should be forbidden with the servants.

It is not long since that a girl of about eighteen years of age, who had enjoyed a very good health, fell into an astonishing weakness; her strength decayed daily; she was all the day stupified with a kind of dozing, and all night tormented with a want of sleep, her appetite was gone, and œdematous swellings spread over her whole body. She consulted an able surgeon, who, having satisfied himself of there having been no disorder in the menstrual flux, suspected self-pollution. The effect of his first question confirmed to him the justness of his suspicion, and the

confession of the patient converted it to a certainty. He made her sensible of the danger of this practice, a cessation of which, and some remedies, stopped, in a few days, the progress of the evil, and even produced some amendment of health.

Besides self-pollution, manual or instrumental, there is another defilement, or contamination, which may be termed *clitoridian*, of which the known origin is traced up to the second Sappho.

*Lesbiades, infamem quæ me fecistis, amatæ.*

A vice too common among the Roman women, from that epoch at which the general dissoluteness of morals began, and which was more than once the object of the epigrams and satires of those times.

*Lenonum ancillas posita Laufella corona*

*Provocat, et tollit pendentis præmia coxæ.*

*Ipsa Medullina frictum crissantis adorat.*

*Palnam inter Dominas virtus natalibus æquat.*<sup>53</sup>

Nature, in her sportive indulgence to variety, gives to some women a degree of resemblance to men, which, for want of sufficient examination, has, for ages, obtained a belief of that chimæra of Hermaphrodites. The supernatural size of a part which is commonly a very small one of the female organ of generation, and upon which M. Tronchin has given a learned dissertation, constitutes the whole wonder, as the odious abuse of that part does the whole ill. Vain, perhaps, of this sort of resemblance, there have been some of these imperfect women, who have usurped the functions of virility. The Greeks call them *Tribades*. They are a sort of monstrous beings too frequent, and which seduce the young of the fair sex with the more facility, for their having in their favor, that reason for loving eunuchs, which Juvenal imputes to some women,

*Quod abortivo non est opus.*

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<sup>53</sup> Juven. Sat. vi. ver. 321.

There are not those consequences to be dreaded, the impossibility of hiding which betrays such as have had complaisances or weaknesses in the natural way. Of this circumstance the *Tribad* takes the advantage to draw the young of her sex into the crime, without her innocent accomplices even suspecting the danger: and yet it is not less in that way than in other means of pollutions; the consequences are equally pernicious. All these deviations from the course of nature lead to weaknesses, languor, pain, and death. This last kind of lewdness deserves the more attention, for that it is, in our days, grown frequent, and that it would not be difficult to find more than one *Laufella*, more than one *Medullina*, who, like those Roman heroines in obscenity, think they should slight those extraordinary gifts of nature, if they did not pervert them to the confusion of the arbitrary distinction of the sex to which they were born. It is well known, that, some years ago, at a certain court, a lady was so much in love with a young girl to her taste, that she conceived a violent jealousy against a celebrated man of Literature, who had conceived a liking for her.

But it is time to have done with these melancholic instances of the depravity and turpitude of human nature; I am mortified and sick of describing them. I will not here then accumulate a greater number of facts: those which remain for me to specify, will naturally find their place elsewhere. I shall next pass to an examination of the causes of the evils proceeding from this practice, after first concluding this Section with the following general observation.

It is this. Young people born with a weak constitution, have, on a parity of crimes, much worse consequences to fear, than those who are naturally vigorous. None escape punishment, but all do not experience it equally severe. Those especially who have reason to apprehend any hereditary diseases by the father's or the mother's side; such as are threatened with the gout, the stone, the consumption, the king's evil; those who have any touches of a cough, of an asthma, of spitting of blood, of head-achs, of the epilepsy; those who have any tendency to that kind of rickets which I have precedently mentioned; all these unfortunates, I say, ought to be intimately persuaded, that every act of this sort of debauchery gives a severe blow to his constitution, most certainly hastens the attack of the

evils they dread, renders the fits infinitely more vexatious, and will throw them, in the flower of their youth, into all the infirmities of the most languishing old age.

*Tartareas vivum constat inire vias.*

## **ARTICLE 2**

### ***The Causes***

#### **SECTION 6**

##### ***Importance of the seminal liquid***

How comes it that an over-abundant emission of seed produces all the evils I have precedently described? This is what I am actually proceeding to examine. These causes may be reduced to two, to wit,

The privation of that liquid.

The circumstances accompanying the emission.

An anatomical particularisation of the organs of this secretion; the conjectures, more or less probable, on the process of nature in that secretion; with observations on its sensible qualities, would be so many points of discussion misplaced here. To prove the utility of that liquid to the human constitution, is all that is essential to the purposes of this work; and this is to be done by the testimonies of the most eminent physicians, including withal a determination of its effects on the body.

The following Section will be appropriated to an examination of the effects which are produced by the circumstances that accompany the emission.

It was the opinion of Hippocrates, that the seed was a secretion from the whole body, but especially from the head. "The human seed (says he) proceeds from all the humors of the body, and is the most essential part of them. This is proved by the weakness, the faintness, which accompanies the loss of it in the act of coition, be the quantity never so small. There are veins and nerves, which, from all the parts in the body, concur to their centre in the parts of generation; when these are turgid, and genially heated, there is felt in them a stimulation, or pruriency, which communicating itself to the whole body, carries with it an impression of pleasure and glowing warmth; the humors enter into a kind of fermentation, which separates from them all that is the most precious

and balsamic in them; and this part separated from the rest, is carried, by means of the spinal marrow, to the organs of generation<sup>54</sup>.”

Galen adopts his ideas. “This humor” (says he) “is but the most subtile, the most refined part of all the others. It has its proper veins and nerves, which carries it from the whole body, to the seminal repositories, the testicles<sup>55</sup>.”

In another place, he says: “The loss of the seed is at the same time attended with a loss of vital spirit, so that it is no wonder that over-frequent coition should enervate the constitution, since it deprives the body of its purest essence<sup>56</sup>.”

The same author has preserved to us, in his History of Philosophy, the opinions of several philosophers on this subject. May I be allowed to recite them here?

Aristotle, whose works of natural philosophy will be in esteem as long as the value of observations shall be known, with a just allowance at once for the merit and the difficulty of opening the career of them, calls it “*the excretion of the ultimate aliment*, (which, in terms more clear, signifies the most perfectly elaborated part of our aliments) *endowed with the faculty of reproducing bodies in the likeness of that whereby it was itself produced.*”

Pythagoras calls it, “*the flower, or quintessence of the purest blood.*”

Alcmæon, his disciple, a great naturalist and an eminent physician, one of the first that discovered the importance of dissecting animals, and of all the heathen philosophers, he that appears to have had the truest ideas of the nature of the soul, Alcmæon, I say, calls the seed “*a portion of the brain.*”

Plato termed it, “*an emanation from the spinal marrow.*”

Democritus thought of it as Hippocrates and Galen.

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<sup>54</sup> *De genitura*, Foes. p. 231.

<sup>55</sup> *De spermate*, L. i. C. i. T. viii. p. 135.

<sup>56</sup> *De semine*, L. i. C. xxv. T. i. p. 1281.

Epicure, that respectable character, who better knew than any one, that it was pleasure alone that constituted the happiness of man, but who at the same time fixed the nature of those pleasures by such rules as the Christian Hero would not disown, or object to them: yes, Epicure, whose doctrine has been so cruelly disfigured and blackened by the Stoics, that those who knew nothing of him but through the chanel of their information, have suffered themselves to be misled by it in their opinion, to such a degree, that they have mistaken for a libertine, a debauchee, a man, “who (as M. Fenelon observes) was of an exemplary continency, and whose morals were extremely regular.” To which I shall add, that his principles are the most severe censure on the tenets of his *pretended* modern sectaries, who knowing nothing of him but his name, most basely and unworthily misuse it, by employing it to authorise systems of infamy, which he would abhor, and by which those men of probity and sense, who love the truth, ought not to permit his memory to be dishonoured, if so it was that men, themselves lost to honour, could dishonour any one. Epicure, I say, looked on the seed as a particle of the soul and the body, and grounded, upon this idea, his precepts for the chary preservation of it.

Though many of these opinions differ in some measure, they all agree to prove how precious this humor was held.

It has been a question whether it has any analogy to any other humor? Or is it the same with that liquid, which, under the name of the animal spirits, conveyed by the nerves, concurs to all the functions of the animal machine that are of any, though ever so little importance, and of which the depravation produces such an infinity of evils, so frequent and so unaccountable? To answer this question positively, it would be requisite first to know intimately the nature of these two humors; and we are very far from having as yet reached that degree of knowledge: we can at best propose nothing more than ingenious and probable conjectures.

Hoffman says, “It is easy enough to conceive how there is such a close alliance between the brain and the testicles, since both those organs separate from the blood the most subtile and the most exquisite lymph, destined to give force and motion to the parts, and even to have an

influence on the functions of the soul. So that it is not possible but that an over-abundant dissipation of these liquids should destroy the strength of the mind and body<sup>57</sup>.”

Elsewhere he says, “That the seminal liquid is like the animal spirits, which are separated from the brain, distributed through all the nerves of the body, and seems to be of the same nature; whence it comes, that the more of it is dissipated, the less there is secreted of the animal spirits.”

M. de Gorter is in the same idea. “The seed (says he) is the most perfect, the most importantly essential of all the animal liquids: it is also the most elaborate; it is the result of all the digestions; its intimate connection with the animal spirits, proves that, like them, it draws its origin from the most perfect humors<sup>58</sup>.”

In short, it appears by these testimonies, and by a croud of others which it would be superfluous to quote, that it is a liquid of the utmost importance; that it might be called the *essential oil* of the animal liquids; or, perhaps more correctly, the *spiritus rector*, the dissipation of which leaves the other humors weak, and, in some measure, dead or vapid.

But whatever may be the original importance of this humor, it may be objected, that since it is separated from the others, and deposited in its appropriate reservoirs, of what use can it be to the body after this its separation? It is granted, they will say, that an over-abundant evacuation of those humors, which are in actual circulation through the vessels, and by that very circulation contribute to nutrition, such as the blood, the serosity, the lymph, &c. may weaken; but it is not so easy to conceive how a humor, that is no longer in circulation, that is, in a state of separation, can produce this effect.

I answer, in the first place, that examples of this kind, and too frequent not to be generally known, ought to obviate such an objection. Who might not have observed, that an evacuation of milk (to go no further than that

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<sup>57</sup> Cas. 102. p. 193.

<sup>58</sup> *De perspiratione insensibili*, Cap. xvii. § 5. pag. 219. In 1720, the Dr. D. A. Jacques maintained, at Paris, a thesis on this question, “*An humorum præstantior semen?*” and, according to custom, defended the affirmative.

instance) though moderate and of no long duration, is capable of weakening a nurse that has not a strong constitution, to such a degree, that she may feel the influences of it for the rest of her life? And even the robustest would sink under it, if continued beyond a certain length of time. The reason is sensibly apparent. Upon evacuating too often the reservoirs appropriated to the reception of any liquid, the humors are, by a necessary consequence of the laws of the animal machine, determined to an afflux thither in the greater abundance. This secretion becomes excessive, all the others suffer by it, and especially nutrition, which is but a kind of secretion; the animal constitution falls into languor and debility.

Secondly, There is an answer, relative to the seed which does not hold as to the milk, which is only a liquid simply nutritious, of which an over-abundant secretion does no detriment, but in so much as it diminishes the quantity of humors: whereas the seed is an active liquid, of which the presence produces effects necessary to the play of the organs, which ceases on its evacuation; a liquid, of which, for that very reason, the superfluous emission is detrimental, in a double view. This requires explanation.

There are humors, such as those of the sweat and perspiration, which leave the body as soon as they are separated from the other humors, and thrown out by the vessels of circulation.

There are others, such as the urine, which, after this separation and expulsion, are retained, for a certain time, in reservoirs appropriated for that purpose, and out of which they are not discharged, but when they are in a quantity great enough to excite, in those reservoirs, an irritation that mechanically forces them to void them.

There is a third sort of humors, which, like the second, are separated and retained in their respective reservoirs, not for the purpose of being, at least intirely, evacuated, but to acquire, in those reservoirs, a perfection that renders them fit for new, or other functions, when they return into the mass of humors. Such, among others, is the seminal liquid. Separated in the testicles, it passes thence, by a duct of some length, into the seminal vesicles, and being constantly repumped by the absorbent vessels, it is, successively, by little intervals, returned into the total mass of the

humors. This is a truth demonstrable by many proofs. One alone may suffice. In a healthy man, the secretion of this liquid is continually formed in the testicles: it flows into these reservoirs of which the capaciousness is very limited, not perhaps great enough for what is separated in one day; and yet there are men so continent as not to evacuate any for whole years. What would become of it, if it was not continually disposed of, by its re-entry through the vessels of circulation? A re-entry, that is extremely facilitated by the structure of all the organs that serve for the separation, the conveyance, and the preservation of this humor. The veins are there much more considerable than the arteries, and that in such a proportion as is observed no where else<sup>59</sup>. It is probable then that this resorption is not only made in the seminal vesicles, but that it has already taken place in the testicles, in the *epididymises*, which are a kind of first reservoir appendant to the testicles, and in the *vasa deferentia*, or channel by which the seed is conveyed from the testicles to the seminal vesicles.

It was not unknown to Galen that the humors were enriched by the retained seed, though he was not apprized of the mechanism.

“Every thing (says he) is full of it, with those who abstain from venery; but there is none of it to be found with those who abandon themselves to excesses of that sensuality.”

He then labors hard to discover why a small quantity of that liquid can give so much strength to the body; at length he decides, “that it has an exquisite virtue, so that it can with surprising quickness communicate its energy to all parts of the body<sup>60</sup>.”

He proves afterwards, by various examples, that a small cause often produces great effects, and at length concludes thus: “Needs it be any wonder that the testicles furnish a liquid of a nature to diffuse fresh vigor

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<sup>59</sup> I adopt, or appear to adopt here, the common system of the absorbent power of the ordinary veins. In Mr. Hunter’s system, who will have it that the absorption is only made by the lymphatic vein, the parts of generation are equally proper for a very considerable absorption, since they abound in vessels of that kind.

<sup>60</sup> *De semine*, L. i. C. xxxiv. T. i. p. 1279.

over the whole body, when the brain produces motion and sensation, and the heart gives pulse to the arteries!”

I shall wind up this Section with what one of the greatest men of the age (M. Haller) says on the seminal humor.

“The seed is kept in the seminal vesicles till the man makes use of it, or that nocturnal pollutions deprive him of it. During all that time, the quantity there is of it excites the animal system to the venereal act; but the greatest quantity of this seed, the most volatile, the most odorous, that which has the most strength, is repumped into the blood, and produces, at its entrance into it, the most surprising changes; the beard, the hair, calluses; it alters the voice and manner: for it is not age that produces in animals this change; it is the seed alone that operates them, and they are never remarked in eunuchs<sup>61</sup>.”

How does the seed operate these effects? Ay, that is a problem of which the solution is not perhaps as yet mature. But this however may, with great probability, be said, that this liquid is a stimulative, a goad, that irritates the parts with which it is in contact: its strong odor, and the palpable irritation it exercises on the organs of generation, leave, as to that, no doubt; nor is it unconceivable that these acrid particles, being continually resorbed and removed with the humors, should, slightly at least, but continually, stimulate the vessels, which, by that very means, contract themselves with the more force; their action upon the fluids is then the more efficacious, the circulation the more animated, the more lively, the nutrition the more exact, and all the other functions executed in the more perfect manner for it: whereas, when this aid is denied or failed, several functions never display themselves, or take place, which is the case in eunuchs<sup>62</sup>; and all are defectively performed, and the worse for that want.

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<sup>61</sup> Hall. *Prim. lin. phys.* §. 790. Besides which there may be consulted upon this head, Wharton *De glandulis*; Russel *De œconomia natur. in glandul. morb.* p. 92. Schmeider *De regressuseminis ad massam sanguineam. Supplement aux actes des Sçavans de Lipsie*, T. v. p. 552. and a croud of other physiological authors.

<sup>62</sup> Such as are curious to see an excellent work upon these imperfect men, will find their account in perusing a treatise of Withof *De castratis*.

Here then occurs a natural enough question; it is this: How comes it that Eunuchs are not afflicted with the same evils as those who exhaust themselves by excesses of venery?

It is hardly possible to answer this question, satisfactorily, till the end of the following Section.

## SECTION 7

### ***An examination of the circumstances which accompany the emission***

There are several evacuations which are performed imperceptibly: all the others, except one, are effected in a state of perfect health, with a facility to which it is owing that they have no influence over the rest of the machine: the slightest motion of the organ which contains the matter of them, suffices for the expulsion. The excepted one is the evacuation of the seed, towards which nothing less is required than a general commotion, a convulsion of all the parts, an augmentation of quickness in the course of all the humors, to dislodge and give it issue.

Can it be thought here too hazardous a conjecture to look on this necessary concurrence of the whole animal system, as a sensible proof of the influence it has over the whole body?

“Coition (says Democritus) is a sort of epilepsy.”

“It is (says M. Haller) a most violent action, bordering upon convulsion, and which must therefore astonishingly weaken, being detrimental to the nervous system.”

It has been seen, in an observation precedently set forth, that an emission was preceded by actual convulsions, by a sort of epilepsy; and the same observation furnishes evident proof of the influence which those violent emotions had on the unhappy man who was subjected to them.

The immediateness of the faintness after the act has to many appeared, and not without reason, a proof, that it could not be only the privation of the seed that occasioned it; but what demonstratively proves how much the spasm or convulsion must weaken, is the weakness incident to those

who are afflicted with convulsive disorders: that which follows the fits of epilepsy is sometimes excessive.

It could be only to the spasm, or convulsion, that the singular effect was to be imputed, which coition had on one whose name was Amman, and whose history was preserved to us by Platerus. Being advanced in years he had re-married, and being about to consummate his nuptials, he was seized with so violent a suffocation, that he was obliged to discontinue the attempt. The same accident returned every time that he renewed the trial. He applied, upon this, to a number of quacks. One of them, who had made him take a great many of his pretended remedies, assured him that he had no longer any danger to fear. On the faith of his Æsculapius, he ventured upon a fresh attempt. The same symptom was instantly the consequence: however, full of confidence, he would persist, and died in the act itself, in the arms of his wife<sup>63</sup>.

Those violent palpitations which sometimes accompany that of coition, are also a convulsive symptom. Hippocrates speaks of a young man, to whom excesses of venery and wine had occasioned, among other symptoms, continual palpitations<sup>64</sup>. And Dolæus knew one, who, in the act itself, was seized with so violent a palpitation, that he must have been suffocated if he had persisted<sup>65</sup>.

The case of the child, above quoted, is also a proof, (which did not escape the sagacity of M. Rast,) of the power of the convulsive cause; since at that age he could hardly evacuate any thing but the humor of the prostates, and not genuine seed.

These remarks have fallen under the observation of a number of good authors, who have written upon this matter. Galen seems to have hit upon them, where he says, "Pleasure itself weakens the vital forces."

Mr. Fleming has not omitted the cause, in his fine poem on the maladies of the nerves:

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<sup>63</sup> Fel. Plateri *Obs.* lib. i. *Suffocatio ex congressu*, p. 174.

<sup>64</sup> *Epidem.* L. iii. æg. 17. Foes. p. 1117.

<sup>65</sup> *Encycl. med.* L. ii. c. 6. p. 347.

*Quin etiam nervos frangit quæcunque voluptas*<sup>66</sup>.

Sanctorius positively establishes his assertion, that the motions weaken more than the emission of the seed: and it is surprising that M. de Gorter, his commentator, should have sought to persuade the contrary. The reason which he gives, in his averment that these motions do not weaken any more than any other motion, “*because they are not convulsive,*”<sup>67</sup> will persuade no one. One example, could he produce it, would not pass for a law of nature. Lister, Noguez, Quincy, who had commented this work before him, are not of his opinion; they attribute part of the danger to the weakness that remains after the convulsions. “Coition (says Noguez) is itself a convulsion; it disposes the nerves to convulsive motions, and the slightest occasion consequently produces them.”

J. A. Borelli, one of the first creators of physiology, had not looked upon them in the same light as M. Gorter. He is clearly positive upon this article.

“This act (says he) is accompanied with a sort of convulsive pathos, which carries with it the most sensible affections of the brain, and of the whole nervous system<sup>68</sup>.”

Mr. Senac specifically imputes to the nerves the weakness which follows coition.

“The most likely cause (says he) of the fainting fit which comes when an abscess breaks in the interior of the abdomen, is the action of the nerves then brought into play. This is confirmed by the ejection, or by the fits of faintness which follow the effusion of seed; for it is only to the nerves that this sinking can be imputed<sup>69</sup>.”

M. Lewis<sup>70</sup> attributes more to this cause than to the other, in which he is of the opinion of Sanctorius. Where there is convulsion, the nervous system is in a state of tension, or, to say more correctly, in an extraordinary

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<sup>66</sup> *Neuropathia*, L. i. ver. 375.

<sup>67</sup> Sect. 6. Aph. 10.

<sup>68</sup> *De motu animali*, L. ii. cap. xii. Prop. 170.

<sup>69</sup> *Traité du Cœur*, L. iv. cap. xii. §. 3. p. 539.

<sup>70</sup> Aphor. 4. p. 6.

degree of action, of which the necessary consequence is an excessive relaxation. Every organ, that has been wound up beyond its natural pitch, falls beneath it; and from that very fall must necessarily result a bad performance of the functions which depend on it; and as the nerves have an influence over them all, there is not one of the functions but what must be more or less disordered when the nerves are weakened.

One reason, too, that may contribute to the weakness of the nervous system, is the augmentation of the quantity of blood in the brain, during the venereal act; an augmentation well demonstrated, and which has gone sometimes so far as to produce an apoplexy. Many examples of it are furnished by observing practitioners, and Hoffman relates one of a soldier, who, in the rage of lust with which he abandoned himself to this act, died apoplectic in the very instant of fruition. On being opened, the brain was found full of blood. It is by this augmentation of blood, that the reason is explained of those excesses producing madness<sup>71</sup>. Such a quantity of blood distending the nerves, enfeebles them: they can the less resist impressions, and thence their weakness.

On a reflection upon these two causes, the evacuation of the seed, and the concomitancy of the convulsive motions, it is easy to explain the disorder that must result from the excess of them to the animal œconomy. They may be ranged under three heads.

The depravation of the digestions.

The weakening of the brain and of the nervous system.

The disordering of the perspiration.

We shall see that there is no chronical disease that may not be deduced from this triple cause.

“The relaxation proceeding from these excesses, disorders the functions of all the organs,” says one of the authors who has written the most sensibly on the dietetic branch of physic; and the digestion, the concoction, the perspiration, and the other evacuations become respectively faulty: thence results a sensible diminution of strength, of

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<sup>71</sup> *De morbis a nim. ven. sect. 17.*

memory, and even of the understanding; a dimness of the eye-sight, all the disaffections of the nerves, all kinds of the gout and rheumatism, an amazing weakness of the back, the consumption, a feebleness of the organs of generation, bloody urines, head-achs, and a multitude of other disorders superfluous to specify here; in short, nothing so much abridges life as the abuse of the pleasures of venery<sup>72</sup>.

The stomach is the part the first affected by all the causes of weakness: this is owing to its being the part of which the functions require the greatest perfection in the organ. The others are, for the most part of them, as much passive as active; the stomach is almost intirely active; so that as soon as its strength diminishes, its functions grow disordered; an observable truth, which combined with the variety of the first impressions, often vexatious ones, produced upon this instrument of digestion by what is taken in at the mouth, combined too, I say, with the immediately following observation, will account for the frequency, the oddity, the obstinacy of its ailments. It is of all the parts of the body that which receives the greatest number of nerves, and in which therefore, by that very means, there must be distributed the greatest quantity of animal spirits. Whatever then weakens the action of the one, and diminishes the quantity or depraves the quality of the other, must in course more diminish the strength of the stomach than of any other intestine; and this is what happens in excesses of venery. The importance of the function to which it is destined, is the cause, that when it is ill or deficiently performed, all the others feel it, and are the worse for it.

*Hujus enim validus firmat tenor omnia membra;*

*At contra, ejusdem franguntur cuncta dolore.*<sup>73</sup>

From the moment that the digestions are imperfectly performed, the humors assume a character of crudity, which disqualifies them for all their destinations, but which, above all, hinders nutrition, upon which depends the reparation of the vital forces. To be assured of the general influence of the stomach, there needs only to observe the state of a

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<sup>72</sup> Abstract from Lynch's *Guide to health*, p. 306.

<sup>73</sup> Q. Serenus Samn.

person under the complaint of a laborious digestion; his strength fails in a few minutes; a general uneasiness renders that weakness still harder to be indured; the organs of sensation grow obtuse; the soul itself cannot exercise its faculties but imperfectly; the memory, and especially the imagination, seem annihilated; nothing, in short, makes a man of sense so nearly resemble a fool, as a painful or defective digestion.

A very curious observation, specified by M. Payva, a Portuguese physician, who resided in Rome, throws a great light on the prodigious weakness into which an excessive indulgence of venery will throw those who are guilty of it.

“When (says he) the desires of the sensual joy are, in young people, risen to the greatest height, they feel a kind of agreeable sensation at the orifice of the stomach; but if they satisfy these desires with too great an impetuosity, and beyond their strength, they feel, in the same place, an extremely disgustful sensation, with something of a bitterness in it they cannot express; they pay dearly besides for their excesses, by the leanness and marasmus, &c. into which they fall<sup>74</sup>.”

Aretæus had, before him, taken notice of this truth<sup>75</sup>, and Boerhaave employs the same expressions as Payva, with this addition, that that sense of pain goes off in proportion as they recover their strength<sup>76</sup>. He informs, in another place, the same thing, joining thereto a very useful practical rule, which is, that on the coming on of epileptic fits, after venereal excesses, care should be taken to strengthen the nerves of the stomach<sup>77</sup>.

Secondly, The weakness of the nervous system, which disposes to all the paralytic and spasmodic accidents, is produced, as I have before observed, by the convulsive motions which accompany the emission,

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<sup>74</sup> *In tentigine ardentissima juvenum inest quid grati in ore ventriculi; in concubitu si ruunt salacissimi, et ultra vires tendant opus, tunc in ore ventriculi manet illud ingratisimum, amarumque quod exprimere nequeunt: pœnas et luunt, et pœnitentia dolent: hinc macies, marasmus, &c.* G. R. de Payva *De affectu atrabiliario, mirachiali, etc.* p. 17.

<sup>75</sup> *De morbis chronicis*, L. ii. c. 6. “Stomachus delectationis tristitiæque princeps est.”

<sup>76</sup> *De morb. nerv.* p. 454.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.* p. 807.

and, in the second place, by the disorder of the digestions: when these are faulty, the nerves suffer by it, and suffer the more, for that the fluid with which they are imbibed, being the very ultimate elaboration of coction, and that which requires the greatest perfection of that elaboration; when, I say, that coction is faulty, it is of all the animal fluids that which is thereby the most sensibly affected, and upon which the crudity of the rest of the humors has the most influence. In short, what augments this weakness, is an evacuation of a humor that has great affinity to the animal spirits, and which, by reason of that affinity, cannot be evacuated without diminishing the strength of the nervous system, which I cannot help attributing to those spirits, notwithstanding the modest doubts of some great men, who dare not affirm any thing, in natural philosophy, the truth of which does not fall under the senses, and notwithstanding the objections of some subaltern or systematical physiologists.

Besides: independently of the damage resulting from this evacuation, relatively to the quantity of the animal spirits, it hurts, by its depriving the vessels of that gentle stimulation produced by the absorbed seed, and which contributes so much to the coction of those spirits. It is pernicious, then, both by its drawing off a part of the animal spirits, or, at least, of a very pretious humor, and by diminishing the coction, without which those spirits can, at best, be only imperfectly and insufficiently prepared.

There is between the diseases of the stomach to those of the nerves, and from those of the nerves again to those of the stomach, a vicious circle. The first beget the second, and these, once formed, contribute infinitely to augment them. If daily observation were not to prove it, the bare anatomical inspection of the stomach would carry sufficient conviction with it. The quantity of nerves distributed through it, is abundantly a demonstration how necessary they are to its functions, and how, consequently, those functions must be disordered when the nerves are not in good condition.

Thirdly, Perspiration does not proceed kindly in that case. Sanctorius has even determined the quantity diminished by it; and this evacuation, the

most considerable of all the others, cannot be suppressed without there resulting from it a croud of different symptoms.

It is easily then conceivable that there can be no disorder which may not be produced by this triple cause. I will not enter into the explanation of all the particular symptoms; such a particularization would too much expand this little work, and could not interest the physicians to whom it would be superfluous. What M. de Gorter has said upon it, is worth consulting<sup>78</sup>.

M. Clifton Wintringham has very sensibly particularised the dangers of this evacuation with respect to the gouty, and his explanation merits attention<sup>79</sup>.

The late M. Gunzius, snatched from the medical career in the flower of his age, has given a very ingenious mechanical explanation<sup>80</sup> of the inconveniences resulting from this excess to the faculty of respiration. He speaks, on this occasion, of a man who had thereby brought upon himself a continual cough; a symptom which I myself observed in a young man who died a victim of self-pollution.

He was come to Montpellier, to pursue there his studies. His excesses in that infamous practice had thrown him into a consumption, and I recollect that his cough was so strong and so continual, that it disturbed all his neighbours. He was frequently blooded, which must have been, I supposed, by way of making the quicker dispatch of his sufferings. A consultation on his case, prescribed his going home, and living there upon turtle-broth. His residence was, if I am not mistaken, in Dauphiny. The persons consulted promised him a complete cure; but he died two hours after the consultation. How curious an one! and what physicians must they have been who were consulted!

But what is the least easy to conceive, or rather, what is beyond all comprehension, is, that of its prodigious weakening of the faculties of the soul.

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<sup>78</sup> *De perspiratione*, Cap. xvii. § 8-12. and *Aph.*

<sup>79</sup> *The works of the late Clifton Wintringham*, T. ii. p. 85, &c.

<sup>80</sup> *Comment. in lib. de Diæta*, p. 228.

The solution of this problem is connected with the question undeterminable by us, of the mutual influence of the two substances upon each other, upon which we are reduced to the observation of these phenomenons, without being able to account for them. We are ignorant of the nature both of the spirit and of the body; but we know that they are so intimately united, that all the changes that the one undergoes are felt by the other: a circulation a little more or less quick, the blood a little more or less thick, some ounces more or less of aliments, the same quantity of one aliment rather than of another, a dish of coffee instead of a glass of wine, a sleep more or less long or tranquil, a stool a little more or less copious, a perspiration too profuse or too languid, will totally change our manner of seeing or judging of objects: From one hour to another, the revolutions of the machine bring with them different sensations, different thoughts, and, arbitrarily, form to us new principles of vices and of virtues; so just is the idea of the poet who first wrote Satires in France.

*Tout, suivant l'intellect, change d'ordre et de rang:*

*Ainsi, c'est la nature et l'humeur des personnes,*

*Et non la qualité, qui rend les choses bonnes,*

*C'est un mal bien étrange au cerveau des humains*<sup>81</sup>.

So exact is the description which Lucretius has furnished of this intimate union:

—*Gigni pariter cum corpore, et una*

*Crescere sentimus, pariterq; senescere mentem.*

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<sup>81</sup> Regnier, Sat. v. The sense of which is nearly as follows:

*Not by intrinsic merit things are tried,*

*But humor, character, their worth decide;*

*Man judging as he's, at the time, inclin'd,*

*So versatile, so weak's the human mind.*

*Nam velut infirmo pueri teneroque vagantur  
Corpore; sic animi sequitur sententia tenuis:  
Inde ubi robustis adolevit viribus ætas,  
Consilium quoque majus, et auctior est animi vis:  
Post ubi jam validis quassatu'st viribus ævi  
Corpus; et obtusis ceciderunt viribus artus.  
Claudicat ingenium, delirat linguaque, mensque:  
Omnia deficiunt, atque uno tempore desunt;  
Quin etiam morbis in corporis avius errat  
Sæpe animus, dementit enim, deliraque fatur.<sup>82</sup>*

Observation also teaches us, that of all the diseases there is not one that affects more quickly the soul, than those of the nervous system: of this the epileptics, who, at the end of a certain number of years, most commonly fall into a state of imbecillity, furnish a melancholy proof, which may, at the same time, give us to understand, that it is not at all surprising that those acts, which, as has been precedently remarked, are always in a small degree epileptic, should produce such a weakening of the brain, and, consequentially, of the vital faculties.

The weakening of the brain, and of the nervous system, is followed by that of the senses, which is nothing but natural.

Sanctorius, Hoffman, and some others, have endeavoured at explaining why the sight more especially suffers; but their reasons, however founded on truth, do not appear to me sufficient. The principal ones, and which are drawn from qualities particular to this organ, are, the multitude of parts that constitute the eye, and which being, all of them, susceptible of different ailments, render it infinitely more subject than the others, to disorders. In the next place the nerves serve here for various uses, and are very numerous. In short, the afflux of humors to that part, during the

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<sup>82</sup> Lucretius *De natura rerum*.

time of the act, an afflux of which the sparkling perceived in the eyes of animals, at that juncture, forms a sensible proof, produces in the vessels of the eye, at first a weakness, and afterwards obstructions, of which a loss of sight is the necessary consequence.

Nor is it actually difficult to answer the question above proposed, why it is that Eunuchs, who have no seed, are not exposed to the disorders we have precedently described?

Of this there are two very sufficient reasons.

The *first* is, that if Eunuchs do not actually draw from this liquid those advantages which are produced by its being prepared and resorbed; on the other hand, they lose nothing of that precious part of the blood which is destined to become seed. It is true, they do not experience those changes which are owing to the preparation of the seed, and which have been above set forth; but then again, they cannot be exposed to the evils which proceed from a privation of this non-prepared humor. The seed, if I could have leave to employ terms of metaphysic, is either seed imperfect, and *in fieri*, or seed *in potentia*; which is that precious part of the humors separated by the testicles, and seed actually made, or *in actu*. If the first is not separated, the animal machine is deprived of the advantages it draws from the seed prepared, and does not undergo the changes which depend on it, but then it is not depauperated: it does not gain, indeed, neither does it lose; the body remains in a sort of state of puerility. When the seed is separated and evacuated, it is then a privation, a real impoverishment.

The *second* reason is, that the Eunuchs escape that kind of spasm or convulsion, to which I have imputed a great part of the evils which are the consequence of excesses in this way.

The accidents which, on the like account, befall the women, are to be accounted for in the like manner with those of the men. The humor which they lose being less precious, less elaborate, than the seed of the man, the loss of it does not perhaps so quickly produce a weakness; but when they go to excesses, the nervous system being, in them, weaker, and naturally more disposed to spasm or convulsion, the fits are more violent.

Sudden excesses will throw them into fits somewhat a-kin to those of the young man whom I mentioned at the end of the fourth section. I have also seen a melancholic instance of this kind.

In 1746 a girl of the age of about twenty three years challenged, to the combat of venery, six Spanish dragoons, and bore their assaults for a whole night in a house at the gates of Montpellier. In the morning she was brought into the town, dying, and weltering in her own blood, which issued from the womb. It would have afforded matter of instruction, to have been satisfied whether that effusion of blood was the consequence of some hurt, or whether it depended on the dilatation of the vessels, by the augmentation of the action of the womb.

## **SECTION 8**

### ***Causes of the dangers particular to self-pollution***

It has been precedently observed, that self-pollution is more pernicious than excesses with women. Those who, on every occasion, bring a particular Providence into play, will assign for a reason, that it is the special will of God, in punishment of this crime. Persuaded as I am, that bodies have been, primordially from their creation, subjected to laws, which necessarily regulate all their motions, and of which the Deity does not probably change the œconomy, unless in a small number of reserved cases, I should not chuse to have recourse to miraculous causes, but when there is found a manifest opposition to natural ones. This is not the case here: every thing may be very well explained by the laws of the mechanism of the body, and by those of its union with the soul.

This common custom of a recourse to supernatural causes, has been anciently combated by Hippocrates, who speaking of a disease which the Scythians imputed to its being a particular punishment inflicted by God, makes this fine reflexion:

“It is true (says he) that this disease comes from God; but not, in any other sense, than as all other diseases come from him: one does not

come from him more than another; because all of them follow his laws of nature, by which every thing is governed<sup>83</sup>.”

Sanctorius, in his Observations, furnishes us with one primary cause of this particular danger:

“Moderate coition (says he) is rather of service, when it is sollicitated by nature: when it is sollicitated by the imagination, it weakens all the faculties of the soul, and especially the memory<sup>84</sup>.”

It is not difficult to explain the cause of this. Nature, in a state of health, does not inspire with desires, but when the seminal vesicles are full of a quantity of liquor, which has acquired a degree of inspissation, that renders the resorption of it the more difficult; which is a sign that the evacuation of it will not sensibly weaken the body. But such is the organisation of the parts of generation, that their action, and the desires consequential thereto, are not only put into play, by the presence of a redundancy of seminal humor, but the imagination has also a great influence over those parts. Imagination can, by laying itself out for the excitation of desires, and by busying itself with objects present, or of its own formation, put the parts into a state which produces those desires, and those desires impell to an action, so much the more pernicious for its being the less necessary.

It is, with regard to this organ of a natural necessity, as it is with regard to all the others, who are never beneficially brought into play, but when they are so by nature herself. Hunger and thirst point out the need of a recourse to meat and drink; but if more is taken of them than these sensations require, the surplusage hurts and weakens the body. The need of going to stool or urine are equally limited to certain natural conditions; but a bad habit may so far pervert or deprave the constitution of those organs, that the necessity of evacuation will cease to depend on the quantity of matters to be evacuated. Men subject themselves to false wants, and such is the case of those addicted to self-pollution. It is imagination and habit that sollicit them; it is not nature. They rob nature

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<sup>83</sup> *De Aere, Locis, et Aquis*. Foes. p. 293.

<sup>84</sup> Sect. 6. Aphor. 35.

of what is necessary to her, and of which, for that very reason, she is so chary, and loath to part with it.

In short, in consequence of this law of the animal œconomy, that humors will tend to where there is an irritation, so it will happen, that, after a certain time, there will be a continual afflux of humors to the irritated parts of generation: that case will come into existence, which Hippocrates has already observed, “When a man exercises the act of coition, the seminal veins dilate, and attract the seed<sup>85</sup>.”

It may be remarked here, that there is in self-pollution particularly a danger for children before they arrive to the age of puberty. It is happily not common to find such monsters, of either sex, as to debauch children before that epoch; but it is but too common for children of that age to debauch themselves. A great number of circumstances may concur to keep a lewd commerce with others at a distance from them, or at least to moderate it; but a solitary lewdness meets with no obstacle, and knows no bounds.

A second cause is, the tyranny which this odious practice gains over the senses, and which the author of the *English Onania* describes very justly.

“This impurity has no sooner subdued the heart, than it pursues the criminal every where: it takes hold of him, and engrosses his thoughts at all times and in all places: in the midst of the most serious occupations, even in acts of devotion, he is in prey to sensual desires and to lascivious ideas, which never leave him free<sup>86</sup>.”

Nothing can be more infeebling than this continual stretch of the mind, ingrossed by the same object. The self-pollutor, perpetually abandoned to his obscene meditations, is, in this regard, something in the case of the man of letters, who fixes all his attention on one point, and it is rare that such an excess is not pernicious. That part of the brain which is then in action, makes an effort, which may be compared to that of a muscle long

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<sup>85</sup> *De natura pueri*, Text. 22. Foes. p. 242.

<sup>86</sup> Translated from the French. There may also be seen an excellent passage on the force and dangers of voluptuous habits, in a new Treatise of M. Pujatti, Professor at Padua, long of great reputation for his admirable work *De victu febricitantium*, p. 63.

and violently on the stretch: thence results, either such a mobility, that there is no stopping the activity of the part, which is notably the case of self-pollution, or an incapacity of action. Exhausted, at length, by a continual fatigue, these wretched beings fall into all the diseases of the brain; melancholy, catalepsy, epilepsy, imbecillity, loss of sense, weakness of the nervous system, and a croud of the like evils<sup>87</sup>.

This cause of disorder does an infinite mischief to a number of young people, in that, when even their faculties are not as yet extinct, the use of them is perverted. To whatever vocation they devote themselves, there is no making a proficiency in any thing, without a degree of application, of which this pernicious habit renders them incapable. Among even those who dedicate themselves to nothing, and the class of these is but too numerous, there are some, whom that vacuity more than commonly misbecomes; an air of absence, of embarrassment, of giddiness, adds to the circumstance of their being good for nothing, that of their being disgustfully so.

I could point out some, whom this incapacity of fixing themselves to any thing, combined with the diminution of their faculties, disables from ever being of any use or value in society. Melancholic condition! which sinks the man beneath the brute, and, very justly renders an object rather of contempt than of pity to his fellow-creatures!

From these two causes there necessarily results a third; and that is the frequency itself of the act. As soon as the habit has gained a little strength, both body and soul concur in sollicitation to this crime. The soul, immersed in obscene ideas, is almost constantly exciting to lascivious acts, and if ever she is, for some moments, interrupted by other thoughts, the acrid humors, which irritate the organs of generation, soon recall her attention, and drag her back again to her mire.

How fit would these truths, collected from observation, be to check youth, if they could but foresee that in this case one false step would bring on another; that they will become slaves to the temptation; that in proportion as the motives of their seduction increase, that reason of

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<sup>87</sup> See Gaubii *Institutiones pathologicæ*, §. 529.

theirs, which ought to restrain them, will grow weaker and weaker; and that they will, in a little time, find themselves cast away in a sea of misery, without, perhaps, the aid of any the least plank, to bring them to the shore again.

If sometimes their beginning infirmities give them strong and salutary advice, if the danger terrifies them for some moments, their rage of debauchery replunges them again, so that it may well be said of them,

*Virtutem videant intabescantque relicta.*

Pers.

In the mean while the danger is actual, the destruction so imminent, that short indeed is the time of opportunity for amendment.

—*cinis et manes et fabula fies:*

*Vive memor lethi: fugit hora: hoc quod loquor inde est.*

Pers.

While I studied in Geneva, a time, of which the remembrance will be dear to me for the rest of my life, one of my condisciples was come to that state of horror, that he was not master enough of himself to abstain from these abominations, even during the time of the lessons. He did not wait long for his punishment: and perished miserably of a consumption, in about two years time. A similar case to this may be found in the *Onania*<sup>88</sup>

The ingenious author, who, from the Latin edition of this work, furnished the extract in the excellent Latin Journal of Literature, which, about a twelvemonth, made its first appearance at Berne, tells you, with regard to this observation, that a whole college had recourse to this filthy practice, by way of an amusement, to avoid falling asleep, at the lessons of scholastic metaphysics, which a very old professor used to teach them, as he nodded between sleeping and waking<sup>89</sup>. But this little story seems to me less fit to prove what I have been physically advancing, than the actual horrid dissoluteness into which the contagion of example may

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<sup>88</sup> P. 126.

<sup>89</sup> *Excerptum totius Italicæ et Helveticæ Literaturæ, pro anno 1759. T. i. p. 93.*

plunge a number of young people. The same author has recently published a work, which I have not as yet had the advantage of perusing, but to which an excellent judge assigns a rank among the best productions of this age. There he mentions, that, in a certain town, there was some years ago discovered a whole society of wicked boys, from fourteen to fifteen years old, who met to practise this vice, and that a whole school was to this moment infected with it.<sup>90</sup>

The health of a young Prince was daily declining, without any one's being able to discover the cause of it. At length his surgeon suspected it, watched him, and surprized him in the fact. He confessed, that one of his *valets de chambre* had taught him the practice, and that he had been often guilty of it. The habit was so strong upon him, that the most pressing considerations, and the most strenuously enforced, could not break him of it. The evil was constantly gaining ground; his strength was daily wasting; and there was no such thing as saving him, but by keeping guard over him, so as not to let him be a moment out of sight, for above eight months.

A patient, in one of his letters, gave me a lively description of the difficulties of his victory.

“There are great efforts (these are his terms) required to conquer a habit, that is every instant urging its recalls to us. I own to you, with blushes, that the bare sight of a female, no matter what she is, is enough to excite my desires. I do not even need that provocative; my polluted imagination is but too ready to present constantly to me objects of concupiscence. It is true that this passion never rekindles in me without my remembering, at the same time, your good advice: I struggle with myself; but even that struggle fatigues and exhausts me. If you could but find and suggest to me the means of diverting my thoughts from such objects, I believe my cure would be soon effected.”

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<sup>90</sup> *On Experience*. In German, by M. Zimmerman, vol. ii. p. 400. I take this fragment from those which his friendship has engaged him to translate in my favor. Almost all the other will serve to adorn a work of which I am preparing the publication, which will soon follow this.

It has been seen, in my extract from the English *Onania*, that a frequent repetition had produced in a woman the *furor uterinus*. The habit of being ingrossed by one idea renders one incapable of having any others; it usurps the sole dominion of the mind, and reigns despotically. The organs constantly irritated contract a morbid disposition, which becomes an ever present goad, independent of all external cause. There are disorders of the urinary passages which give a constant tendency to make water; the reiterated irritation of the organs of generation produces a disorder, in its way, analogous to that. It is therefore not surprizing if the concurrence of these two causes, moral and natural, combined, should throw one into that horrid disorder: and how powerful ought this idea to be, for inspiring a salutary terror to all in any danger of being in this case, and who have as yet any traces of reason or shame left!

A fourth cause to self-pollutors of their waste of strength, is, that independently of their frequency of emissions of seed, that frequency of their erections, though imperfect ones, of which they complain, considerably exhausts them. Every part, that is in a state of tension, produces an expence of the vital forces, and they have none to spare: the animal spirits crowd thither in the greater abundance, and dissipate themselves. This is a great cause of weakness: they are proportionably deficient in the other functions, which are, in course, thereby imperfectly executed; and the concurrence of these two causes has the most dangerous consequences.

Another mischief, to which this fourth cause subjects self-pollutors, is a sort of paralytical affection of the organs of generation, whence follow impotency, incapacity of erection, and the simple gonorrhœa; for, the relaxed parts suffer the true seminal liquid to come from them as fast as it arrives, and the humor separated by the prostates to keep continually oozing, and, in short, all the internal membrane of the urethra acquires a catarrhus disposition to furnish a gleet, much of the same nature as the *fluor albus* in women: a catarrhus disposition, which, let me here somewhat digressively remark, is less rare and more general to the parts of the human body than is commonly imagined; not being confined to the membrane that invests the nostrils, the throat, the lungs, but which often attacks all the cavities of the intestines, where the disease is not

discerned, because not suspected, and must, for want of that knowledge, be improperly prescribed for: nor would it be difficult to collect, from various medical observations, examples of this disorder having been mistaken for some other, and attempted to be cured accordingly.

An able surgeon, once, mentioned to me a man, who, from a singularity of taste, used to indulge his debauchery with the lowest street-walkers, and being accustomed to satisfy his desires with them, in a standing posture, against some wall or bulk, fell into a wasting, accompanied with the most cruel pains of his loins, and with an atrophy or shrivelling of his thighs and legs, combined with a palsy in those parts, which seemed to be a consequence of the attitude in which he used to indulge his dirty amours. After having kept his bed about a month, he died in a condition equally fit to inspire compassion and terror.

But does not this observation furnish also a fifth cause of the dangers particular to self-pollution?

When one loses one's strength by two means at once, the weakness must be considerably augmented. A person who is standing upright, or sitting, has need for the supporting himself in those postures, and especially in the first, of putting into action a great number of the muscular parts; and this action dissipates the animal spirits. Weak persons, who cannot keep, for an instant, in a standing posture, without feeling a weakness, and the sick, that cannot sit up without the like uneasiness, very evidently prove this. But in lying down, or in the being extended at full length, there is not required the same strain on the vital strength. Thence it is clear enough, that the same act, performed in the one or in the other attitude, will produce a much greater weakening in the first than in the last case.

Sanctorius has not failed to point out the danger of this attitude: "*Usus coitus stando, lædit, nam musculos et eorum utilem perspirationem diminuit.*"

Other observations, well examined, afford a sixth cause, which may, at the first superficial view, appear of the slightest, but which no intelligent naturalist will readily pronounce null.

All living bodies perspire. Every instant there exhales through, perhaps, one half of the pores of our skin, a humor of extreme tenuity, and which is a great deal more considerable than all our other evacuations: at the same time, another kind of pores admit a part of the fluids which surround us, and convey them into the vessels. These are *the invisible torrents* (to use M. Senac's happy expression) that have their egress and regress into our body<sup>91</sup>. It stands demonstrated, that, in some cases, this insorption is enormous. The strong and healthy perspire the most: the weak, who have hardly any atmosphere of their own, inhale more. Now the miasms, or perspired matter of healthy persons, contains something nutritious and corroborative, which inhaled by another, contributes to give him vigor. These are observations, which explain why the *young virgin*, selected to cherish David, by lying in his bosom, gave him strength; why the same experiment has succeeded with other old men, to whom it had been prescribed; why that process weakens the young person, who loses, without receiving anything; or rather receives, in return, faint, sickly, corrupt, putrid exhalations, which cannot but be noxious.

Now, in the time of coition, people perspire more than at any other, the force of the circulation being augmented. This perspiration is also, probably, more active, more spirituous, than at any other time: it is a real loss that is, on that occasion, sustained, and which takes place, in whatever manner the emission of the seed is made, as it depends on the agitation that accompanies it. In coition it is reciprocal, and then, the one inhales what the other perspires. This exchange stands unquestionably proved by sure observations. I saw myself, not long ago, one, who having no gonorrhœa, no cutaneous symptom of the *lues*, had given the venereal distemper to a woman, who, at that instant was giving him the itch in exchange. In coition, then, there is a sort of mutual compensation of loss

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<sup>91</sup> The demonstration of this truth may be seen in the part I am quoting of M. Senac's treatise *On the Heart*, L. iii. §. 7., a work that seemed to have left nothing more to be wished for upon that subject, if its illustrious author had not, in his promise of a second edition, given us to understand, that he could yet render it more perfect. A great man may surpass himself, and see a point of perfection, which others do not so much as imagine.

on both sides. But in the case of self-pollution, the person guilty of it loses, and in lieu of his loss, receives nothing.

An observation of the effect of the passions discovers a seventh cause of evil, in the difference between those who indulge themselves with women, and the self-pollutors; a difference which is intirely to the disadvantage of these last.

That joy which is allied to the soul, and which it is so very right essentially to distinguish from that merely corporal pleasure, in which the man shares but with the brute, and from which it is totally different; that joy, I say, aids the digestions, animates circulation, favors all the functions, restores the vital forces, cherishes, and supports them. Where it is found combined or united with the pleasures of love, it contributes to repair that strength which those pleasures may have diminished or exhausted. This stands proved by observation. Sanctorius has remarked it.

“A man (says he) after an excessive coition with a woman he loves, and has passionately desired, does not feel that fatigue of weakness which one would naturally suppose would be the consequence of such an excess; because the joy of the soul augments the power of the heart, favors the functions, and repairs the losses.”

It is upon this principle that Venette, in whose work there may be seen a good chapter on the dangers of pushing the pleasures of love to an excess, establishes it as a maxim, that an union with a beautiful woman is less apt to exhaust the strength, than with a homely one.

“Beauty (says he) has charms which dilate the heart, and multiply the vital spirits, that proceed from it. We may very well believe, with St. Chrysostom, that to excite one’s self repugnantly to the laws of nature, is, in that respect, a much greater crime than the other.”

And, in fact, can there be a doubt of Nature’s not having annexed more joy to the pleasures procured by the means which are in her appointed course, than by any which are out of it?

An eighth and last cause which augments the dangers of self-pollution, is the regrets, the horrors, which cannot fail of being the consequence of it, when once one's eyes come to be opened on the crime and its dangers.

*Miseri quorum gaudia crimen habent!*

*Wretched are those joys which are obnoxious to remorse!*

And, surely, if there are any human beings in this case, the self-pollutors must be among them.

When the veil is drawn, the representation of their conduct appears to them in all its most hideous colors and aspects. They find themselves guilty of a crime, of which divine justice would not postpone the punishment, but punished it immediately with death; a crime reputed a very great one even by the heathens themselves.

*Hoc nihil esse putas! scelus est; mihi crede, sed ingens*

*Quantum, vix, animo concipis ipse tuo.*

Mart.

The shame that pursues them infinitely augments their misery. Such, it is true, is the dissoluteness in some places, that debauches with women are hardly looked upon there, but as matter of custom; the guilty of them make no mystery of it, and have no notion of their being the more contemptible for it: But where is the self-pollutor that dares avow his infamy? Ought not this necessity of wrapping himself up in the shades of secrecy, appear, in his own eyes, a proof of the criminality of this act? What numbers have not perished for their never having dared to reveal the cause of their evils?

It appears a natural sentiment in several letters of the *Onania*, "*I would rather die than appear before you, after such a confession.*"

And indeed one cannot help being infinitely more ready to excuse a man, who being seduced by that inclination which Nature has ingraved on all hearts, and of which she makes use for the preservation of the species, is in no wrong but that of not respecting the boundaries set by the laws, and by health. He is one carried away by his passions, and who is wanting to

himself. We are much more willing to absolve such an one, than him who in his sin violates all the laws of Nature, perverting all her sentiments, and disappoints all her ends. Sensible of how great a horror he must be in to society, if his crime was known, that idea alone must incessantly torment him.

“It seems to me (says one of these criminals, a fragment of whose letter I have above quoted) as if every one could read in my face, the infamous cause of my ailments, and this idea renders company insupportable to me.”

They fall into melancholy and despair; of which examples may have been seen in the fourth Section of this work, and they labor under all the evils that are brought on by a continuity of dejection or sadness, without having, and this is dreadful indeed for a criminal, any pretext of justification, any motive of comfort. And what are the effects of such a melancholy? A relaxation of the fibres, a lentor of the circulation, imperfection of the digestions, a deficient nutrition, obstructions occasioned by those shrinkings or contractions which most particularly seem the effect of sadness or melancholy: [“the strainers of the liver, says Senac, close themselves, and the bilious overflow spreads over the whole body:”] spasms, convulsions, palsies, pains, increase of anguish *ad infinitum*; with all the train of evils consequential to these.

It would be superfluous to enlarge more here on the dangers particular to self-pollution: they are but too real, and too self-evident: I proceed to the last part of this work, the methods of cure.

## ARTICLE 3 Curative Indication

### SECTION 9 *Means of Cure proposed by other Physicians*

There are some diseases against which the success of remedies is next to sure. Those which are the consequences of venereal exhaustion, and, *a fortiori*, of self-pollution, do not enter into this class; and the prognostic which is to be made of them, when they shall have arrived at a certain degree, has nothing in it but what is desperately terrible.

Hippocrates has, in such case, denounced Death. "*It is a deplorable disorder, says Boerhaave; I have often seen it, but could never cure it.*"<sup>92</sup>

M. Van Swieten had, for three years, a patient whom he mentions for it, under his hands, without success. I have seen some perish miserably of this disorder. There were even others of those patients, to whom I could not so much as give relief. Yet these examples should not intirely discourage: there are not wanting instances of a happier issue. Some may be found in the collection of the *Onania*, and in the Observations of Physicians; my own practice has furnished me some. In the same place where Hippocrates gives a description of this disease, he points out means of cure.

"When, (says he,) the patient is in this condition, let there be fomentations made for him, over his whole body; then give him a medicine that may provoke a puke; after that, another to purge his head, and then a cathartic by stool. After the purgatives, give whey or asses milk; after that, cows milk for forty days. While he drinks milk, he must abstain from flesh meats, and in the evening he may have some boiled wheat. After his milk diet is over, he should be nourished with the most tender meats, beginning with a small quantity, and by this means he will recover afresh. For a whole twelvemonth he must avoid all kind of debauchery, all venereal indulgence, and all immoderate exercise; he

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<sup>92</sup> *Lessons on his Institutes*, Sect. 776.

must confine himself to walks, in which he will do well to avoid the cold, or the sun.”

It is remarkable here, that Hippocrates begins the method of cure by an emetic, and by purging. Now there is a danger of such an authority's obtaining the force of a law, and yet the observation of this law would, in a number of cases, be pernicious. But it is easy to get rid of this perplexity, by observing, that he only ordered purgatives in a view to divert the fluxion which he supposed threw itself from the head on the spine of the back; and that, in another place, he puts those who are sick, after venereal excesses, in the catalogue of those to whom no purgatives should be given, “*because not only they can do no good, but, on the contrary, they may do a great deal of harm*<sup>93</sup>.” So that it is this last rule which must be considered as the general one: the first constitutes an exception, and an exception which appears founded on a theory, of which the error is now discovered, and which especially therefore ought to have no force.

In Hoffman's dissertation, which I have already often quoted, there are to be found two observations, that should recommend great circumspection as to the use of emetics. They are as follow:

A man of fifty years of age, having, for a long time, indulged himself in excesses with women, fell into a state of languor, emaciation, and consumptiveness. His sight grew dim, so that at length objects appeared to him as if he saw them through a cloud. It was at this epoch that he took an emetic by way of preventing a fever, which he apprehended, after a long use of eating ham. This medicine made his head swell, and totally deprived him of his eye-sight.

A common prostitute, who, every time that she had commerce with a man, felt a dimness in her eyes come upon her, having taken an emetic, lost her eye-sight intirely<sup>94</sup>.

M. Boerhaave seems to have rather meant to establish the difficulties of the cure, than to point out the means of obtaining it.

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<sup>93</sup> *De ratione victus in morbis acutis*. Foes. p. 405, 406.

<sup>94</sup> *De morb. a nimia venere*, §. 24, & 26.

“There are (says he) little hopes of cure; the milk passes too easily; the exercise of riding does no good to this kind of patients; they complain that these remedies weaken them; and, in fact, exercise encreases the waste of their seed, in the course of their nocturnal pollutions by dreams, and at the same time diminishes their strength. When the day re-appears, they quit their beds, all bathed in their own sweat, and but the weaker for even their sleep; they cannot bear aromatics, of which the effects are also dangerous. The only resource, in these cases, is that of aliments, a moderate exercise of the body, bathing the feet, and frictions used with precaution<sup>95</sup>.”

Among the consultations of this great man, which M. de Haller has added to the edition which he has procured to us of them, there is one for a man, who had rendered himself totally impotent for the joys of love.

“A man (as the case is stated) has so much weakened the organs of generation, that the seed comes away of itself, every time that he has any beginning of erection, for that is never a complete one<sup>96</sup>, and the seed never spurts forth with any force, but dribbles away, drop by drop, which renders him impotent; his memory, stomach, loins, legs, are totally weakened.”

M. Boerhaave answered: “These disorders are always extremely hard to cure: they hardly ever declare themselves, but when the body has lost so much of its vital forces, that the remedies remain without efficacy. However, it may not be amiss to try what the following ones will produce.

“*First*, A dry and temperate regimen, composed of fowls, of beef, of mutton, of kid, all rather roasted than boiled, a small quantity of ale, but excellent in its kind, of a very little wine, but then that wine must be of a very generous restorative sort.

“*Secondly*, A great deal of exercise, augmented, by due degrees; it should only border upon weariness, and always be taken fasting.

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<sup>95</sup> *Instit. de med.* T. vii. p. 215.

<sup>96</sup> This symptom is very frequent among persons who have exhausted themselves by venery, and contributes to prolong or maintain that exhaustion. The smallest temptation produces a beginning of erection, which is followed by an efflux of the seed.

“*Thirdly*, Frictions, with a flannel perfumed with the smoke of incense, to be used to the loins, the abdominal region, the *pubis*, the groin, the scrotum, and regularly repeated night and morning.

“*Fourthly*, He should take, every two hours, half a drachm of the following kind of electuary:

“*R. Terr. Japon. dr. iv. Opoponac. dr. v. Cort. Peruv. dr. vi. Conserv. rosar. rub. unc. i. Olib. dr. ii. Succ. acac. unc. B. Sir. Kerm. q. s. f. l. a. cond.*

“Immediately after which he should drink half an ounce of the following medicinal wine:

“*R. Rad. cariophil. mont. Pœn. mar. ana unc. i. Cort. rad. capp. tamarisc. ana unc. iβ. Lign. agalloch. ver. unc. i. Vin. Gall. alb. lib. vi. f. l. a. vin. med.*

“I hope (added Boerhaave) that the patient will be cured, after having employed this regimen for two months.”

But he would not make use of it, and died, in a few weeks, of a malignant flux. What would have been the effect of this remedy? That can be only conjectured.

M. Zimmermann wrote to me, that he had made a patient try it for two months, but without any success.

M. Hoffman sets forth the precautions which he conceived ought to be taken, and the methods to be employed.

“We must (says he) avoid all the remedies which do not agree with weak habits of body, or that may weaken still more those who are already enervated: such are all astringents, all over-refrigerants, all saturnines, nitrous, acid, and especially narcotic medicines: all these are pernicious in cases of this kind, and unfortunately there is, however, too much use made of them.

“The end to be proposed is to re-establish the vital forces, and to restore to the fibres the tension they have lost. Heating remedies, volatiles, aromatics, those that have an agreeable but strong odor, are not proper here: nothing but the mildest aliments should be allowed, such as are the fittest to repair that nutritious gelatinous substance, which immoderate

evacuations will have destroyed: such are strong broths of beef, of veal, of capon, with a little of wine, of lemon-juice, of salt, of nutmeg, and cloves. To the use of this diet may beneficially be joined, those remedies which favor perspiration, and which reanimate the languishing tone of the fibres.”

In another consultation for a self-pollutor, he ordered the taking, every morning, a certain measure of asses milk mixed with a third of the quantity of *Selter-water*.

It would be useless here to quote the precepts, or observations of other authors. I shall content myself with relating here a very instructive case, such as it stands in a thesis of M. Wespremi, which thesis includes fourteen observations, all interesting ones<sup>97</sup>.

“W. Conybeare, about thirty-six years old, had had, for six years past, his eyes so dimmed, without any apparent blemish in them, that he saw all objects as it were through a thick cloud. He had been successively in the three most celebrated hospitals in London, St. Thomas’s, St. Bartholomew’s, and St. George’s; at length, about two years ago, he came to ours. In all the others, after other remedies, it had been tried whether a mercurial salivation might not cure this kind of *gutta serena*. The physicians were tired out, and the patient quite discouraged. On my interrogating him very particularly, and very carefully, upon his illness, he told me, that, from time to time, he felt a pain all along the spine of his back, especially when he stooped to take up any thing; that his legs were so weak, that he could scarce stand a minute upright, without leaning, which if he did not, his legs would tremble, and he had then a vertigo and dizziness; that his memory was so weakened, that he sometimes appeared stupid; and I could myself observe, that he was greatly

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<sup>97</sup> The one selected here is the seventh. This thesis, so worthy of perusal, is to be found, together with a great number of other small excellent works, which are to be come at no where else but in that fine collection of practical *theses*, which M. Haller (who desires and promotes the advancement of medical knowledge, with as much zeal as discernment) has taken the pains to publish, under this title: *Disputationes ad morborum historiam & curationem facientes*. Lausanne, 1758. The name of the author is a sufficient attestation of the merit of the work, which bids fair to become one of the foundations of a library of practical study. The piece, which I am here quoting, is, Stephani Wezpremi *Observationes Medicæ*, Trajecti, 1756. See T. vi. p. 804.

emaciated. All this made me suspect, that his *gutta serena* might be no other than the symptom of a more dreadful disorder, and that the patient was attacked with a real *tabes dorsalis*.

“I pathetically urged him to own to me, whether he had not polluted himself with the abominable crime of Onan, which intirely destroys the balsamic parts of the nervous fluid. After much hesitation, and blushing, he confessed it. I ordered him to take, over night, two mercurial pills, containing six grains each, of *mercurius dulcis*, and the next day an ounce of purgative salts, and to repeat that four times in the space of fifteen days. On the expiration of that term, I made him, according to the prescription of Hippocrates, live forty days intirely upon a milk-diet, during which time he used to have himself, two or three times a week, rubbed, as he went to bed. At the end of this method of treatment, he returned from the country, in a much better condition than he had gone thither. I advised him, afterwards the cold-bath for three weeks. For two months together he took, twice a day, the mineral electuary and volatile julep, to which he joined frictions, and the bathing his feet. These remedies so far restored his health, that he wanted to resume the exercise of his trade, which was that of a baker; but I advised him to betake himself to some other business, being afraid that his inhaling the flower, that rises in the kneading, might form in his as yet weak stomach and breast, a paste, of which the effects might be dangerous.”

M. Stehelin gave some relief to the youth mentioned towards the end of the second Section, by strengthening baths, by *Tinct. Mart. Ludovic.* and by aperitive broths.

The principal remedies mentioned in the *Onania* consist of nostrums, which the author reserved to himself. It may be observed on it, in general, and the observation is important, that he employed no *evacuants*, and that only corroboratives constituted the basis of them, under the names of *The strengthening tincture*, and *The prolific powder*. They act, without that action's producing any sensible effect, but, as the author says, they enrich, strengthen, and nourish the parts of generation in both sexes. According then to him, they give them new vigor; they favor the generation of seed, and powerfully restore oppressed nature: in a word, like all

nostrums, they do every thing that is required of them. There is a third secret remedy mentioned, under the name of *The restorative draught*, which operates very efficaciously, and, in fact, if any faith may be given to the testimonies adduced in favor of these remedies, they have doubtless great virtue. Besides these three nostrums, he gives some formularies: One is a draught, composed of amber, aromatics, and of some other remedies of that class: A second is a liniment, composed of essential oils, of balsams, of acrid tinctures. Both, these compositions appear to me too stimulative, and as they have not any experience in their favor, I omit the particularising them. He specifies two others, which seem more proper.

Decoction.

R. *Flor. siccat. lamii*<sup>98</sup> *mpl. vi. Rad. cyper. et galangal. ana unc. ii. Rad. bist. unc. i. Rad. osmund. reg. unc. ii. Flor. ros. rub. mpl. iv. Icthiocoll unc. iii. Scissa tus mixt. cum aquæ quart. viii. ad quartæ partis evaporat. coquantur.*

Take a quart of this every day.

Injection.

R. *Sacchari Saturn. Vitriol, alb. Alum. rup. ana drachm. i. Aq. chalyb. fabr. ℞ i β. per dies decem igne arenæ digerantur. Add. Spir. vin. camphorat. cochl. iii.*

Before I go on to the next Section, I think myself bound to mention, that very sensible views, applicable to the disease of which I am treating, may be found in a book lately published, intitled, *Precis de Medecine pratique*, a work of M. Lieutaud, physician to the young royal family of France, who, after having got to himself a distinguished name among the Anatomists and Physiologists, has moreover secured to himself one of the first ranks among the practitioners, by his excellent treatise on intermittent and remittent fevers.

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<sup>98</sup> As he does not particularise the species, it can be no other than the *lamium album*, white archangel, or the *lamium maculatum*.

The chapters of his last work relative to the *tabes dorsalis*, are those which have for their title *calor morbosus*, morbid heat, at disease, be it here parenthetically remarked, very frequent, of which no one had before treated, and which has been often subjected to improper methods of cure, as I have elsewhere lamented, and of which M. Lieutaud has been the first to unfold the symptoms, the nature, and curative indication. *Vires exhaustæ*, and *anæmia, or deficiency of blood*, a very interesting chapter, which is intirely and originally that author's.

M. Lewis, whose work I could not procure for myself before the impression of the first edition of mine, is one who has the most of any enlarged upon the method of cure. I had the pleasure of finding that we agreed perfectly in our ideas, and that we employed the same remedies, especially the bark, and the cold bath; a conformity which appears to me a proof in favor of the practice we have, in this case, both followed. I shall only quote here the two aphorisms that comprehend the substance of his doctrine: I shall avail myself of some passages in the explanation which he gives to them, to confirm, in the following Section, my own practice.

“The cure of this disease (says that able physician) depends as much on knowing what to avoid as what to do. Without a nice regularity of the non-naturals, therefore, medicine will have little or no effect. Thus the salubrity of the air is of great importance; the diet should be analeptic and cooling; sleep little, and in due season; moderate exercise must be used, especially riding on horseback. The secretions of the body are to be regulated if out of order, and the patient should be entertained with chearful company and mirthful diversions. All the remedies that are necessary, are derived from the two classes of balsamics and astringents<sup>99</sup>.”

He recommends strongly, in the place of tea, which, he observes, is always prejudicial to the nerves, the infusion of mint, or balm, in every dish of which is to be put a tea-spoonful of the balsamic mixture of cream and yolks of eggs beat together, with two or three drops of oil of cinnamon, which he says give a very agreeable flavor, and is highly

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<sup>99</sup> *A practical essay on the Tabes dorsalis, etc.* the fourth edition, p. 20 and 25.

grateful to the stomach<sup>100</sup>. This indeed I have had occasion to remark myself, of its being both balsamic and strengthening; but I shall place here a remark that may have its use: It is, that M. Lewis specifies among the corroboratives, medicines from lead, *Tinct. faturnia*<sup>101</sup>; and I think it my duty to give this caution, without offence to his authority and to that of other respectable physicians, that the internal use of all preparations of lead is a real poison, according to the almost unanimous confession of all the faculty. I have seen the most tragical effects from it; and the shameless rashness of quacks, furnishes but too many occasions of observing such. But if the use of it is to be preserved, like that of some other poisons, let the administration of it at least be reserved for those who are able to discern its dangers and its virtues, and not indicated without due precaution in works designed for the public.

I shall conclude this Section with the method employed by M. Storck in the cure of these disorders: it is a very simple and a very efficacious one. And by comparing all these methods, it will be seen, that they are all founded on the same principles, all tend to the same end, and all employ means nearly similar, a conformity which forms a recommendation of the method, and inspires confidence.

“I begin (says M. Storck) by trying to restore the patient with nourishing broths. Rice, oatmeal, barley boiled with broth, or milk, or milk itself, are all very serviceable; but it must be observed, to let him eat but little at a time, and often. Should the stomach be so weakened, which is sometimes the case when the disorder is far advanced, that it cannot bear even these light aliments without great anguish, the patient should be put to the female breast of milk, a recourse which has retrieved many out of the most desperate condition. To restore strength and activity to the relaxed fibres, I would recommend the use of wine heated with a hot iron, bark, and cinnamon. As soon as the patient has strength enough to walk, it will be of infinite service to him, his going into the purest air of the country, or mountains<sup>102</sup>.”

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<sup>100</sup> Sect. 10. p. 27. also Robins *on Consumptions*, p. 98.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 26 and 28.

<sup>102</sup> *Medic. annuus*, T. ii. p. 216.

## SECTION 10

### *The Author's Practice*

There are some diseases of which it is difficult to discover exactly the cause, and consequently it must be so to determine the indication, and to regulate the method of cure; and yet such diseases are easily cured when those points are once ascertained. It is not so of the *Tabes dorsalis*. That disease is known, its cause is known: (it is, as M. Lewis observes, a particular sort of consumption, of which the proximate cause is a general debility of the nerves:) the indication is easily formed, and there can be no great differing in opinions about the essential method of cure: and yet even the best methods often fail; this is a reason the more for fixing the particulars with exactness.

A general relaxation of the fibres, a weakness of the nervous system, a depravation of the fluids, are the causes of this evil. It depends on the weakening of all the parts; the great requisite is to restore strength to them; this is the sole indication, which has again its respective subdivisions, derived from the different parts that are weakened; but as the same remedies are of service in them all, it is needless to particularise those subdivisions here, which has been already done in the course of this work.

Those who are totally ignorant of physic, and who nevertheless talk more of it than those who understand it, will probably think it very easy to accomplish this indication; and that with good aliments, and the cordials with which pharmacy abounds, it is a matter of great facility to restore strength; while, on the contrary, sad experiences have taught our greatest physicians that nothing could be more difficult.

*“It is easy (says M. Gorter) to diminish the vital forces, but we have hardly any thing capable to repair them<sup>103</sup>.”* This may easily be conceived, on reflecting, that aliments and remedies are nothing but the instruments of which Nature makes use to support itself, to repair her losses, and to remedy the disorders which happen to the body. And what is Nature? *The aggregate of the forces of the body harmoniously distributed.* It is the vital

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<sup>103</sup> *De perspir. insensib.* p. 504.

force respectively distributed into the different parts. When those forces are exhausted, Nature it is that consequently fails; she is the working architect that no longer executes her functions; furnish her with materials, as long as you please, she is in no condition to employ them. You may bury an architect, with all his building, under stone, wood, and mortar, without an inch of a wall being thereby repaired. Just so it is with diseases dependent on the destruction of the vital forces: the aliments repair nothing, the remedies operate nothing. I have seen stomachs so weakened, that aliments received from it no more preparation than in a vessel of wood: sometimes they take place in it according to the laws of their specific gravities, and when, at length, a new ingestion has, by its weight, irritated the stomach, they have been known, on a slight effort, to come away, successively, clearly separate one from another. At other times, through a long stay in the stomach, they corrupt in it, and are vomited up just as if they had been suffered to putrify in a vessel of silver or porcelain. What good can be hoped from aliments of this sort? The exhaustion of strength is not, indeed, so considerable in all: there are some in whom the vital forces are only weakened without being totally destroyed; for these there remains some resource in aliments, and even in remedies. What remains unperished of Nature draws some benefit from aliments: as to the remedies, they are to be sought for among those which have been observed to be fittest for re-animating that principle of the vital action which is verging to extinction: these are the adventitious aids, with which the architect is to be enabled to work at his task at the least expence possible of the strength that is left him: sometimes, too, they serve, as a spur to a weak horse, that may oblige him to make an effort to get out of a plunge in a slough; but what expertness, what prudence are not required, to be able at one cast of the eye, to judge comparatively the depth of the slough, and the strength of the animal? If the attempt is beyond his strength, that spur will, it is true, oblige him to make an effort; but if that effort is not sufficient to disengage him, and bring him into the good road again, it will only serve to totally exhaust him.

The weakness which is produced by self-pollution, is attended with such a difficulty in the choice of restorative remedies, as does not occur in other cases; which is, that those articles must, with the greatest care, be

avoided, that, bringing with them any irritation, might awaken the sensual passion. In the animal mechanism, that mechanism so different from the inanimate, and so little subjected to the same rules, there is a law, that, when the motions augment, the augmentation is the most considerable in the parts the most susceptible. In self-polluters those parts are the generative ones. It is in these parts that the effect of the irritating remedies will the most sensibly manifest itself; and the dangerous consequences of this effect cannot be too circumstantially guarded against in the choice of the means of cure. What then are they to be? This is what I shall examine, after having particularised the regimen. In this particularisation, I shall follow the common division of the six non-naturals, as they are termed, Air, Aliments, Rest, Motion, the natural Evacuations, and the Passions.

### **AIR**

Air has the influence over us, that water has over fish, and even a much more considerable one. Those who know how great a power the air has, and who also know that there have been Epicures who could, by the taste, discover not only the river, but even the part of the river out of which the fish had been taken;

*lupus hic Tiberinus an alto*

*Captus hiet, pontesne inter jactatus an amnis*

*Ostia sub Tusci?*

Hor.

such, I say, will easily be sensible of the importance it is of to the sick, their breathing one air preferable to another. Such as may have once entered into a room inhabited without being aired; such as may have kept walking on the side of a marsh in the heats; or have resided in low places, surrounded, on all sides, with eminences; such as have made a transition from a populous town to the country; who have breathed the air at sunrise or at mid-day, before or after a shower of rain; all these, I say, will conceive how great an influence the air has over health.

*Temperie cœli corpusque, animusque juvatur.*

Ovid.

The sick or weakly have, more than others, need of a good air; it is a remedy that acts, and perhaps the only one that does so, without the concurrence of our nature's vital forces, to which it gives no trouble, and is no draught upon them: and for that very reason, it is of the greatest importance not to neglect it. That air which is the properest for a general atony or relaxation, is a dry, temperate air: too moist, or too hot an air are pernicious. I know one labouring under a disorder of this kind, whom great heats throw into a total faintness or exhaustion of strength, and whose state of health varies in summer, according to the vicissitudes of days less hot or less cold. A cold air is much less to be dreaded; and it is necessarily, and according to Nature, that it should be so. Heat relaxes still more the fibres which are already but too relaxed, and dissolves still more the humors already too much dissolved: Cold, on the contrary, is a remedy against these two evils. When the Caribes are attacked with the palsy, after, and in consequence of those dreadful convulsions of the cholic, to which they are subject, when they cannot be sent to the warm-baths in the north of Jamaica, the other expedient is to send them to some place of a colder air than that of their country; and this bare change of air has always manifestly a favorable effect.

Another essential quality of the air, is, that it should not be impregnated with noxious particles: that it should not have lost, by its stay or stagnation in inhabited places, that kind of reviving quality which constitutes all its efficacy, and which might be called its vital spirit as necessary to plants as to animals; and such is the air one breathes in a country, open, airy, interspersed with the verdure of herbs, bushes, and trees.

“Let the sick, says Aretæus<sup>104</sup>, live near meadows, fountains, rivulets; the freshness they exhale, and the gaiety which those objects inspire, fortify the mind, restore strength to the body, and give new life.”

The air of the town, continually sucked in and let out again, continually crouded with foul vapors or infected exhalations, combines at once the

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<sup>104</sup> *De curat. acutorum*, L. ii. c. iii. p. 103.

two inconveniences of possessing less of that vital spirit, and of being big with noxious particles.

On the other hand, the air of the country is enriched with the two opposite qualities. It is a pure virgin air, an air impregnated with all that is the most volatile, the most agreeable, the most cordial, in the effluvia of the plants, and in the vapor of the earth, which is itself very salubrious.

But it would be of no use to fix on a place with a good air to live in, if one does not chuse to breathe it. The air of rooms, or chambers, if it is not continually renewed, is nearly the same in all. It can hardly be called a change of air, from a close room in town to a close room in the country. There is no enjoying the benefits of a healthy atmosphere but in the open fields. If infirmities, or weakness, hinder the procurement of that benefit, by the going or the being carried thither, at least the air of the room, or chamber, should be renewed several times in a day; not simply by opening a door or a window, which renews it only a little, but in letting into the chamber a torrent of fresh air, by opening, all at once, two or three different and opposite inlets. There is no disorder that does not require this precaution; but it is requisite not to expose the sick person to the force of the current of air, and it is always very easy to place him out of the power of it.

It is also extremely important to breathe the morning air. Those who deprive themselves of it, for the sake of remaining in a stifling atmosphere between four curtains, voluntarily renounce the most agreeable, and perhaps the most strengthening of all remedies. The freshness of the night will, by morning, have restored to the air all its vivifying principle; and the dew which evaporates, by degrees, after having loaded itself with all the balm of the flowers on which it will have dwelt, renders the air truly medicinal; you solace yourself in a vaporous bath of the essence of plants, the air of which you continually draw in, and of which nothing can be equivalently substituted to the good effect. The ease, the refreshment, the strength, the appetite, which we may feel procured by it, for the rest of the day, are a proof in every one's power, and a stronger one than all that I could add.

I have, very recently, seen the most sensible effects of it on some valetudinarians, and especially on such as were hypochondriacs: these experienced, in the clearest manner, that if they indulged themselves in breathing the morning air, they were always the more chearful, the more lively, for the rest of the day; and those who passed that rest of the day with them, could not, by that mark, be mistaken as to the hour of their rising.

It is easy then to conceive, how important this effect is for those who are affected, in any degree, with the *Tabes dorsalis*, who are so often hypochondriacal; and in whom a return of chearfulness is alone sufficient to furnish an unquestionable sign of a general amendment of health.

### **ALIMENTS**

In the choice of Aliments I would recommend the two following rules:

*First*, To take no aliments, but what, under a small volume, contain a great deal of nourishment, and are of easy digestion. This is an aphorism of Sanctorius: *Coïtus immoderatus postulat cibos paucos et boni nutrimenti*<sup>105</sup>.

*Secondly*, To avoid all that have any acidity.

It is of great importance to restore to the stomach all its strength; and nothing is more destructive of the forces of the animal fibres than an over-stretch; so that the dilatation of the stomach by an over-abundance of aliments would daily weaken it: besides, if it is too full, weak persons feel a state of uneasiness, of anguish, of debility, and melancholy, that augments all their disorders. Both these inconveniences are prevented by the choice of aliments, such as I have recommended, by taking of them a little at a time, and frequently. It is essential that they should afford an easy nutrition: the stomach is in no condition with persons in their state, to conquer any thing hard of digestion: its action, which is extremely faint and languid, would be totally destroyed by aliments too indigest, or of a nature to diminish its strength.

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<sup>105</sup>105 Sect. 6. Aphor. 22.

Upon these principles may be formed a catalogue of such as are proper in this case, and of those which should be excluded. In this last class are all flesh-meats naturally hard and indigestible; such as pork; all flesh of old animals; all that has been hardened by salt or smoak, a preparation which, at the same time, renders them acrid: all that are too fat, or greasy; a quality which, in any other subject of aliment whatever, relaxes the fibres of the stomach, diminishes the action, already too weak, of the digestive juices; they remain indigested, dispose to obstructions, and acquire, by their stay in the stomach, an acidity, which, breeding a continual irritation, gives inquietude, pains, want of rest, anguish, feverishness. In short, there is nothing which persons of a weak digestion ought more carefully to avoid, than fat or greasy food. Unfermented pastry-ware, especially when kneaded up with fat, is another sort of aliment much above the strength of a weak stomach. Flatulent garden-stuff is also very noxious, by producing a turgescence that distends it, and at the same time cramps the circulation in the neighbouring parts; such, in general, are all forts of cabbage, of leguminous pulse, and such plants as have a taste and smell remarkably acrid, which last quality renders them noxious, independently of their flatulency.

Fruits, which are so salutary in acute and inflammatory distempers, in obstructions, especially those of the liver, and in several other disorders, are never proper in this case; they weaken, relax, and enervate the strength of the stomach; they augment the attenuation of the blood, already too aqueous; and ill digested, they ferment in the stomach and intestines, and this fermentation sets free an astonishing quantity of air, which produces enormous distensions, that absolutely disturb the course of the circulation. I have, in a woman, seen this effect: so considerable, for her having eaten too many cherries and currants, four and twenty hours after a very easy delivery, that her belly was stretched to such a degree as to become livid; she appeared lethargically dozing, and her pulse was almost imperceptible. Fruits also leave, in the first passages, a principle of acidity, apt to occasion several dangerous symptoms, so that it is necessary to abstain almost totally from them. Crude garden-stuff, vinegar, verjuice, have the like inconveniences, and deserve the like exclusion.

But though the catalogue of prohibited articles of food be a long one, that of the allowable ones is still longer. It comprehends the flesh of all young animals, fed in healthy places, and wholesomely fed; such especially is that of veal, lamb, or young mutton, young beef, fowl, pigeon, turkey, partridge. Lark, thrushes, quails, and other wild fowl, without being absolutely forbidden, are, however, attended with such inconveniences, as not to allow of their entering into daily food. Fish is under the same restriction.

But it is not enough only to chuse your flesh-meats with due discernment, but they must also be properly prepared. The best way is to roast them by a gentle fire, so as to preserve their gravy, and not dry them up too much; or to stew them slowly in their own juices. The flesh-meats that are boiled in too much water, give out to it all that they have of juiciness, and remain incapable of nourishing: thus they often become nothing but fleshy fibres deprived of their nutritious juice, and equally insipid to the taste, and indigestible to the stomach. It is common for weak persons, and even for such of them as are above all suspicions of being too nice, not to be able to eat of them without their stomach being disordered by them. The more tender flesh meats are, the less they can bear this preparation, which, in the case of sick people, ought to be reserved for extracting by it from hard or tough meats whatever nourishment they may contain.

Yet whatever preparation may be carefully employed upon the flesh meats, there are persons who cannot digest them: and to them it becomes as necessary to give them the broth, extracted by a gentle boiling; but as that has too great a tendency to putrefaction, it must be accompanied with some bread, and a dash of lemon juice, or a little wine: such a mixture is of the most desirable, in that case, for nourishment. Some lobsters boiled, and crushed in the broth, heighten its relish, and make it perhaps more strengthening; but they have the double inconvenience, of being somewhat heating, and of rendering the broth more susceptible of a quick corruption; so that on these two accounts it is good to be on one's guard.

Bread and garden-stuff have not the advantage of containing at once a great deal of nourishment in a small quantity; but the use of them,

especially of bread, is indispensably necessary, to prevent, not only the distaste which the use of a regimen consisting totally of animal meats would not fail of producing, but also that putridity which would be the consequence of them, if not mixed with vegetables. Without this precaution, there would soon a spontaneous alkali disclose itself in the first passages, with all the disorders consequential thereto. I have seen terrible accidents produced by this regimen, in weak persons, to whom it had been prescribed. One of the commonest symptoms is, thirst; they are obliged to drink, and drink weakens them: besides, the liquid they drink does not easily mix with the humors of the body, as that mixture depends on the action of the vessels, which is very languid; and if, unfortunately, as is not unfrequent with those who do not use much motion, the action of the kidneys diminishes, the liquids pass into the cellular membrane, and immediately form œdematous swellings there, and, at length, dropsies of all kinds.

These dangers are prevented by a due alliance of the vegetable regimen with the animal. The best garden-ware are, the tender roots, herbs of the endive kind, artichoaks, asparagus. There are some others, which, though tender, are of disservice; being too cooling, they deaden the strength of the stomach.

Farinaceous grains, prepared and boiled in cream, with flesh broth, are an aliment not to be slighted, as it combines every thing that is nourishing in the two kingdoms animal and vegetable, while their mixture prevents the danger from each aliment given single; the broth hinders the meal from turning sour, the meat the broth from putrefying. By reading, with a little reflexion, observant Naturalists, it may easily be perceived, that distempers are more malignant in the north of Europe than in its middle regions: may not that be owing to more flesh meats being eaten in proportion than vegetables?

What I have above said of fruits, need not, however, hinder, where the stomach still preserves something of its strength, one's indulging one's self, now and then, with a small quantity of the best chosen for the sort, and for ripeness; the most watery are those which are the least proper.

Eggs are an aliment of the animal kind, and an aliment extremely useful; they strengthen greatly, and are easy of digestion, provided that they have but little or even no preparation by fire, for if the white is once hardened it does not dissolve again; it becomes heavy, indigest, and unnutritious: it might then be the aliment of those who digest too quickly, and not of those who have rather no digestion. The best way of eating them, is just as they are new laid from the fowl, without any preparation, or in the shell, after only three or four dips in boiling water, or stirred into warm, and not boiling broth.

Conclusively; there remains to mention the aliment from milk; which unites all the qualities that can be desired, without having any of the inconveniences that are to be dreaded. It is the most simple, the most easily assimilable, and the quickest restorative: all prepared as it is by nature, it needs no risk of spoiling it by an artificial preparation: like the broth of flesh meats it nourishes, but is not susceptible of putridity; it prevents thirst, it supplies the place of meat and drink; it keeps up all the secretions; it disposes for tranquil sleep; in short, it fulfils all the indications that present themselves in this case. M. Lewis attests its having produced the best effects<sup>106</sup>. Why then is not it always employed, always substituted to the other aliments? Answer. For a reason which is peculiar to it, which unnaturalises its effect, and which makes it sometimes produce a very different one, from that which might be hoped from it, or reasonably expected.

This reason is, that sort of decomposition to which it is subject. If the digestion of it is not very quick, if it stays too long in the stomach, or if, without too long a stay there, it meets in it with matters of a nature to hasten that decomposition, it undergoes in the stomach all the changes, which fall under our observation, out of it. The butyrous, the caseous, the serous parts separate; the whey sometimes occasions a quick diarrhœa; sometimes it passes off by the urinary passages, or by perspiration without nourishing; the other parts, if they stay in the stomach, are not long before they trouble it, cause uneasy sensations, bloatedness, loathings, cholics; and if one is not immediately affected by them, it is

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<sup>106</sup> P. 27.

because they will have passed into the intestines, where they may, it is true, remain some time without a sensible prejudice, but they acquire there a singular acidity, and after a certain time they produce mischiefs which the delay will not have rendered the less dangerous; and, indeed, it may be established for a law, that should render one extremely circumspect in the prescription of it in dangerous cases, that if it is an aliment of which the digestion is the easiest, it is also that of which the indigestion is the most noxious. We have already mentioned the difficulties that Boerhaave found in the use of it; but however great they may be, the advantages to be drawn from it are so considerable, that it is worth while to study all possible means for surmounting them, and happily such means there are. They may be ranged under two classes; attentions to the regimen, and the medicines. Of these last I shall refer the discussion to one of the following articles.

The attentions to the regimen are, first, the choice of the milk. From whatever species it may be determined to procure it, the female that furnishes it should be healthy, and live regular: Secondly, during the time of taking it, all aliments should be avoided that can turn it sour; such are all fruits, raw or prepared, and in general every thing that is acid: Thirdly, it must be taken at times very distant from other aliments; it not taking kindly any mixture: Fourthly to take only a little of it at a time: Fifthly, all the while to take care of keeping the breast, the abdominal region, and the legs extremely warm: and, above all, Sixthly, (for without this precaution all the others would be useless,) to be very moderate as to the quantity of even the best chosen aliments. During this recourse to milk, there should be no trouble given to the stomach; the smallest over-load, the slightest indigestion, leaves in it a principle of corruption, which presently turns the milk, and may, of the most wholesome of aliments, make a poison sometimes very violent, and, at least, almost always infallibly one, in a greater or less degree.

Another question occurs: What is the milk that merits preference? In answer to this, I will not enter into an examination of the various sorts of milk; this would be over-lengthening my work by an adventitious subject; for satisfaction in which there are many recourses extant, and perhaps

none better than a dissertation, now indeed out of print, of the late Mons. d'Apples, M. D. and Professor of Greek and Morality in this College<sup>107</sup>.

Now-a-days there are hardly any kinds of milk used but of the female breast, or of asses milk, the goat's, or the cow's. Each has its different qualities: it is the comparison of these qualities, and of the indication presented by the disorder, that should determine the choice from among them. There are few cases in which milk from the cow may not be succedaneously used for all the others. That from the female breast is generally believed the most strengthening: it is the notion of the greatest masters in the art, and yet this opinion bears upon a ruinous foundation, which is, the women's making use of animal food, without considering at the same time that the preference is constantly given to the milk of a hale robust nurse from the country, who eats no flesh-meats, or, at least, very little, and who lives only upon bread and vegetables. I believe, however, that there are cases in which it may be tried with success. The noble cures operated by the use of it, leave no doubt of its efficacy; but there is one inconvenience which is peculiar to it, which is, that it must be taken immediately from the breast that furnishes it: this is a precaution, of which Galen has already taken notice of the necessity, and, in ridicule of those who would not care to confine themselves to it, he refers them "*like asses, to asses milk.*" But in the case of recourse to the female breast for lactation, might not the vessel of conveyance excite those desires which the main point is to keep under? Might it not expose the patient to the temptation of renewing the adventure of that Prince, the story of whom Capivaccio has preserved to us? He had two nurses given him, whose milk produced so good an effect, that he put them both into a condition of supplying him, at the end of some months, with new milk on a fresh account, if he should happen to need it.

It is thought that asses milk has the nearest analogy to that of the female breast; but, if I may be allowed to say it, this assertion is rather matter of opinion than of experience. It is the most serous, and, from that very quality, the most laxative. It is a most pernicious error the imagining it the most strengthening. Daily observations demonstrate the contrary, and

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<sup>107</sup> ΓΑΛΑΚΤΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ. *Tentamen*, &c. Basle, 1707.

prove not only that it is not the most efficacious, but that it is, perhaps, the least so. I have rarely seen any good effects from it; sometimes I have seen bad ones, and am not the only one that has seen them. M. de Haller, writing to me, says, "It appears to me, that this same asses milk rarely does what it is desired to do." Now, the inutility of a pretended remedy, in disorders where the hopes of a cure are founded on it, is one of the most grievous defects. M. Hoffman advised it in cases where there were at once an exhaustion and a desire<sup>108</sup>.

Before I quit this subject of Aliments, I ought to conclude with the counsel of Horace, to avoid mixtures.

*nam variæ res*

*Ut noceant homini credas, memor illius escæ*

*Quæ simplex olim sederit, at, simul assis*

*Miscueris elixa: simul conchyliæ turdis;*

*Dulcia se in bilem vertent; stomachoque tumultum*

*Lenta feret pituita.*

To sense it is obvious enough, without any need to insist on this advice, how impossible it is for very different aliments to undergo, within the same time, a perfect digestion: this mixture it is which is one of the causes that ruin the healthiest constitutions, and is mortal to weak ones: it cannot be too carefully avoided.

Another attention equally necessary, and almost equally neglected, is, a thorough mastication. This is a help to digestion, of which even the most vigorous stomachs cannot be long deprived, without a notable decline or diminution; and without which the digestion in weak ones is extremely imperfect. Nothing but a long and attentive observation could satisfy one of the infinite importance to health of a careful mastication. I have seen the most stubborn diseases of the stomach, and the most inveterate languors, dissipated singly by this attention. On the other hand, I have seen persons in good health fall into infirmities, when their teeth, being

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid. Sect. 32.

damaged, no longer suffered them to employ any but an imperfect mastication; nor recovered they their health, till, after a total loss of their teeth, their gums acquired such a hardness as to enable them to supply their function.

So many particulars, so many precautions, so many self-denying privations, will seem very fit to verify this line of M. Procope,

*Vivre selon nos loix c'est vivre miserable.*

*By physic's laws to live 's a wretched life.*

But is there any paying too dear for health? How amply are you satisfied for the sacrifices you make, by the enjoyment of it, and by the pleasures it throws into all the moments of your life? "Without health (says Hippocrates) there can be no enjoyment of any earthly good; honors, riches, and all other advantages are of no avail<sup>109</sup>."

Besides, these sacrifices are much less than it is commonly imagined they are. I could quote many witnesses, to whom, after just the first days, it no longer cost them any pain to renounce the variety and savoriness of rich viands, for the sake of a simplicity of regimen: which is what nature points out, and is the most pleasing to well constituted organs. A healthy palate, which has all the sensibility that it ought to have, can have no relish but for plain meats; made dishes and high sauces are insupportable to it, while, in the least savory aliments, it finds a relish, and a variety of relish, which escape the depraved, worn out, or furred organs of taste: so that those who return to the simplicity of nature in their aliments, whether it is for their health, or from convinced reason, or from a contracted distaste to high eating, may be assured, that so fast as they shall recover their health, they will find in plain aliments a delight of the palate which they did not suspect in them. A fine ear discerns the slight difference between two notes, which will have escaped a less sensible ear: just so it is with the nerves of the organs of taste; when they are in exquisite order, they perceive the slightest varieties of savors, and are sensible to them; the water-drinkers meet with waters as flattering to

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<sup>109</sup> *De Diæta acuta*. L. iii. c. 12. Foes. 368.

their taste as the most exquisite Falernian could be to drinkers of wine, and others as disagreeable to them, as to those the pricked wines of Brie.

But even were there not rational hopes of pleasure in the plain regimen, and I am sure it is not hard to accommodate one's self to that which I have indicated, the satisfaction one must feel, the consideration that, in submitting to it, one is fulfilling a duty to one's self, must be a greatly pressing motive, as well as a justly flattering reward, for those who can know all the value of the being well with one's self.

The liquid part of aliments, or the drink, is an article of the regimen almost as important as the solid, or eating.

All liquids should be forbidden that can augment the weakness or relaxation, that can diminish the little that remains of the digestive powers, that can convey any acidity into the humors, or dispose the nervous system, already too irritable, to a greater mobility. All hot waters have the first defect, of weakening or relaxing. Tea, with that, has also all the others: coffee has the two last; so that one ought rigorously to abstain from them. The author of a work superior to all encomiums, and of which those who interest themselves in the progress of the medical art, wait with the greatest impatience for the continuation, has presented such an account of the danger of these two liquids, as might very well disgust or deter from the use of them those who find the greatest pleasure in them<sup>110</sup>.

Spirituous liquors, which, at the first view might appear serviceable, for that they operate precisely the contrary of hot water, of which they really diminish the danger, if added to it in a small quantity, are, however, attended with other inconveniences that authorise their rejection, or at least restrain them to an extremely rare recourse. Their action is too violent, too transient; they irritate more than they strengthen, and if they sometimes strengthen, the weakness which succeeds is greater than before a recourse to them: besides, they give to

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<sup>110</sup> M. Thierry, anonymous author of *La Medecine Experimentale*. When an author publishes so valuable a work, he ought not to wish or imagine that he can long remain unknown, nor fear the being discovered. The moment that we shall have all that work compleat, it will furnish a considerable epoch in the history of physic.

the *papillæ* of the stomach a hardness that robs them of that degree of sensibility necessary to the creation of an appetite, and take from the liquids that degree of fluidity which they ought to have in aid of that sensation; and, indeed, the great drinkers of spirituous liquors are strangers to it. “Those (says the illustrious author whom I have just now quoted) who every day drink strong liquors after their meals, by way of remedying the defects of digestion, could hardly find a more likely method for accomplishing just the contrary to what they propose, and to destroy the powers of digestion.”

The best drink is water from the purest spring, mixed, equal parts, with a wine neither too heady nor too acid: the heady kinds sensibly irritate the nervous system, and produce in the humors a transient rarefaction, of which the effect is an extension of the vessels, that leaves them afterwards the laxer for it, and to augment the dissolution of the humors: the acid kinds weaken the digestions, irritate, and procure over-copious urines, which exhaust the patients. The best are those which have the least of spirit and of salt, the most of terrestrial and oily, which constitutes what is called racy, generous wines: such are the red wines of Burgundy, of the Rhône, of Neufchâtel, and a few kinds in this country, (Lausanne,) the old white wines of Grave, the choice ones of Pontac, the wines of Spain, Portugal, the Canaries, and, where procurable, those of Tockay, superior perhaps to those of all the world besides, both for salubrity and deliciousness to the taste. As to common use there are none preferable to those of Neufchâtel.

In places where good water is not to be come at, it may be corrected by filtration, by a hot iron, or an infusion of some agreeable aromatics, such as cinnamon, aniseed, lemon-peel.

Common beer is noxious. Mum which is properly an extract from grain, both nourishing and strengthening, may be of great use: rich of spirit, it enlivens as much as wine, and is more nutritious; it may serve for meat and drink.

Among the useful drinks, may be ranked chocolate, which belongs perhaps more properly to the class of solid aliments; the cocoa contains a great deal of nutritious substance, and the mixture with it of sugar and

aromatics corrects any detriment from its oiliness. "Chocolate made with milk (says M. Lewis) in such quantities as to pass easy off the stomach, is an excellent breakfast for a tabid constitution. I knew a child twelve years old who was in the last stage of a consumption, when given over by a Physician, recovered by the mother's giving her chocolate only, in small quantities, often repeated. Indeed it is an aliment that for weak constitutions cannot be too much recommended<sup>111</sup>." Be it, however, remarked, that there are some to whom it might prove very pernicious.

One general attention to be observed is, that too great a quantity of any drink whatever should be avoided: it weakens the digestions by relaxing the stomach; by drowning the digestive juices, and by precipitating the aliments before they are well digested; it relaxes all the parts, it dissolves the humors; it disposes to urines and to sweats that exhaust the patients. I have seen disorders produced by an atony, considerably lessened, by no other means of assistance, than by a retrenchment of a part of the liquids for drinking.

### **SLEEP**

What is to be said of sleep, may be reduced to three points; its duration, the time of taking it, and the precaution necessary for a quiet undisturbed enjoyment of it.

In grown persons seven hours of sleep, or at the most eight, are sufficient for any one: there is even a danger in sleeping longer, and in remaining longer a bed, which throws one into the same disorders as an excess of rest. If any could wish to indulge it longer, it might be those who give themselves a great deal of motion, and of violent motion, during the day time; but it is not those who practise such indulgence; on the contrary, it is those who lead the most sedentary life. Thus that term ought never to be exceeded, unless one should be fallen into such a degree of weakness as not to have the strength necessary left for the being long up; in which case, however, one should try to keep so as long as possible. "The more moderate the quantity of his sleep (says Mr. Lewis) the sweeter and more invigorating will it be."

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<sup>111</sup> *Tabes Dorsalis*, Sect. 9.

It stands demonstrated, that the air of the night is less healthy than that of the day, and that the weakly sick are more susceptible of its influences in the evening than the morning; as then, during our sleep, we are confined to a small part of the atmosphere, which our bodies also would not fail of corrupting; it is to sleep that that time should be appropriated, in which the air is the least healthy, and in which the being up in it would be the most pernicious; so that it is best to go to bed early, and rise early. This is a precept so commonly known, that it may appear trivial to recall it to mind; but it is actually so much neglected, the consequence of it seems to be so little felt, though infinitely greater than it is believed to be, that it is very allowable to suppose it unknown, and to re-inculcate it by an insistence on its importance, especially to valetudinarians.

Mr. Lewis gives it for his opinion, “That if a patient lies down at ten o’ clock, which hour he should never exceed, he ought to rise in the summer-time at four or five, in the winter at six or seven, under an absolute prohibition of an indulgence in bed in the morning.” He recommends even the forming a habit of getting up after one’s first sleep, and avers, that uneasy as this custom might be at the first, it would soon become easy and agreeable<sup>112</sup>. A number of examples attest the salutariness of this advice: there are many valetudinarians who feel themselves light and well on waking out of their first sleep, and who experience a laborious restlessness on yielding to the temptation of going to sleep again: they are as sure of passing a good day of it, if, at whatever the hour be of their waking out of their first sleep they immediately get up, as of passing it disagreeably, if they give way to the second.

Sleep is not tranquil but where there are no causes of irritation: which ought therefore to be carefully prevented. Three of the most important attentions are;

*First*, Not to be in a hot air, and to be neither too much nor too little covered.

*Secondly*, Not to have the feet cold at lying down; an accident common to weak persons, and which is, for many reasons, hurtful to them. The

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<sup>112</sup> Sect. ix.

rule of Hippocrates should be scrupulously observed, *To sleep in a cool place, taking care to cover one's self*<sup>113</sup>.

*Thirdly*, And what is yet more important, not to lie down upon a full stomach: nothing disturbs more the sleep, nor contributes more to render it disquieting, painful, heavy, or overwhelming, than a laborious digestion in the night. Depression of spirits, weakness, disgust, weariness, incapacity of thought or of application to any thing the next day, are the inevitable consequences.

—*vides ut pallidus omnis*

*Cœna desurgat dubia? Quin corpus onustum,*

*Hesternis vitiis animum quoque prægravat una*

*Atque affligit humo divinæ particulam auræ.*

Hor.

On the contrary, nothing is more efficacious toward procuring a sweet, calm, uninterrupted, refreshing sleep, than a light supper. Freshness, agility, gaiety, are, the ensuing day, its necessary consequences.

*Alter, ubi dicto citius curata sopori*

*Membra dedit, vegetus præscripta ad munia surgit.*

Ibid.

“The time of sleep (says Mr. Lewis, with great reason) is that of nutrition, and not of digestion.” Accordingly he requires of his patients the greatest severity as to their supper: he prohibits to them, and never was a juster prohibition, all flesh-meats at that meal; he allows them nothing but a little milk, and some bread sippets, and that two hours before they go to bed that the first digestion may be over before they lie down to sleep. The Atlantics, who were strangers to an animal diet, and who never ate any thing that had life, were famous for the tranquillity of their sleep, and hardly so much as knew what dreams were.

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<sup>113</sup> *Epidem.* L. vi. §. 4. Aphor. 14. Foes. 118

## **MOTION**

Exercise is a point of absolute necessity. To the weak it is a pain to take it; and if they have any inclination to melancholy or dejection of spirit, it is not easy to determine them to motion; and yet nothing is more apt to augment all the evils that proceed from weakness, than inactivity; the fibres of the stomach, of the intestines, of the vessels, are lax; the humors every where stagnate, because the solids have no longer the strength to impress on them the necessary motion: thence are generated lodgments of matter, choaked up passages, obstructions, extravasations; coction, nutrition, the secretions, do not proceed; the blood remains aqueous, the strength diminishes, and all the symptoms of the disorder increase. Exercise prevents all these evils, by augmenting the force of the circulation; all the functions execute themselves as if there existed in the body a real strength for it, and this regularity of the functions does not fail soon to give it, so that the effect of motion is to supplement the vital forces, and to restore them. Another of its advantages, independent of the augmentation of circulation, is its enabling one to enjoy an air always new. A person that does not stir, soon corrupts the air which surrounds him, and becomes noxious to him: whereas a person in action is continually changing it. Motion may often supply the place of remedies, but all the remedies in the world cannot supply the place of motion.

The fatigue of the first days of attempting it, is a rock against which the faint heart of many of the sick is apt to split; but if they had the courage to conquer this first obstacle, they would soon be experimentally sensible, that to this case especially it is that that proverbial saying is truly applicable, *Il n'y a que les premiers pas qui coûtent*: "It is only the first steps that are hard to take." I have been myself astonished at seeing to what a degree those who had not been disheartened at the first, acquired strength by exercise. I have seen persons fatigued with one turn in a garden, arrive, in a few weeks, at being able to take a walk two leagues, and be the better after it.

The exercise of walking on foot is not the only favorable one. For persons extremely weak, for such as have a complaint of their bowels or breast, riding on horseback is even better: but in a still greater weakness, the

motion of a carriage, if not too easy an one, is preferable. When the weather does not allow of going out, some means of motions should be contrived, in the house, some not too laborious occupation, or some exercise of play; such, for example, as the battledore and shuttle-cock, which diffuses through the whole body an equable motion.

A return of appetite, of sleep, of cheerfulness, are the necessary consequences of motion; but the precaution should be observed, of not taking any thing of a violent motion immediately after a meal, and not to eat while warm from exercise; which should be taken before a meal, with allowance of some moments of rest before the sitting down to it.

### ***EVACUATIONS***

The evacuations are apt to be disordered along with the other functions, and their disorder increases that of the whole machine; it is then of importance to give attention thereto, in order to the earliest remedy. The evacuations which principally require observation are, the stools, the urines, the perspiration, and the saliva. The best way to keep them in due order, or to bring them to the point at which they ought to be at, is to govern one's self by those precepts which I have laid down on the other objects of regimen: when those are heedfully attended to in practice, the evacuations, whose greater or the less regularity is the barometer of the better or worse state of digestions, proceed regularly enough. That evacuation which it is of the most importance to favor, as being the most considerable, is perspiration, which very easily goes out of order, in weak persons. It may be aided by having the skin very regularly rubbed with a flesh-brush, or a flannel; but when it is very languishing indeed, there is not a surer way to restore it, than to put the whole body immediately into woollen covering. And yet care should be taken to avoid too warm a dress, for fear of sweating, which is always detrimental to perspiration; the forced strainers remain the weaker, and perform their functions the worse: too cool a dress is also to be shunned, as that is an enemy equally to all cutaneous evacuations. The part which every person, and especially the weak, ought to keep the warmest, is the feet. This easy precaution would never be neglected, if the importance of it to the preservation of the whole machine was sufficiently known. Frequent

catching cold of the feet disposes to the most terrible chronical diseases. There are many on whom it immediately produces bad effects. But those especially who are subject to disorders of the breast, to cholics, or to obstructions, cannot too much guard against these dangers. Those priests who used to walk bare-footed on the pavement of the temples were often attacked with violent cholics.

The *saliva* often is an over abundant secretion in weak persons; which is owing to a relaxation of the salivary organs. Now if the patients spit out continually this saliva, thence result two evils; the one, that they exhaust themselves by this evacuation; the other, that this humor, so necessary to the work of digestion, which without it operates but imperfectly, fails, and thereby renders it laborious and defective. I have already sufficiently explained myself on the dangers of a bad digestion, not to need here much insistence on those incident to an evacuation, on which the digestion so essentially depends. For this reason it is that Mr. Lewis forbids smoaking to his patients. Smoaking, among its other inconveniences, disposes to an abundant salivation, by the irritation it produces on the glands which furnish this secretion.

Might not the inhalation from one person to another, which I have precedently mentioned, be here recalled to mind as one of the means of cure? Capiavaccio had judged it of use to the person under his care, that should lie between the two nurses that suckled him; and it is very probable that the inhalation of their atmosphere contributed perhaps as much as their milk to restore his strength.

Elidæus, cotemporary with Capiavaccio, and preceptor to Forrestus, who has preserved to us this observation<sup>114</sup>, advised a young man, who was in a *marasmus*, to asses milk, and to have his nurse lie in the same bed with him, who was a woman extremely healthy, and in the flower of her age: this advice had the greatest success; nor was the compliance with it discontinued till the patient owned he could no longer resist the inclination grown upon him, to make an illicit use of the strength that was

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<sup>114</sup> *Observat. et Curat.* L. i. Obs. 10. T. i. p. 122.

returned to him. A remedy, on the foot of this utility by inhalation might be preserved, and yet the danger be prevented by not mixing the sexes.

### ***The PASSIONS***

The intimate union of the soul and body has been precedently mentioned; how great the influence is of the well-being of the first, over the last, cannot have escaped comprehension; the sinister effects of melancholy have been pointed out; so that it is almost needless here to add, that too great care cannot be taken to avoid the unpleasant sensations of the soul, and that it is of the highest consequence to procure for it none but the most agreeable ones; indeed in all distempers, but especially in those, which, like the *tabes dorsalis*, of themselves dispose to sadness, a sadness which, by a vitious circle, considerably augments those distempers. But (and this makes one of the difficulties of the cure) it often happens that the patients take a kind of pleasure in this symptom of their disorder, and there is no prevailing on them to determine upon making any efforts to get the better of it. Besides, not to deceive ourselves, we must not imagine that it is enough to prescribe to a person to be chearful, for him to be so. Mirth is voluntary. Laughing is no more to be commanded than it is to be forbidden. A man can no more help his being sad, than having a fit of a fever, or the torture of a tooth-ach. All that can be required or expected of the patients is, that they will no more refuse their yielding to accept or try the remedies prescribed to them against their melancholy, than they refuse yielding to other remedies. Now the remedies are not so much, in this case, company, (we have already observed that it was displeasing to them, for particular reasons) as a variety of situations. A continual change of objects for a succession of ideas that diverts them, and this is what they need.

Nothing can be more pernicious to persons inclined to deliver themselves up to one idea, than inaction, or want of occupation. But, above all, nothing is worse than that for the case here treated of: the patients cannot too much avoid idleness, and the being too much left or abandoned to themselves. Rural exercises, or employment, comprehend the most powerful diversion. M. Lewis advises, “that the sick should, if possible, see none but those of their own sex;

*“Nam non ulla magis vires industria firmat*

*Quam Venerem et cæci stimulos avertere amoris.*

Virg.

“that they should never be absolutely alone; that they should be kept from giving themselves up to their own reflexions; that they should be diverted or kept from reading, or any occupation of the mind; all these, (as he observes,) being so many causes that exhaust the spirits and retard the cure.” I should not, however, be for totally debarring them from all reading. It might be enough to forbid their reading for too long a time at once, if it were but on account of the weakness of their eyes; or all reading that should require too much application, but especially and severely any kind of reading that might recall to their mind ideas, or to their imagination objects, of which it were to be wished they should lose the remembrance: but there are subjects which, without much fixing the attention, and without recalling dangerous images, might agreeably divert, entertain, and prevent the terrible dangers of a wearisome idleness.

### **REMEDIES**

I shall follow the same order as in the preceding article. I shall point out the pretended remedies, which are to be avoided, before I enter on the mention of those which are the eligible ones. I have already taken notice of a first class of those which should be excluded, the irritating, the heating, the volatile medicines. There is a second one, of a very opposite nature, and equally noxious, and that is evacuatives. I have already observed, that sweats, an over-secretion of the *saliva*, and too copious urines, exhausted the patient. I shall not then repeat my premonition against those evacuations: it is consequentially clear enough, that all the medicines which excite them, should be banished. It remains then to examine the propriety of bleeding, and of the evacuations of the *primæ viæ*. The curative indications being to restore strength, now, in order to judge whether they are proper, it is but to know whether they can be expected to answer that indication. I shall not be long on this head. There are two cases in which bleeding restores strength; in all others, it

diminishes it. The first is, when there is too great an abundance of blood; this is not the case in consumptions; or when the blood has acquired an inflammatory inspissation, which, rendering it unfit for its uses, quickly destroys the vital forces; this is the disorder of the vigorous, of those who have rigid fibres, and a strong circulation: our sick are in precisely the contrary case; bleeding then cannot but be hurtful to them. “Every drop of blood, (according to M. Gilchrist,) is precious to persons in a consumption: the assimilating power that repairs it being destroyed, they have not more than barely sufficient to keep up the circulation, and that but a languid one<sup>115</sup>.” M. Lobb, who has very justly calculated the effects of evacuations, is positive in this sense. He observes, “that in bodies, which have no more than the necessary quantity of blood, if that is diminished by bleeding or other evacuations, the vital forces are at the same time diminished, the secretions disturbed, and various disorders produced<sup>116</sup>.”

The manner in which M. Senac speaks of bleeding gives it yet more precisely the exclusion in this case. “If (says he) the thick or red globules of the blood be deficient, bleeding is useless or rather pernicious: it ought then to be forbidden in extenuated bodies, where the blood is in small quantity, or not of due consistence, as when there comes from the vessels but a liquid that can scarce color linnen or water<sup>117</sup>.” It has been observed, that such is the state of the blood in those who have hurt themselves by self-pollution; and such it is generally in the weak and in valetudinarians. Let those who attempt the cure, in this case, by bleeding, compare that method with this precept founded on the most enlightened theory, and on numerous practical observations, well digested by reflection; these constitute the basis of the work from which I draw it, and then let them judge of the success they ought to expect.

Those medicines which evacuate the first passages, conduce to the restoration of strength, when, in those parts, there is formed a lodgment of matters so considerable by their mass, as to cramp or obstruct the functions of all the *viscera*, or when there are in the stomach, or in the

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<sup>115</sup> *On sea voyages*, p. 117.

<sup>116</sup> *A Letter shewing what is the proper preparation of persons for inoculation*. Sect. iv.

<sup>117</sup> *Traité de Cœur*. L. iv. c. 1. § 2. T. ii. p. 263.

first intestines, putrid matters, of which the common effect is a prodigious weakness. In those cases evacuatives may be prescribed, if nothing contra-indicates them, if there are no other means of freeing the first passages, or if there should be any danger in not evacuating them quickly enough. These three conditions have rarely place in persons who are in a state of consumption, and in whom the weakness and atony of the first passages is a counter-indication, ever present, to purgatives or emetics. There is oftenest another method of procuring a successive evacuation, which is, the employing the non-astringent tonics; such are a great number of bitters, which, by restoring play to the organs, produce the double good effect of digesting what is not indigestible, and of evacuating the superfluities. In short, there is rarely any danger in not evacuating them quickly enough. This danger, indeed, sometimes exists in acute diseases; the acridity of the matters which the heat augments, and the prodigious re-action of the fibres, may occasion violent symptoms, which are never seen in chronical disorders or distempers of languor, in which the evacuatives, properly so called, are, from that very quality, never, by much, so necessary, and are, as I have before observed, often contra-indicated. Atony, and the want of action, are the cause of those gatherings when there are any formed; when they are evacuated by a purgative, the effect is dissipated, but the cause which will have produced them is considerably augmented: there remain to be repaired both the evil that actually exists, and that which the remedy will have done; if for these a remedy is not quickly provided, the effect reproduces itself faster than before; and if way is given to the employing purgatives a-new, the evil is a second time augmented; besides that the intestines are made thereby to contract indisposition to stools, which hinders their functions, till at length they arrive at such a point that there is no obtaining evacuations from them but by physic. In short, purgatives, in the case of obstructions in the first passages of weak persons, can produce no diminution of the effect but by augmenting the causes, nor give a momentary relief but as they make the disease worse. And yet this method is but too much followed; the sick generally like it, to them it has an air of quickness or dispatch; and, indeed, provided that the failure of strength be not too considerable, they find themselves relieved for a few days. The evil, it is true, returns, but they had rather impute it to the

insufficiency than to the operation of that remedy, to which they have taken a liking. Besides, the sick are ever for the present relief, and few physicians have the courage to oppose this weakness. Yet is it important, as well in physic as in morality, to know when to sacrifice the present to the future: a neglect of this law peoples the world with wretches and with valetudinarians. It were much to be wished, that there should be inculcated to many physicians, as well as to many patients, that fine passage to be found in the *Pathologia* of M. Gaubius, upon all the evils which are the consequence of the abuse of purgatives<sup>118</sup>.

Are not there, will it be said, some cases, in which emetics and purgatives may be admitted for the sick of whom I am treating? Doubtless, some there are, but they are very rare; and great attention is requisite not to be mistaken as to the signs which seem to indicate evacuatives, and which often depend on a cause that is to be attacked by remedies of quite another nature. I will not enter into a discussion of these distinctions; that would be quite out of place here; it is enough for me to observe, that evacuatives are rarely advisable in this disorder. M. Lewis is of opinion, “that a gentle emetic may serviceably prepare the first passages for the other remedies, but would not have that exceeded;” a multitude of cases have taught me, that even that might and often ought to be omitted; and I have precedently adduced two observations of M. Hoffman, which prove all the danger for that remedy. But even, without recourse to experience, common sense alone may suffice to persuade one, that a remedy which gives convulsions, cannot be very proper for a disorder which are the effects of repeated convulsions.

It is by combating the cause that the evil is to be destroyed; for as little as may every day be removed, of that cause, one may be pretty sure that the effect will disappear, without the danger of a return. If it is against the effect only that the procedure of the cure is levelled, the work of each day is not only of no service to the following one, but almost always detrimental.

After having indicated what is to be avoided, there remains to examine what can be done. I have precedently specified the character that the

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<sup>118</sup> Sect. 484.

remedies ought to have; to strengthen without irritating; there are some that can answer those indications; indeed the catalogue of them is not a long one, and the two most efficacious are, doubtless, *the bark and the cold bath*. The first of these medicines has been looked upon, for more than a century past, independently of its febrifuge virtue, as one of the most powerful strengtheners, and as an anodyne. The most celebrated of the modern physicians look on it as a specific in the disorders of the nerves. I have already shewn, that it was an ingredient in the prescription above quoted from Boerhaave; and M. Vandermonde employed it with great success in the case of a young man under his care, whom debauches with women had thrown into a deplorable condition<sup>119</sup>. M. Lewis prefers it to all the other remedies; and M. Stehelin, in that letter of his which I have more than once mentioned, says, he holds it the most efficacious of any.

Twenty ages of exact and well considered experiences have demonstrated that the cold baths possess the same qualities. Dr. Baynard has more particularly proved the virtue of them in the disorders produced by self-pollution, and by excesses of venery; especially in a case, where, independently of the impotency and of the simple *gonorrhœa*, there was so great a weakness, augmented, indeed, by bleeding and by purgations, that the patient was considered as at the gates of death<sup>120</sup>.

M. Lewis does not scruple affirming yet more positively their efficacy. "Among all the medicines (says he,) whether external or internal, there is nothing can equal the virtue of the cold bath.... It cools the body more, strengthens the nerves better, and promotes perspiration more effectually, than any medicine taken down the throat can do, and will do as much service in the *tabes dorsalis*, prudently used, as every thing else put together<sup>121</sup>." It ought even to be remarked, that the cold bath has, as I have already said of the air, a particular advantage, which

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<sup>119</sup>119 *Recueil periodique d'Observations de Médecine*, T. vi. p. 195. In the second volume of which same work may be seen the description of a disorder produced by the same cause, which deserves attention.

<sup>120</sup> ΨΥΧΡΟΔΥΣΙΑ, or *the History of Cold Bathing*, p. 254, 281.

<sup>121</sup> Sect. x.

is, that its action depends less on the reaction, which is as much as to say on the vital forces of nature, than the action of the other remedies: these only act upon the quick, but the cold bath gives a spring even to the dead fibres.

The conjunction of the bark with the cold bath stands indicated by the purity of their virtues; they operated the same effects, and being combined, they cure those disorders which all the other remedies only serve to make worse. In their qualities of strengthening, of anodynes, of febrifuges, they re-invigorate, they lessen the feverish and nervous heat, they calm the irregular motions produced by the spasmodic disposition of the nervous system. They remedy the weakness of the stomach, and very quickly dissipate the pains which are the consequences of it. They restore appetite, facilitate the digestion and nutrition, they re-establish all the secretions, and especially perspiration, which renders them so efficacious in all the catarrhal and cutaneous disorders; in short, they are remedies for all the diseases caused by weakness, provided that the patient does not labor under indissoluble obstructions, inflammations, abscesses, or internal ulcers, conditions which even do not necessarily or almost necessarily exclude, any thing more than the cold baths, but which often allow of the bark.

I saw, some years ago, a foreigner, who might be of the age of about twenty-three or twenty-four, and who, from his tenderest infancy, had been subject to the torture of the cruellest head-achs, and almost continual ones considering the frequency and the length of the fits, which were almost always accompanied with a total loss of appetite. The evil had been considerably made worse by the use of bleeding, of evacuatives, of purgative waters, of warm baths, of broths, and a multitude of other remedies. I prescribed for him the cold bath and the bark. In a few days, the fits became weaker and weaker, and much less frequent; the patient, at a month's end, thought himself almost radically cured; the cessation of the remedies and the bad weather renewed the fits, but incomparably less violent than before. He recommenced the same process of cure the spring following, and his disorder came to be so slight, that he judged he should need no more of any application; I am

persuaded that the same recourse, once or twice repeated, will radically cure him.

A man of eight and twenty years old, had, for many years, been cruelly tormented with an irregular gout, which seized constantly his head, and occasioned dreadful distortions of his face; he had consulted a number of physicians, and tried remedies of various kinds, and lately a medicinal wine composed of the most penetrative aromatics, infused in Spanish wine; all, and especially the last, had increased his disorder; blisters had been applied to his legs which brought on violent symptoms; at this epoch it was that I was consulted. I advised for him, a strong decoction of bark and of camomile, which he continued for six weeks, and which restored him to more health, than he had enjoyed for many years. It would be needless here to adduce a great number of examples, especially foreign to the case, to prove the strengthening quality of these remedies, which has been so long demonstrated, and of which every thing in this disorder indicates the use; an use of which the happiest successes have confirmed the virtue.

When I employed the bark in a liquid form, I ordered the decoction of one ounce in twelve ounces of water, or, according to the indication, of red wine, boiled for two hours in a close vessel, to be taken, at three ounces a time, three times a day. I time the cold bath in the evening, when the digestion of the dinner is intirely completed; it contributes much to procure a quiet sleep. I knew a young man, accustomed to self-pollution, who used to pass the night in the most sleepless disquiet, and who was every morning bathed in his own colliquative sweats; the night that followed the sixth cold bath he slept five hours, and got up in the morning without sweats, and much refreshed.

Martials are a third remedy, so often used in all cases of weakness, as not to need any insistence here on their efficacy in quality of strengtheners; as they contain nothing of an irritating nature, they are extremely proper in this disorder. They are given in substance or in infusion; but the best preparation is the chalybeate waters prepared by nature, and especially the spaw-waters, one of the most powerful tonics that are known, and a tonic, so far from irritative, that it softens any acidity that may be in the

humors. The gums, myrrh, the bitters, the mildest aromatics may also be of use. It must be the circumstances that must decide the choice from among these different remedies. The first of those that I have indicated, merit, for the most times, the preference; but there may cases occur which require others; they should, in general, be selected from the class of the nervous medicines, taking for a guide of choice, the precautions I have above specified. It is a disorder of the nerves, and ought to be treated as such; and treated so it has often been with success, without the cause of it having been known. It is a truth, and a truth demonstrated by incontestable observations, that the ignorance of this cause, and a neglect thereto consequential of the precautions which it exacts, has sometimes frustrated prescriptions to all appearances the best indicated, without the physicians being able to penetrate the cause of their failure of success.

I prescribed for the young man, whose case is described in a fragment of his letters (p. 34.) pills of which mirrh was the basis, with a decoction of the bark; and this was attended with the happiest success<sup>122</sup>. “I am every day (as he wrote me sixteen days after his beginning these remedies) more and more sensible of the great good they do me; my head-achs are no longer either so frequent or so violent: I have not them now any more, unless when I apply close; my stomach grows better; I have now but rarely pains in my limbs.” At the end of a month his cure was complete, except in this, that he had not, nor perhaps ever will have, the strength it is probable he would have had but for his misconduct. The check, which the machine receives in its growing season, has consequences which are irreparable. Oh, that this truth were but strongly imprinted on the minds of youth! It has been lately urged with great energy. “Youth” (says M. Linnæus) “is the most important season for forming a robust

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<sup>122</sup> R. *Myrrh. elect. unc. S. Gum. Galb. extr. trifol. Terr. Japon. āā* dr. ii. *Sin. cort. aur. q. s. f. pil. gr. iii.*

To be taken an hour before breakfast, dinner, and supper, with three ounces of the following draught:

R. *Cort. Peruv. ℥ii. Cort. rad. capp. ℥i. Cinnam. acut. ℥ii. Lim. Mart. in nodul. lax. ℥B. S. cum aq. font. lib. ii B. l. a, f. decoct.*

constitution. Nothing is more to be dreaded than a premature or excessive use of the pleasures of venery: thence proceed weaknesses of the eyes, vertigos, diminution of appetite, and even an enfeeblement of the mental powers. Bodies enervated in youth never recover their original vigor: their old age is accelerated and infirm, and their life short<sup>123</sup>.”

Sixteen hundred years before the times of this great Naturalist, Plutarch, in his valuable work on the education of children, had recommended the formation of their constitution as a point of the highest importance. “No care (says he) should be neglected that can contribute to the elegance and vigor of the body:” (the excesses of which I am treating are detrimental to both the one and the other;) “for” (adds he) “the foundation for a healthy old age is to be laid in youth: temperance and moderation at this early time of life, are a passport to a happy latter season<sup>124</sup>.”

To the account of the preceding case, in which the success appears due to the bark, I shall subjoin another, in which the cold bath was the principal remedy.

A young man of a bilious constitution, seduced to libidinous practices from the age of ten years, had always been, from that time, weak, languishing, and of an ill habit of body: he had had some bilious disorders, which it had been very difficult to cure; he was extremely lean, pale, feeble, melancholic. I prescribed for him the cold bath, and a powder of cream of tartar, martials, and a very little cinnamon. In less than six weeks he acquired such a strength as he had never before known.

One great advantage of the Spaw-waters and of the bark is, that the use of them agrees with milk, and suffers it to pass. The Spaw-waters are not the only ones that have this property. Hoffman prescribed asses milk, with a third of Seltzer-water. M. de la Mettrie has preserved to us a curious observation of M. Boerhaave; speaking of the Duke of —, “This amiable Duke (I translate literally) had thrown himself out of the nuptial

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<sup>123</sup> This passage is taken from a Dissertation of this learned Physician, *On the foundations of health*. See the *Danish Mercury for July 1758*. p. 95.

<sup>124</sup> *De puerorum institutione*, Cap. x.

paradise; I brought him into it again by the use of Spaw-waters with milk<sup>125</sup>.”

A weakness of the stomach which causes the digestion to be too slow; acids; the want of activity in the bile; the obstructions in the intestines of the abdominal region, are the principal causes that hinder the digestion of the milk, and counter-indicate its use. The waters which remedy all these causes cannot but facilitate the digestion; and the bark, which fulfils the same indications, may also be very well combined with the milk. These remedies may be employed, either precedently, to prepare the passages, which is almost always necessary, or at the same time.

In 1753 I restored, perfectly, a foreigner, who had so exhausted himself with a woman of the town, that he was grown incapable of any act of virility; his stomach was also extremely weakened, and the want of nutrition and sleep had quite emaciated him. At six in the morning he took six ounces of the bark-decoction, to which he added a spoonfull of Canary-wine: an hour afterwards he took ten ounces of goats milk, fresh drawn, with a little sugar, and an ounce of orange-flower-water. He dined on a cold roast fowl, with a glass of excellent Burgundy, diluted with an equal part of water. At six in the evening he took a second dose of the bark; at half an hour after six he went into the cold bath, in which he staid ten minutes, and immediately on coming out of it, went to bed. At eight in the evening he took again the same quantity of milk, and got up from nine till ten. Such was the effect of these remedies, that at the end of eight days, on seeing me come into his room, he cried out to me, in a transport of joy, that he had recovered *the external sign of virility*, if I may make use of M. Buffon’s expression. In a month, he had almost intirely retrieved his original vigor.

Some absorbent powders; some spoonfulls of mint-water, often the addition of only a little sugar; some pills of the extract of the bark with mastic, which is itself an useful remedy in this case, may also contribute to prevent the disagreement of the milk. To the mastic, or to the gum-dragon, might be substituted that gum newly introduced in some parts of

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<sup>125</sup> *Supplement à l’Ouvrage de Penelope*, Chap. i. p. 35. “*Amabilis ille Dux se posuerat extra matrimonium; ego illum reposui intra.*”

England, under the name of *Gumm. rubrum Gambiense*, upon which there may be seen a small dissertation in that excellent collection published by the new Society of Physicians formed at London<sup>126</sup>. It strengthens, it sweetens: which are the two great indications in the diseases of which I am treating.

However, if with all the care that may be taken, it should be found impossible to bear the milk, I should advise trying butter-milk. I prescribed it with success for a young man, in whom certain symptoms of vergency to the hypochondriac disorder deterred me from a recourse to milk itself. The bilious drink the butter-milk with pleasure, and are always the better for it; and indeed it ought always to be preferred to milk, where there is a great deal of heat, a feverishness, an eresipelatous disposition; but it is especially of very great service when the venereal excesses produce an acute fever, such as was that of which Raphael died. Notwithstanding the weakness in these erotic fevers, the tonics would be hurtful; bleeding is dangerous: the famous Johnston, who died Baron of Ziebendorff, above fourscore years ago, positively forbad it in this case<sup>127</sup>. Too cooling a method of cure does not succeed, as the observation of M. Vandermonde proves, and as I have myself seen; but the butter-milk is of service, provided it is not too unctuous. It calms, it dilutes, it sweetens, it assuages the thirst, it refreshes, and at the same time nourishes and strengthens, which is of great importance in this case; one symptom of which is, that strength melts away in it with an inconceivable quickness. M. Gilchrist, who does not lay any great stress on milk in a hectic, commends greatly the use of butter-milk in that very disorder<sup>128</sup>.

Since my last edition of this work, published about four years ago, (it being now 1764,) I have been consulted by several persons in a state of enervity or debility. Some have been intirely cured. Many have received considerable relief; others none at all. When the disease is got to a certain head, the most that can be hoped for is, that the remedies will

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<sup>126</sup> *Medical Observations and Enquiries*, T. i. p. 36.

<sup>127</sup> *In febre ex venere cavendum a venæ sectione*. Syntagma, L. i. tit. 2. c. 1.

<sup>128</sup> *On Sea voyages*, p. 119.

stop the progress of the disorder. Of the successes of some of my patients I have remained unacquainted.

In almost all my treatment of these cases, milk has been the principal aliment; while the bark, martials, chalybeate waters, and the cold bath have been the remedies. Some patients I put intirely into a milk diet; others only took it once or twice a day.

The patient of whom I particularised the case in the fifth Section, where I promised an account of my method of management of his disorder, lived for three months upon nothing but milk, upon bread well-baked, upon one or two quite new laid eggs, a day, and fair water, just drawn from the fountain. His milk he took four times a day, twice warm from the cow without bread, twice warmed on the fire with some bread. The remedies were an electuary composed of bark, of conserve of orange-peel, and syrup of mint. His breast was covered with an aromatic strengthening plaister. His whole body was every morning rubbed down with flannel. He took as much exercise as he could bear, both on horseback and foot, and especially he kept much in the open air. His weakness, and his complaints of his breast, hindered me from advising him the cold bath at that epoch. The success, however, of the remedies was such, that his strength returned to him, and his stomach was restored. In a month's time he was able to walk a league on foot. His vomitings ceased intirely; the pains of his breast were considerably diminished, and for these three years last past he continues in a very tolerable state of health. Little by little he returned to his usual aliments, having taken a distaste to milk.

The parts of generation are always those that recover their vigor the slowest. Often too they never regain it, even though the rest of the body appear to have recovered its natural strength. In this case, it may be literally prophesied, that the part which has sinned, will be the part that shall die.

I have always found more facility in curing those who, in the age of maturity, had exhausted themselves by excesses, in a short time, than those who, in a longer space of it, had enervated themselves by pollutions, more rarely practised, but which having been begun in their tenderest youth, had hindered their growth, and had never allowed them

to come to all their natural strength. The first may be considered as having had a violent illness, which has consumed all their strength, but whose organs having acquired all their perfection, however they may have much suffered, yet, the cessation of the cause of their illness, time, a good regimen, and proper remedies, may restore them. Whereas the others, having never let their constitution come to good, how should they be restored to what they never had? How could they expect that art should operate in the age of maturity, what they have hindered nature from operating in the tender season of youth and of puberty? Common sense must tell one how chimerical such a hope must be; and, indeed, my observations every day prove to me, that young persons, who have delivered themselves up to this pollution, in their childhood, in their earliest youth, and in the epoch of the unfolding of puberty, an epoch which is a crisis of Nature, for which its whole strength is necessary to her; daily observation, I say, proves to me, that such young persons must never expect to be vigorous and robust: they may think themselves very well off, if they can compass the enjoying a moderate state of health, exempt from great disorders or great pains.

Those who trust to a tardy repentance, having delayed it to an age, in which the machine may preserve itself, when it is in good order, but is not to be repaired without great difficulty, ought not either to have great hopes. After forty it is rare to grow young again.

When I order the bark with wine, I do not restrict the patient intirely to a milk diet; but make him take the bark in the morning and the milk at night. For some patients, however, I have been obliged to invert that order; the wine taken in the morning not agreeing with their stomach, and constantly making them vomit.

When I employ mineral waters, I make them drink first some bottles pure, before I proceed to have them mixed with milk.

When the disorder is inveterate it commonly degenerates into a *cacochymia*, a general depravation of the humors, or ill habit of the body; the cure of which must be proceeded upon before you attempt to restore strength. In this case it is that evacuants are sometimes indispensably necessary, and prove of great service. Whereas

restoratives, nutritious aliments, milk, ordered in these circumstances, may throw the patient into a slow fever, and he will rather find his strength diminish in proportion to the use he makes of them.

When violent excesses shall have thrown one suddenly into such a considerable weakness as to give room of fear for the patient's life, recourse should be had to active cordials. Spanish wines may be given him with a little bread, or some good broths with new laid eggs: he should be put to bed directly, and have some flannels applied to his breast, steeped in wine, warmed with Theriaca.

As to those cases, in which venereal excesses have occasioned an acute fever, bleeding should not be used, unless indicated by the fullness and hardness of the pulse; and it is better to take the quantity of blood at two different times bleeding, than all at once. The white decoction, barley water with a little milk, some doses of nitre, some glisters with a decoction of mullein flowers, some warm bathings for the feet; and as to aliments, some veal-broth, thickened with barley or the like grain; these are the remedies indicated by right practice, and such as I have seen succeed very happily and quickly, in those cases in which I have employed them.

The symptoms rarely require any particular method of cure, and yield to the general one. You may sometimes, however, join external corroboratives to the internal ones, where it may be proper to strengthen any particular part. I have myself often advised, with success, epithems or aromatic plaisters for the breast. Nor is it sometimes unserviceable to wrap the testicles in a soft flannel, steeped in some corroborative liquid, and to support them by means of a suspensory.

Here also may be placed what M. Gotter says: "I have sometimes cured the *gutta serena*, occasioned by venereal excesses, by employing internal corroboratives, and errhines, or nasal cephalic powders, which, by the slight irritation they produced, determined a greater afflux of the animal spirits to the optic nerve<sup>129</sup>."

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<sup>129</sup> *De perspiratione insens.* p. 514, 515.

It would be needless here to enter on greater particularities of the method of cure; whatever extension I might give them, they would never be sufficient to guide the sick without the assistance of a physician, to whom they would be superfluous. I have, indeed, treated the more largely of the regimen, because that, when the disorder has as yet made no great progress, that alone, joined to the cessation of the cause, might operate a cure, and that any one might confine himself to it without any danger.

There appears then nothing more for me to say, before I terminate this part, but to add the preservative cautions. I was sensible that this article was wanting to the first edition of this work, and that it was an unjustifiable defect, from the importance of the matter. A gentleman, celebrated in the Republic of Literature for his works, and yet more respectable for his talents, his knowledge, and his personal qualities, than for his name, and for the employments of which he so worthily acquits himself, in one of the first towns in Switzerland, M. Iselin, (I hope he will forgive my naming him,) made me sensible of that my omission in a very polite manner. I shall quote here an extract of his letter with the more pleasure, for its pointing out exactly what there remained for me to do.

“I could wish (says he) to see a work from your hand, in which you would explain the means the most secure and the least dangerous, by which parents, during the time of education, and young persons, when they are left to their own conduct, might the best preserve themselves from that violence of desires which urges them to those excesses, whence arise such dreadful diseases, or to disorders that disturb the happiness of society and their own. I do not doubt of there being a diet that particularly favors continency. I should think that a work that should teach it us, combined with a description of the diseases produced by impurity, would be equivalent to the best treatises of morality on this subject.”

M. Iselin is doubtless in the right; nothing would be more important than the combination of the two points he desires; but then nothing would be more difficult than the detaching them from the other parts not only of moral but medicinal education. To treat of this article apart, that is to say, to treat of it well, it would be necessary to establish a great number of

principles, which would swell too much this little work, and which would, besides, be very foreign to it. Some general precepts, unconnected with the necessary principles and divisions, would not only be of little use, but might even become dangerous; so that it is better to refer such a treatise to the making part of a more considerable one, upon the means of forming a good constitution, and of giving a youth a firmly established health; a matter which, though it has been handled by very able authors, is, hitherto, far, very far from being exhausted; and upon which there remain a multitude of extremely important things to be added, as well as upon the disorders incident to that season of life. So that, though it be against my inclination, I will not here touch upon this article. All that I can say is, that idleness, inactivity, too long lying a-bed, too soft a bed, a rich, aromatic, salt, or vinous diet, dangerous or suspicious acquaintance, licentious works, being the likeliest causes of seduction into those excesses, they cannot be too carefully avoided. Diet especially is of extreme importance, and there is not attention enough had to that particular. Those who educate youth, ought to have ever present to them that pathetic observation of St. Jerom: “The forges of Vulcan, the internals of the Vesuvius and the Mount Olympus do not burn with more flames, than youth pampered with high meats, and drenched with wines.”

Menjot, one of Lewis the XIVth’s Physicians, from about the middle to the end of the last century, mentions women, that an excess of *hippocras* (spiced wine) threw into a venereal extasy. The use of wine and flesh-meats is so much the more pernicious, for that while they augment the force of the stimulations of loose desires, they weaken at the same time that of reason, which ought to resist them. “Wine and animal food dull the soul,” says Plutarch, in his treatise *On the eating of flesh-meats*, a work which ought to be generally perused. The most ancient Physicians had already known the influence of regimen over the morals; they had the idea of a moral medicinal-course; and Galen has left us upon that matter a small work, which is, perhaps, the best upon that subject hitherto extant. Conviction of the reality of his promise cannot but follow its perusal.

“Let those (says he) who deny that the difference of aliments can render some temperate, others dissolute; some chaste, others incontinent;

some courageous, others cowardly; some meek, others quarrelsome; some modest, others overbearing; let those, I say, who deny this truth, come to me; let them follow my counsels as to eating and drinking, and I promise them, that they will find great helps therefrom towards moral philosophy; they will especially feel the faculties of their soul gather greater strength; they will improve their natural genius, they will acquire more memory, more prudence, more diligence. I will also tell them what kind of liquors, what winds, what state of the air, what climates they ought to shun or chuse<sup>130</sup>.”

Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch, had already left us some very good things on this important matter, and among the works which remain to us of the Pythagorean Porphyry, that zealous anti-christian of the third century, there is one, *upon the abstinence of the animal food*, in which he reproaches Firmus Castricius, to whom he addresses it, for his having quitted the vegetable diet, though he himself had owned it was the fittest to preserve health, and to facilitate the study of philosophy; and he adds, “Since you have taken to the eating of flesh-meat, your own experience has taught you, that that confession of yours was well grounded.” There are some very good things in that work.

The most efficacious preservative, the most infallible one is, doubtless, that which is pointed out by that great man, who, of all men has the best known his fellow creatures, and all their ways; who has not only seen what they actually are, but what they have been, what they ought to be, and what they are capable of becoming; who has the most truly loved them; who has made the greatest efforts in their favor, and who has been the most cruelly persecuted by them. “Watch with care (says he) over the young man. Do not leave him alone either by day or by night. Sleep, at least, in the same room with him. From the instant that he shall have contracted that habit, the most fatal one that a young man can enslave himself to, he will carry to the grave the melancholic effects of it. He will have his body and his heart for ever enervated by it.” I refer to the work itself for a perusal of all the excellent things he has said on this matter<sup>131</sup>.

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<sup>130</sup> *Quod animi mores temperamenta sequentur*. C. 9. Charterius, T. v. p. 457.

<sup>131</sup> See Rousseau’s *Emilius*, English Translation, Vol. ii. p. 188, & seq. Vol. iii. p. 155, &c.

The description of the danger, upon the abandoning one's self to such vicious practices, is perhaps one of the most powerful motives of correcting one's self of them: it is a dreadful picture, and fit to make one start back with horror and affright. Let us assemble in one point of view the principal features of it. A general wasting of the whole machine; an enfeeblement of all the corporal senses and of all the faculties of the soul; loss of imagination and memory; imbecillity; contempt; shame; the ignominy such viciousness drags after it; all the functions of life disturbed, suspended, or painfully executed; long, vexatious, unaccountable, disgusting diseases; acute and constantly regenerating pains; all the infirmities or evils of old age, in the age of youth and vigor; an unaptitude for all those occupations for which man is born; the vile character to act of being an useless burthen to the earth; the mortifications to which such a character is daily exposed; a distaste for all worthy pleasures; a dull melancholy; an aversion for society and consequently for one's self; a horror of life, the dread of temptations every moment to suicide; an anguish worse than pain; a remorse worse than anguish, a remorse which daily increasing, and which doubtless taking a new force, when the soul is no longer weakened by its ties to the body, will perhaps serve for a torment to all eternity, for an unextinguishable fire. See here the sketch of the fate reserved for those who proceed as if they had not it to dread!

Before I quit this article of the method of cure, I ought to observe to the patients, and it is an observation equally extensible to all who labor under chronical disorders, especially when they are accompanied with weakness; that they ought not to hope that, in a few days, those evils can be repaired or removed, which are the produce of the errors of years. They must lay their account with being obliged to endure the tediousness of a long cure, and to confine themselves scrupulously to all the rules laid down for their regimen. If sometimes they appear trifling or minute to them, it is because they themselves are not fit judges of the degree of their importance; it would be better for them constantly to repeat to themselves, that the irksome tediousness of the most rigid method of cure is still preferable to a state of any the slightest disease. Be it allowed me to observe, that for one disorder that remains uncured through

improper treatment, there are a number, which the indocility of the patients renders incurable, notwithstanding the most well judged assistance given on the part of the physician.

For the securing success, Hippocrates required that the patient, the physician, the attendants, should all equally do their duty; if this concurrence was less rare, the happy issues of disorders would be more frequent. “Let the patient (says Aridæus) have a good heart, and join forces with the physician against the disease<sup>132</sup>.” I have seen the most stubborn ones yield to the establishment of this harmony; and recent observations have demonstrated to me, that the virulence of even cancerous disorders has submitted to methods of cure, directed perhaps with some skill, but especially executed with a docility and a regularity of which the successes constituted the best praise.

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<sup>132</sup> *De diut. morb.* 1. i. proem. p. 27.

**ARTICLE 4**  
***Accessory, or Relative Diseases***

**SECTION 11**  
***Nocturnal Pollutions***

I have shown the dangers of an over-abundant evacuation of the seminal liquid, by excesses of venery, and by self-pollution: I have also observed, in the beginning of this work, that it was to be lost both by nocturnal pollutions through libidinous dreams, and by that running called the simple *gonorrhœa*. I shall briefly examine these two disorders.

Such are the laws that unite the soul to the body, that even when the senses are locked up by sleep, the soul is taken up with ideas transmitted to it in the day.

*Res, quæ in vita usurpant homines, cogitant, curant, vident,*

*Quæque aiunt vigilantes, agitantque, ea si cui in somno accidunt*

*Minus mirum est.*

Acc.

Another law of this union is, that without disturbing this imprisonment of the other senses; or, that I may express myself less equivocally than in metaphor, without restoring to them their sensibility to external impressions, the soul can, during sleep, beget the motions necessary to the execution of those acts of the will, which the ideas on which she busies herself suggests to her. Taken up with ideas relative to the pleasures of love, delivered up to lascivious dreams, those objects which she paints to herself, produce upon the organs of generation the same motions that they would have produced in the time of being awake, and the act naturally consummates itself in reality, if it is consummated in the imagination. The accident to Horace in one of the places of repose on his journey to Brundusium, is well known.

*Hic ego mendacem stultissimus usque puellam,*

*Ad mediam noctem expecto: somnus tamen aufert*

*Intentum veneri: tum immundo somnia visu*

*Nocturnam maculant vestem, ventremque supinum.*

The organs of generation, on the other hand, when they are the first irritated, sometimes excite nothing but the imagination, and bring on dreams, which terminate as the precedently mentioned ones. These principles serve to explain the different kinds of these nocturnal pollutions.

The first is that which proceeds from an over-abundance of the seminal liquid; it is what persons in the vigor of life, who are sanguine, hearty, and continent, are liable to. The heat of the bed coming to rarefy the humors, and the seminal liquid being more susceptible of rarefaction than any other, the irritated *vesiculæ* hurry away the imagination, which, being destitute of the helps that would discover the illusion to her, delivers herself wholly up to it; the idea of coition produces the ultimate effect of it, the ejaculation. In this case, this evacuation is not a disease; it is rather a favorable crisis, that disembroasses from a humor, which, in too great an abundance, or too long retained, might be rather hurtful: and though some Physicians, who have no faith but in what they themselves have seen, have denied it, it is not the less true that this liquid may, by its over-abundance, produce disorders different from the priapism or the *furor uterinus*. I hope I may be allowed a short digression on this question; it is not a foreign one to my subject.

Galen has preserved to us the history of a man and woman to whom the excess of the seminal liquid was the cause of bad health, and who were both of them cured by renouncing that continency to which they had taxed themselves<sup>133</sup>; and he looks on the retention of this humor as capable of producing very bad effects. I had, at Montpellier, occasion to make an observation, in every point similar to that great man's. A widow, of a healthy vigorous habit of body, of near forty years of age, who had for a long time been accustomed to the enjoyments of the nuptial bed, and had been for some years deprived of them, used, from time to time, to fall into such violent hysteric fits, that she lost the use of her senses by them:

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<sup>133</sup> *De locis affectis*, L. vi. c. 5. Charter. T. vii. p. 519.

no remedy could dissipate those fits; there was no way to make her come out of them but by strong frictions of the genital parts, which procuring to her a convulsive tremor, followed by a copious ejaculation, she, that instant, recovered her senses.

Zacutus Lusitanus relates a case very similar to this. "A girl (says he) was in a very violent convulsive paroxysm, so as to be on the point of suffocation by it; without feeling, without sense, a general tremor over her whole body, her eyes set; having tried all other remedies in vain, I ordered an acrid irritative pessary to be applied, which produced a copious spermatic evacuation, and she immediately recovered her senses<sup>134</sup>."

M. Hoffman has also preserved to us the history of a nun, who could not be recovered out of an hysterical paroxysm but by the excitation of that evacuation. And Zacutus, in the same work I have just quoted, speaks of two men, to whose health the suppression of the pleasures of love was a detriment. The one was attacked with a swelling at the navel which no remedy could diminish, and which was dissipated on his marrying: the other, weakened by his debauches in that way, quitted them all on a sudden; six months afterwards he had vertigos, and soon afterwards some attacks of a real epilepsy, which were imputed to some disorders of his stomach. Accordingly they gave him stomachics, which exasperated his disorder, and he died in a violent fit of the epilepsy. On being opened, every thing was found in proper order, except the *vesiculæ seminales* and the *vasa deferentia*, which were found full of a sperm, green, and in some places ulcerous<sup>135</sup>.

A Physician, respectable for his skill and for his age, and who long attended the Austrian armies in Italy, told me, he had remarked, that those German soldiers who were not married, and who lived chastely, were often attacked with fits of epilepsy, priapisms, or nocturnal pollutions; accidents which proceeded from an over-abundant secretion of the seminal liquid; which perhaps too had the more stimulative acridity from the heat of the country, where the diet is also more rich.

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<sup>134</sup> *Prax. admirand.* L. i. Obs. 85.

<sup>135</sup> *Prax. admirand.* L. i. Obs. 109, 110.

We have from the same Dr. Jaques, whom I have quoted in the second Article of this work, a thesis<sup>136</sup>, of which M. de la Mettrie has given a translation<sup>137</sup>, in which he adduces many examples of diseases produced by a privation of the pleasures of venery; and M. de la Mettrie mentions another work upon cloistered virginity, of which the object is the same.

M. Zindel published at Basle, about fifteen years ago, a dissertation, in which he has collected together, scattered observations on the diseases produced by too rigid a chastity<sup>138</sup>. And here may be placed what M. de Sauvages says of the dangers of a rigorous chastity to those women with whose constitutions it does not agree; they are so much the more the victims of the warmth of it, the more careful they are to conceal it; they pine, and fall into melancholy, disrelish of life, emaciation, and pollutions. He adds a case, which furnishes perhaps an example of the severest trial to which a conflict of constitution and virtue could expose the party distracted between them: it is that of a young girl, who, devoured with a raging fire, and yet preserving her soul pure, with an astonishing fortitude was subject to pollutions even in those moments in which she was deploring her misfortune at the feet of her confessor, a decrepid, loathsome old man.<sup>139</sup>

“A young girl, who marries an old husband” (said a new married woman to her female friend) “had better throw herself into the river, with a millstone about her neck.”

In short, not to mention many others, M. Gaubius places excessive continency in the class of causes of diseases. “It is rare, indeed, (he says,) that it produces any evils, and yet it has been known so to do, in some men, born with a warm constitution, and who breed a great deal of the seminal liquid, and in some women<sup>140</sup>.” And he proceeds to an enumeration of those disorders. The existence then of them is not to be denied; but the rarity of them may at the same time be affirmed, especially in the present age, which seems to be the age of sensuality:

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<sup>136</sup> *An ex negato veneris usu morbi*, 1722.

<sup>137</sup> Penelope, ch. 8. *Des qualités nécessaires aux medecins*.

<sup>138</sup> Nicolaus Zindelii *De morbis ex castitate nimia oriundis*. Basle, 1745.

<sup>139</sup> *Nosolog. medic.* T. iv. p. 344.

<sup>140</sup><sup>140</sup> *Institutiones Pathologicæ*, §. 563.

and, in truth, we see every day that gross mistake committed, of attributing indistinctly to this cause, that is to say, to a need of employment for the organs of generation, all the diseases which attack marriageable persons of both sexes, and in advising marriage to them as the only remedy; a remedy often misjudged, often even noxious, because it cannot destroy the complaints which proceed from other causes of disorder, and may add to such evils, those which pregnancy and lying-in commonly produce in persons of a languishing state of health. I return to the subject of pollutions.

I have shown, that the first kind of them, produced by that over-abundance of the seminal liquid, which it lessens by evacuation, is not of itself an evil; but it may become one by recurring too frequently, and at times when the over-abundance no longer exists. I have also already observed, that one evacuation disposed for a second, and so on, so great is the force of habit, which consists in this, that the reiteration of the same motions gives them the greater facility, insomuch that they reproduce themselves on the slightest cause; an observation of great use towards the understanding the animal œconomy, upon which Galen, and especially M. Maty<sup>141</sup>, have said some excellent things; and still it has not been treated of to the bottom. From the habit then there results this inconveniency, that these evacuations become a consequence of it, independently of the want, and when it no longer exists. Then they are extremely pernicious, and have all the dangers of an excessive evacuation procured by other means. Satyrus surnamed Gragropilex, residing at Thasus, had had, from the age of twenty-five, frequent nocturnal pollutions: nay, sometimes the liquid would come from him in the day time. He died of a consumption in his thirtieth year<sup>142</sup>.

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<sup>141</sup> Galenus, *Libr. De consuetudinibus*, Charter. T. vi. p. 541. M. Maty, *Dissertatio de consuetudinis efficacia in corpus humanum*, Leyd. 1740. M. Pujati has also given us some very good reflexions on this matter, in his *Treatise De la Diète des Fievreux*, p. 57, &c. Metaphysicians, who appear to have the best handled this point, are Mr. Locke, *Essays*, L. ii. c. 32, M. de Condillac, *Traité des animaux*, p. 2. c. 2. and 9. and the anonymous author *des Elemens de Physiologie*, c. 61, 62, 63, 64. I know a man that, having been waked, above twenty years before, at one after midnight, by an alarm of fire, has since that time constantly waked of himself precisely at that hour.

<sup>142</sup> *Epidem.* L. vi. §. 8. n. 52. Foesul. 1201.

M. Zimmerman told me of a man of a remarkably fine genius, to whom pollutions had caused the loss of all the activity of his understanding, and whose body was exactly in that condition described by Boerhaave (Section I.) In that Section too may be seen the evils which Hoffman observed consequential to pollutions. The most common symptoms, when the disorder has not as yet made any great progress, are, a continual oppression, most considerable in the morning, and acute pains of the loins. Some months ago I was consulted about a laborer in the vines, aged about fifty years, before that time very robust, but whom frequent pollutions had, for three or four months, so prodigiously weakened, that he could not work but a few hours a day. Often he was even totally debarred from it by pains in his loins, which confined him to his bed, and he every day grew leaner. I gave him some advice, of which I could not learn the execution or effect.

I knew a man who had become deaf for some weeks on his neglecting a cold, and who, on his having a nocturnal pollution, was, the next day, much deafer than ordinary, with great restlessness and anxiety; and another, whose weakness was owing to many causes, and who, after a pollution, wakes under the greatest oppression, and with so general a numbness, that he is for an hour like a paralytic, and remains the whole day after under a great dejection.

In this first class may be put the pollutions of those, who, having been accustomed to frequent emissions, suddenly suspend them. Such were those of a woman whom Galen makes mention; she had been, for some time, in the state of widow-hood, and the retention of the spermatic liquid brought upon her disorders of the *uterus*. In her sleep she had convulsive motions of her loins, arms, and legs, which were accompanied with an abundant emission of a thick matter, with the same sensations as in the act of coition<sup>143</sup>. A female dancer had received accidentally a slight hurt near her left breast; her surgeon prescribed to her rather a strict diet, and especially forbid her those pleasures to which she was pretty much accustomed. The third night of the privation, to which she had submitted without minding the injunctions of diet, she had a pollution, which

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<sup>143</sup> *De semine*, Lib. ii. cap. 1. Charter. T. iii p. 213.

returning several times the following nights, made her visibly fall away, and caused to her violent pains of the loins. Her wound, however, did not fail of healing, in a great measure, and would have been quite so, if she had been observant of the surgeon's rules of diet, who, firm in the principles of his art, continued his prohibition of venery, and bled and purged her. Wearied out, at length, and weakened, she left off his remedies, and, resuming her usual course of life, her weakness and her pains quickly went off.

But do not let any one, by any means, from this last mentioned observation, conclude against the utility of the precepts of the most skillful masters in the art of surgery, who, grounding it on other observations, strictly forbid coition to the wounded; there is no practitioner that might not easily have convinced himself how pernicious it must be to them. I shall only adduce one example, in which self-pollution was mortal, and of which G. Fabri de Hilden has preserved to us the history.

Cosmus Slotan had amputated the hand of a young man, that was shattered by a gun-shot wound. As he knew him to be of a very hot constitution, he had strictly forbid him any commerce with his wife, whom he likewise apprized of the danger. But when all fear of the worst accidents was dissipated, and the cure was proceeding in a fair way, the patient finding desires come upon him, for which his wife refused to have the complaisance he wanted of her, he, without coition, procured to himself an emission of the *semen*, which was immediately followed by a fever, by a delirium, by convulsions, and other violent symptoms, of which he died in four days time<sup>144</sup>.

I knew a young married man, who, having inconsiderately thrown himself out of the seat of a *cabriolet*, (a chaise,) fell on his side; the hind-wheel went over his foot, between the heel and the ankle-bone; there was neither fracture nor luxation, but a considerable contusion: finding himself recovered at the end of five days, he proceeded with his bride as if he had had no such accident. Two hours afterwards his leg swelled,

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<sup>144</sup> *Obs. Chirurg. Cent. i. Obs. 22.*

with the most unsufferable torture, and he had a strong fever, which lasted thirty hours.

But return we to the point. It is of great importance early to prevent the progress of habit; and whatever may be the first cause of the pollutions, not to suffer them to grow upon one. When they have been a long while upon one, they are very hard to cure. “There is no disorder (says Hoffman) that more torments the patients, nor gives more trouble to physicians, than nocturnal pollutions, when they have lasted a long time, and become habitual, especially if they return every night. The very best remedies are almost always in vain employed; they even often do more harm than good<sup>145</sup>.”

All the Physicians who have written on this distemper have asserted, that the cure of it is extremely difficult; and all the Physicians who occasionally have had it under their cure, have themselves found it so; nor is there any room for being surprized at it. Unless one either restore to the organs their strength, and diminish their irritability during the time that passes between two pollutions, which is impossible; or on a sudden prevent the return of lascivious dreams, which it is not easy to do, one may be sure that the pollution will return, and destroy almost all the good that may have been operated by the small quantity of remedy applied since the last: so that from the term of one pollution to that of another, the ground that may have been gained must be infinitely little, and a great number of remedies must be accumulated before any sensible good effect can be obtained.

Coelius Aurelianus has collected together the best things that the antients have said on the management in this case.

*First*, He would have the patient avoid, as much as possible, all libidinous ideas.

*Secondly*, That he should lie on a bed of a hard and refreshing matter; that he should apply to his loins a thin plate of lead, and to all the parts

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<sup>145</sup> Cons. 102.

which are the seat of the disorder, sponges soaked in water and vinegar, and cooling things, as the *balaustæ*, *acacia*, *hypocist*, the *psillium*.

*Thirdly*, That he should use no diet but of cooling and yet not laxative articles of meat and drink.

*Fourthly*, He advises restoratives, or analeptics.

*Fifthly*, The use of the cold-bath.

*Sixthly*, Not to sleep on one's back, but on one side, or prone.

All this advice is full of sensible things; but let us examine more distinctly the indication that presents itself. It is to diminish the quantity of the seminal liquid, and to prevent those lascivious dreams. Now generally speaking, the diet and the regimen are much more proper to obtain these ends, than medicines. The fittest aliments are those which are procured from the vegetable kingdom, pulse, herbs, grain, and fruits. Among the meats, those which contain the least substance. In both the one and the other class, the choice should fall on those which have the least acidity. It has been precedently remarked, what an influence this regimen has on the tranquillity of sleep; it cannot be too much recommended to persons afflicted with nocturnal pollutions, to whom that tranquillity is so necessary. They ought especially to renounce suppers, or at least never sup but lightly: this single attention contributes more to operate a cure than all the medicines.

Some years ago I knew a young man, who had almost every night a nocturnal pollution, and who had before had some fits of the *night-mare*. A barber-surgeon had ordered him to drink every night, at his lying down, some glasses of warm water; which, without diminishing the pollutions, augmented the other complaint. Both these evils then united, and returned every night. The dream of the *night-mare* was the phantom of a female, which caused at the same time his pollution. Weakened by the double disorder, and by the privation of a tranquil sleep, he was going fast into a consumption. I prescribed his taking nothing for supper but a little bread and some raw fruits, and, as he went to bed, to drink a glass of cold water, with fifteen drops of the anodine mineral liquor of Hoffman. It was

not long before he regained his tranquillity of sleep; his two disorders left him intirely, and he soon recovered his strength.

Heavy, indigest meats, game or venison, especially at night, are a perfect poison for this disorder; and, I repeat it, without leaving off suppers, and especially of animal food, all the other remedies can be of no service. Wine, spirituous liquors, coffee, are, in many lights, hurtful. The best drink is that of pure water; or there may, to advantage, in each bottle of it be dissolved a drachm of nitre.

The precept that Coelius gives for avoiding soft beds, is of the greatest importance. There should be no feathers suffered in it: straw is preferable to horse-hair, and I have known some patients receive benefit from covering the mattrass with leather.

The advice against not lying on one's back, is especially necessary; this posture, in the night, contributing to render the sleep the more agitated, and to heat more the parts of generation.

In short, as habit has, in this case, a very great influence, and that to break it is the capital point, the following observation may furnish a means of succeeding. I owe it to an Italian gentleman, respectable for his virtues, and one of the worthiest characters I ever remember to have known. He consulted me upon a disorder of a very different kind; but in order to give me the clearer notions of his present case, he let me into the history of his health. He had five years before then been troubled with frequent pollutions, which totally exhausted him. Upon this he took, over-night, a firm resolution to wake of himself the first moment that the appearance of a female should strike his imagination; and, before he fell asleep, he took care to dwell fixedly and strongly on this idea. This remedy was attended with the happiest success; the idea of the danger, and his resolution of waking of himself, being closely, over-night, linked with the idea of a woman, reproduced themselves, in the midst of his sleep, at the same time, and jointly with this last: he waked at the time, and this precaution, repeated for some nights, dissipated the disorder.

But I would not have those two last instances inspire too much security: there are cases against which the best remedies must fail; that

which Hoffman relates<sup>146</sup> is an example; and it would be right to give before-hand to patients the advice which he gave to his; it is this; that without a long perseverance in the use of proper remedies, there is no efficacy to be hoped for from them; or rather, that in such a case, as that the regimen is the great essential, it is often only by means of a long observance of it, that any perceptible relief can be obtained. If remedies are employed, they ought to be regulated by the same indications as the regimen. It is not long since I knew a copious bleeding carry off this disorder. Nitrous powders, lemonades, acid spirits, almond emulsions, may be of service.

M. Hoffman prescribed for the self-pollutor, who, after having renounced his infamous practices, had fallen under the disorder of nocturnal pollutions, the following powder:

*R. C. C. pphicè ppati. Ossis sepiæ ana unc. ss. Succini cum instillat. Olei tartar. per deliquium ppat. dr. ii. Cascar. dr. i.*

Of which he took one drachm over-night, with black cherry-water; and in the morning the Seltzer waters with milk; his drink, a ptisan of *santal*; the China-root, *cichoreum*, *scorzonera*, and *cinnamon*. With these helps, and a proper diet, the patient got well in a few weeks. M. Zimmerman, by means of the same powder, has cured “very frequent pollutions, attended with the common languor in that case, and which had lasted for several years, in a young man of twenty.” It is not easy to explain how this powder, which is but a simple absorbent, can do any good; but I have seen good effects from camphire.

Another sort of pollutions is such as are incident to Hypochondriacs. The circulation proceeds in them but slowly, especially in the veins of the Hypogastrium, which is specifically the reason why the parts from which those veins bring back the blood are often obstructed; the nerves are easily put into motion; the humors have a character of acridity extremely fit to irritate; their sleep is commonly disturbed with dreams: here you have many causes of pollution, and indeed they are much subject to them. “The imagination (says M. Boerhaave) often, during sleep,

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<sup>146</sup> Cas. 102.

produces emissions of the seed. The most sedentary of the men of letters, and the splenetic, are liable to this accident; and the efflux of the seed is often so considerable, as to cause them to fall into an atrophy<sup>147</sup>.” This disorder has for them so much the more vexatious consequences, for that they never give a loose to any excesses of this kind, without being extremely incommoded, as M. Fleming has happily expressed it:

*Non Veneri crebro licet unquam impune litare.*

For them there is but one method of cure, which is, to attack the principal disorder. The removal of the obstructions is the first thing to be done; after which the cold-bath should be used, and that salutary bark which God preserve to us. Then is truly the case of recourse to those two powerful remedies, with which martials may be allied. If an attention to the choice of aliments is necessary in all cases, it is particularly so in this. The Hypochondriacs, in general, perform their digestions very ill; the ill-digested aliments produce flatulent turgescences, which disturbing the circulation, dispose to pollutions in two ways; first, by obstructing the return of the blood in the veins of the genitals; secondly, by disturbing the tranquillity of sleep, and thereby consequently disposing to dreams. Thence sensibly appears the reason why Pythagoras forbid his disciples the eating flatulent aliments, which he, wisely, considered as detrimental both to the clearness and strength of the intellectual functions, and to corporal chastity. Besides the two reasons which I have given, I might venture to point out a third, which I have strongly had room to suspect in two patients; and that is, the expansion of the air, disengaged from the fluids in the *corpus cavernosum*, which produced an erection, together with the venereal pruriency. It is now well known that all our liquids are impregnated with this fluid, but that so long as they are in perfect health, that fluid is, as it were, imprisoned, and deprived of all elasticity. Great Naturalists have been of opinion, that there were but two ways of restoring to it its elasticity; the one, a considerably greater degree of heat than is observed in the animal body; and the other, putrefaction. But a multitude of observations of disorders produced by the air so dilated, have proved, that, independently of these two causes, there were other

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<sup>147</sup> *Institut.* §. 776.

alterations in the fluids, which would have the same effect, and these alterations appear the most frequent in Hypochondriacs: so that it is not wonderful that the cavernous parts should be the seat of the expansion of this diseased air: on the contrary, there is no part which appears more likely to be exposed to it; and if attention has not thereto been given before now, it is probably rather for want of observers than of observableness. Observations, however, clearly evince the necessity of avoiding those aliments which, abounding more than others in air, are the more hurtful, both by that which separates from them in the first passages, and by that which they convey into the blood. Who does not know that new beer, which is extremely flatulent, occasions violent erections? Since my last edition of this work, I have seen that M. Thierry, one of the most learned Physicians, and of the most celebrated practitioners of France, has taken notice of these flatulent erections.

And here may be added, as bearing some affinity to this last kind of pollution, and principally attacking such as are melancholically affected, a disease that might be called a *furor genitalis*. It differs from a Priapism, and from the Satyriasis. I shall describe it by an observation already published in the first Latin edition of this work, and omitted in the French one.

A man about fifty years of age had labored under it for twenty-four years, and in all that long term could not pass twenty-four hours without recourse to women, or to that horrid supplement, self-pollution; and commonly he would reiterate the act several times a day. The seed was thin, acrid, unprolific, and the evacuation very quick. His nerves were excessively weakened: he had violent fits of melancholy, and vapors; his faculties were stupified, his hearing very indifferent or slow, his eyes extremely weak; in short, he died in the most wretched condition. I had never prescribed any thing for him; but he had taken a great number of remedies. Many of them had done him no service; all those that were of a hot nature had been prejudicial to him. Only bark, infused in wine, by order of M. Albinus, had relieved him: and the authority of this great Physician is a fresh, and, surely, a respectable testimony, in favor of that remedy.

Among the Consultations of M. Hoffman may be seen a case nearly similar to this; the pruriency was almost continual, and body and soul equally enervated<sup>148</sup>.

## SECTION 12

### **The Gleet, or simple Gonorrhœa**

“The *Gonorrhœa* (says Galen, who knew none but the simple one) is a running of the seed without erection.” Many authors, in all ages, make mention of it, and Moses, the most antient of all. In the observations of Hippocrates may be seen the example of a Mountaineer, whose disorder seems to have been a marasmus, and who had an involuntary evacuation of the urine and seminal liquid<sup>149</sup>. M. Boerhaave seems, however, as to the seminal efflux, to have set down this disorder among the number of doubtful things. “You may (says he) read in books of physic, that the seed has sometimes run, without its being perceived or felt. But this disorder must be extremely rare, as I know of no instance in the which the seed has come out without some degree of titillation: or else it was not the true seminal liquid separated in the testicles, and amassed in the seminal vesicles, though I have seen the liquid of the *prostatæ* flow forth<sup>150</sup>.” This authority is, doubtless, very respectable; but besides that M. Boerhaave does not decisively pronounce on this point, he has against him all the Physicians; and, not to go out of his own school, one of his most illustrious disciples, Gaubius, admits the evacuation of the seed without sensation. My own observations leave me no room to doubt of the existence of both the one and the other disorder. I have seen men who, after a virulent *gonorrhœa*, after excesses of venery, or self-pollutions, had a constant running at the yard, but which did not render them incapable of erection and ejaculation; they even complained, that a single ejaculation weakened them more than a running of some weeks; which is an evident proof that the liquid of these two evacuations was not the same; and that that which comes by a *gonorrhœa* flows only from the *prostatæ*, from some other glands about

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<sup>148</sup> *Consult.* Cent. 2 & 3. Op. T. iii. p. 214.

<sup>149</sup> *Epid.* L. vi. § 3. No. 13. Foes. 1173.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* La Mettrie, T. vii. p. 214.

the urethra, from the follicular cellules distributed over its whole length, or, in short, from the dilated exhaling vessels. I have seen other men, who, like the first, had a continual running, but a running which weakened them much more, and which rendered them incapable of all venereal pruriency, of all erection, and, from that very circumstance, of all ejaculation, though the testicles had no appearance of any disqualification for their functions. It seems to me demonstrated, that, in these last, the true testicular semen came away without sensation. Those then who know the structure of the parts of generation, will easily bring themselves to believe, that the first case must be much more frequent than the last; but of the last they will also readily conceive the possibility of existence. The authors of the greatest exactness have called that the true *gonorrhœa*, in which they apprehended that the matter of the running was the genuine semen; the other they termed the *spurious* or *catarrhal gonorrhœa*.

The dangers of the genuine running are very considerable. In the beginning of the first Section, *On the Symptoms*, the description by Aretæus has been quoted. “How (says he, in the same place) can one avoid the being weakened, when that which is so essential to the vital forces is continually slipping away, in waste. It is in the seminal liquid alone that eminently resides the strength of man.”

Celsus, who lived before the times of Aretæus, says positively, “That the running of the seed without venereal sensation, brings on a consumption<sup>151</sup>.”

John, son of Zacharias, more commonly known by the name of Actuarius, in a work which he composed for the service of the Ambassador whom the Emperor of Constantinople was sending to the North, is, upon this point, of the same opinion with the authors I have already quoted. “If (says he) the running of the seed, which proceeds without erection, and without sensation, sails for any time, it produces necessarily a

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<sup>151</sup> *De Medicina*, Lib. iv. cap. 21.

consumption and death; for the most balsamic part of the humors and the animal spirits are thereby dissipated and lost<sup>152</sup>.”

Some of the most modern authors agree also, on this head, with the antients. “The whole body (says Sennertus) becomes emaciated, and especially the back; the patients grow weaker and weaker; they languish; they have pains in the loins; they turn hollow-eyed<sup>153</sup>.”

Boerhaave ranks this *gonorrhœa* among the causes of the palsy; and it may be remarked, that he admits in this place a *gonorrhœa* of pure seed. “The palsy (says he) which comes from a *gonorrhœa*, is incurable, because the body is exhausted<sup>154</sup>.”

On this matter there may also, in an excellent dissertation of M. Koempf, be found some interesting observations<sup>155</sup>.

This disorder may draw its origin from many remote causes. The proximate cause is always unitedly constituted of a defectiveness or depravity in the liquids, of which the running consists, they being too thin, and often too acrid; and of a great relaxation of the parts. The defect in the liquids denotes a want of elaboration, which is owing to a general weakness; this requires tonic remedies, which the weakness of the organs also indicates; the coincident circumstances determine the choice of them. It would be out of place to enter here on all the relative particulars, and upon which there may be found instructive lights in many medical writers, and especially in Sennertus, author of the best compendium of practical physic that we have.

The same remedies as are pointed out in the course of this work, against the other consequences of pollution, are applicable in this case; the cold-bath, the bark, martials, and corroboratives. Boerhaave says, that

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<sup>152</sup> *Medicus, sive de methodo medendi*, L. i. c. 22.

<sup>153</sup> *Praxis medica*, L. iii. Part. ix. Sect. 2. c. 4.

<sup>154</sup> *De morb. nervor.* p. 717. This Work, gathered from his Lessons, from 1730 to 1745, and in that posterior by some years to the Lessons collected by M. de Haller, proves that Boerhaave had changed his opinion as to the possibility of a purely seminal *gonorrhœa*; and it is well known, that that great man was always ready to renounce his former ideas to adopt new ones, the instant he was convinced of their being the justest.

<sup>155</sup> G. L. Koempf *De morbis ex atrophìa*, Basle, 1756.

the *hepatica* (liverwort) produces excellent effects (*egregios sane præstat usus*) in the inveterate *gonorrhœa*, where it depends on the relaxation of the organs<sup>156</sup>. Sometimes, to direct the tendency which habit gives to humors towards the same part, it may not be amiss to begin by some laxatives: there are even some great Physicians, who have attributed to them an almost specific efficacy against this disorder; experience yet more than reason has proved to me the contrary. Those who will give themselves the trouble of reading the authors whom I have above quoted, will find that they prescribe nothing laxative. Actuarius directs “things that strengthen without heating<sup>157</sup>.” Aretæus, who, in consideration of the urgency of the danger, recommends an immediate recourse to remedies, prescribes none but strengtheners, abstinence from the pleasures of love, and the cold-bath<sup>158</sup>.

Celsus, of whose works both of them have availed themselves, orders frictions, and especially *baths extremely cold, (natationesque quam frigidissimas;)* he would have nothing eaten or drank but what is cold; that all aliments should be avoided which may engender crudities, wind, and augment the acidity of the seed. Fernelius orders nutritious aliments, and restorative electuaries<sup>159</sup>.

If the promise of Langius, who said “he would venture to swear for the efficacy of purgatives and a diet in the cure of this disorder,” be at all true, it cannot, probably, be relied on, but in that case alone, where the disorder is produced by a bad diet, which should have given birth to obstructions in the *hypogastrium*, and made all the humors degenerate, without the solids having as yet received any considerable damage; and this case it is that he must only have had in view; for if the solids had received any material prejudice, the purgatives must necessarily be aided by corroboratives. Such was the *gonorrhœa* that Regis observed, and of which Craanen has preserved to us the particulars.

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<sup>156</sup> *Historia plantarum*, &c. p. 51.

<sup>157</sup> L. iv. c. 8.

<sup>158</sup> P. 231.

<sup>159</sup> Oper. Omn. p. 544.

“A man (says he) of a pituitous constitution, having for along time used himself to a humid diet, was attacked with the running of a watery, crude, viscous humor, which came away without perceptible sensation. He was wasting away, his eyes grew hollow, and he felt a daily decay of his strength. Regis began with him by evacuating with purgatives those pituitous humor.” After which he gave him corroboratives, analeptics, and desiccative aliments; and if that should not be sufficient, he advised him a caustic for each leg<sup>160</sup>.

But this method of purgatives can never be proper, when this disorder is the consequence of venereal excesses, and is owing, as Sennertus observes, “to that weakness which the *vesiculæ seminales* have contracted by the over-frequent vicissitudes of repletion and inanition.”

A particularisation of some cases will afford a clearer notion of the true method of cure.

Timæus furnishes us with one, which cannot be better placed than here.

“A young man, (says he,) a student of the Law, of a sanguine constitution, used to pollute himself manually twice or thrice a day, and sometimes oftener: he fell into a *gonorrhœa*, accompanied with a weakness of the whole body. I looked on the *gonorrhœa* as a consequence of a relaxation occasioned in the seminal vessels, and on his weakness as owing to his frequent effusions of seed, which had dissipated the natural heat, gathered crudities, damaged the nervous system, stupified the soul, and weakened the whole body.”

[He prescribed for him strengthening cordial wine, with the astringents and aromatics infused in a strong-bodied red wine, an electuary of the same nature, and an ointment composed of *oil of roses, mastic, nitre, bol. armen. terra sigillata, balaustæ, and white-wax.*]

“The patient was in about a month’s time cured of this shameful disorder; and I advised him to abstain in future from this infamous practice of

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<sup>160</sup> See J. J. Mangeti *Bibliotheca medico-practica*, T. ii. p. 625.

debauchery, and to remember the threat from the Most High, of an exclusion of the effeminate from the kingdom of Heaven,” 1 Cor. vi.<sup>161</sup>.

M. Zimmerman writes me as follows: “One of the best Physicians that we have in Switzerland, M. Wepfer, whose authority cannot be of too great weight, avers his having cured a continual flux of seed, the consequence of self-pollution, with the help of the *Tinctur. Mart. Ludovici*. M. Weslin of Zurzach has, on his own experience, confirmed to me the same thing. As for me (adds my friend) I cannot say that I have seen such good effects from it.”

The Professor M. Stehelin mentions a man of letters, who was afflicted with an involuntary efflux of seed, without any ideas of venery, and who was cured by the use of wine with the martials and the bark. The remedies, and among others the waters of Swalbach, the embrocating with cold water the *pubis* and the *perinæum*, had not the same success with a young man, who had brought upon himself this disorder by self-pollution. He adds, that M. de Bongars, a celebrated Practitioner of Physic at Maseck, had cured two persons attacked with a debility of the *vesiculæ seminales*, by making them take, three times a day, eight or ten drops of Sydenham’s *liquid laudanum*, in a glass of Pontac wine, and by a decoction of *sarsaparilla*. M. Stehelin remarks, that though the opium is contrary to the indications, it has been advised by Etmullerus *against too quick an ejaculation, where owing to an over-spirituousness in the seed*. Be it here allowed me to add, that on attentively examining the advice of this famous practitioner, and on comparing the nature of the disorder, in certain cases, with the effects of opium, it is not difficult to conceive, that this remedy may sometimes be useful, but not in the case for which he prescribes it. He distinguishes, with a great deal of accuracy, the different kinds of runnings, he assigns the causes and the curative method of each kind, and then passing on to the ejaculation which comes just on the beginning of an erection, too quick (*nimis citam*,) he lays down two causes for it; first, the relaxation of the *vesiculæ seminales*; secondly, too boiling, too spirituous, too

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid. 624.

redundant a seminal liquid; and in this case it is that he orders opium<sup>162</sup>. But on what foundation? Opium, the quality of which, as a provocative to venery, stands so well demonstrated, a quality which Etmullerus himself points out, both in his small treatise on this medicine, and in this very place where he gives this advice, cannot but augment the cause of the disorder, and consequently thereby aggravate its symptoms. But the cases in which it may be of service, are, on the contrary, where the humors are crude, thin, aqueous, and the nerves, at the same time, of an excessive mobility. It is then known to be a remedy for these different accidents, that it suspends the irritability, and that it stops all the evacuations except perspiration. It cannot then be too often inculcated, that the greatest attention must be had not to prescribe opium, or opiates, but where they are proper, otherwise they are capable of doing great mischief. M. Tralles, in his excellent work, furnishes us with an observation, and the like is to be met with in other authors, which ought to oblige us to use a great deal of circumspection as to that medicine.

“A man (says he) who from his youth upwards had had a strong passion for self-pollutions, which had rendered him extremely weak, never took opium, either to moderate a cough, or a diarrhœa, or with any other intention, without having, in the night, and to his great detriment, lascivious dreams, accompanied with a spermatic emission<sup>163</sup>.”

Here may I have leave to state a reflexion which presents itself naturally? It is this: the error of Etmullerus evidently proves:

*First*, How great an influence an exact theory has over practice, which, without its help, cannot be but often false and erroneous.

*Secondly*, How great an advantage must a man, furnished with such a theory, united with practice, have over one, who has no guide but a few observations, or who delivers himself wholly up to a systematical theory?

*Thirdly*, How much may not the reading of even the best practical authors, but who were destitute of that exact theory which is due to our times, deceive such as, on the reading of them, can only have an implicit

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<sup>162</sup> *Colleg. pract. special. C. ii. T. i. p. 459.*

<sup>163</sup> *Usus Opii salubris et noxius, p. 131.*

faith in them, and who are ignorant of those principles which ought to serve for a touch-stone, to discern, in physic, what is the good ore, or the base alloy?

I shall conclude with two cases which fell under my observation; a greater number would be superfluous.

A young man of twenty years old, who had had the misfortune of being addicted to self-pollution, had been, for two months, attacked with a continual mucous running, and now and then with nocturnal pollutions, attended with considerable wastings of his strength; he had frequent and violent pains of the stomach, he felt his breast extremely weak, and was apt to sweat much: I ordered him the following electuary:

*R. Condit. rosar. rubr. unc. iii. Condit. anthos. Cort. Peruv. ana unc. i. Mastic. dr. ii. Cath. dr. i. Olei cinnam. gutt. iii. Sirup. Cort. aur. q.s.f. electuar. solid.*

Of this he took a quarter of an ounce twice a day. In three weeks time he found himself recovered in all respects; and the running, or gleet, no longer incommoded him, unless after the nocturnal pollutions, which were become less frequent; a continuation of the same remedies for fifteen days more completely restored him.

Two married persons, foreigners, whom I never knew, were attacked almost at the same time, with a running, accompanied with weakness, and with pains along the spine of the back. They were very sure there was no venereal taint in the case, and could impute their disorder to nothing but conjugal excesses. The running was much the most considerable in the husband. They had tried various remedies, and all without any effect, and among others some mercurial pills, which had increased the running. At length they had me consulted. I prescribed for them the cold-bath, wine medicated with the bark, steel, and flowers of red roses. They took regularly my prescription: it was the summer of 1758, when the rains rendered the use of bathing in the river very difficult: the wife bathed only once or twice, the husband a dozen of times. At five weeks end, they sent me word that they were almost totally restored: I advised them to

continue the method till the cure should be completed, which it soon was.

These happy successes cannot, however, serve for a general foundation of a favorable prognostic: this disorder is often extremely rebellious, and even sometimes incurable. Of this I will give but one example, but it is a demonstrative one.

One of the greatest Practitioners that we have now in Europe, and who has enriched the medical art with works, all of them excellent, is actually himself afflicted with a *simple gonorrhœa*, of fifteen years standing, which not all his skill, nor that of some other Physicians, whom he has consulted, have been able to dissipate. This sad and vexatious disorder wastes him away, little by little, and gives room to fear the loss of him long before the term to which it were to be wished he should arrive, and to which he might attain in the ordinary course of nature.

It would be needless for me to launch into a farther extension: I have aimed at omitting nothing that might open the eyes of youth on the horrors of the precipice they are preparing for themselves. I have done my best to point out the most proper means of remedying the evils they will have brought on themselves: I conclude with a repetition of what I have already said in the course of this work, that some happy cures ought not to serve for an encouragement of fallacious hopes; those who are even the most happily cured, find it a hard matter to recover their pristine vigor, nor can preserve a transitory health but by dint of a constant attention to regularity, and to the keeping measures with their constitution; the number of those who never emerge out of a state of languor, is tenfold to that of those who are cured; and some examples of persons, who either had not been more than slightly affected, or in whom a more than ordinary vigorous constitution might occasion the easier recovery, ought not to be considered as constituting a general rule,

—*Non bene ripæ*

*Creditur: ipse aries etiam nunc vellera siccat.*



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