

were no longer to be wondered at. I at once told him to leave off his tobacco, gave him a slight tonic, cauterized the ducts, and directed him to go and bathe in the salt water for a few weeks. He did so and returned perfectly cured.

I could, in fact, give numerous cases, both among single and married, showing the effects of this poisonous drug, and I do not hesitate to say that I think it has more to do with many of these complaints than has been hitherto supposed.

In the thirteenth Annual Report of the Massachusetts State Lunatic Asylum, are some excellent remarks on the use of tobacco, which, though they are intended to apply chiefly to its influence in predisposing to insanity, are nevertheless of great general interest, and I therefore quote them :

"Alcohol is not the only narcotic which thus affects the brain and nervous system. Opium produces delirium tremens and probably insanity. Tobacco is a powerful narcotic agent, and its use is very deleterious to the nervous system, producing tremors, vertigo, faintness, palpitation of the heart, and other serious diseases. That tobacco certainly produces insanity, I am not able positively to observe; but that it produces a predisposition to it, I am fully confident. Its influence upon the brain and nervous system generally, is hardly less obvious than that of alcohol, and if used excessively is equally injurious. The young are particularly susceptible to the influence of these narcotics. If a young man becomes intemperate before he is twenty years of age, he rarely lives to thirty. If a young man uses tobacco while the system is greatly susceptible to its influence, he will not be likely to escape injurious effects that will be developed sooner or later, and both diminish the enjoyments of life and shorten its period.

"The very general use of tobacco among young men at the present day, is alarming, and shows the ignorance and devotion of the devotees of this dangerous practice to one of the most virulent poisons of the vegetable world. The testimony of medical men, of the most respectable character, could be quoted to any extent to sustain these views of the deleterious influence of this dangerous narcotic.

"Dr. Rush says of tobacco—'It impairs appetite, produces dyspepsia, tremors, vertigo, headache, and epilepsy. It injures the voice, destroys the teeth, and imparts to the complexion a disagreeable, dusky brown.'

"Dr. Boerhaave says that 'since the use of tobacco has been so general in Europe, the number of hypochondriacal and consumptive complaints has increased by its use.'

"Dr. Cullen says, 'I have known a small quantity snuffed up the nose to produce giddiness, stupor, and vomiting. There are many instances of its more violent effects, even of its proving a mortal poison.'

"Dr. Darwin says, 'It produces disease of the salivary glands and the pancreas, and injures the power of digestion by occasioning the person to spit off the saliva which he ought to swallow.'

"Dr. Tissot once saw the smoking of it prove fatal.

"Dr. Pilcher details the particulars of a case of a medical student whom he had been requested to see. 'This gentleman suffered under all the symptoms of phthisis. There was muco-purulent expectoration, night sweats, etc. The mucous membrane of the throat, epiglottis, and the neighboring parts, was coated with a brown fur. The patient had been an immoderate snuff-taker; he was told to discontinue the snuff; he did so, and recovered.'

"Dr. Chapman says, 'By a member of Congress from the West, in the meridian

of life, and of a very stout frame, I was some time since consulted; he told me that, from having been one of the most healthy and fearless of men, he had become "sick all over, and timid as a girl." He could not even present a petition to Congress, much less say a word concerning it, though he had long been a practicing lawyer, and served much in legislative bodies. By any ordinary noise he was startled or thrown into tremulousness, and afraid to be alone at night. His appetite and digestion were gone, he had painful sensations at the pit of his stomach, and unrelenting constipated bowels. During the narrative of his suffering, his aspect approached the haggard wildness of mental distemperature. On inquiry, I found that his consumption of tobacco was almost incredible, by chewing, snuffing, and smoking. Being satisfied that all his misery arose from this poisonous weed, its use was discontinued, and in a few weeks he entirely recovered.'

"Distressing as was this case, I have seen others, from the same cause, even more deplorable. Two young men were in succession brought to me for advice, whom I found in a state of insanity, very much resembling delirium tremens. Each had chewed and smoked tobacco to excess, though perfectly temperate as regarded drink. The further account given me was, that in early life, adopting this bad practice, it grew with their growth. Dyspepsia soon occurred, attended by great derangement of the nervous system, and ultimately the mania I have mentioned. But I have also seen the same condition very speedily induced.'

"Dr. Franklin says he never used it, and never met with a man who did use it that advised him to follow his example.

"The venerable John Quincy Adams, in a recent letter on the subject, says that in early life he used tobacco, but for more than thirty years he had discontinued the practice. 'I have often wished,' says he, 'that every individual of the human race, affected with this artificial passion, would prevail upon himself to try, but for three months, the experiment which I have made, and I am sure it would turn every acre of tobacco-land into a wheat-field, and add five years to the average of human life.'

"Some cases have come under my observation which show the injurious effects of tobacco where no evil was suspected.

"A respectable merchant, who abstained wholly from ardent spirits, applied to me for advice. He complained of great weakness, tremor of the limbs and joints, with lassitude, general prostration of health, and depression of spirits. Knowing that he used tobacco freely, I advised him to discontinue it entirely; he soon became better, and after a time was wholly relieved from these disagreeable symptoms.

"A distinguished clergyman informed me that he had been an extravagant snuff-taker; that for years he had had a disagreeable affection of the head, and his health was not good. He did not attribute either to his use of snuff, but thinking it a filthy habit and a growing evil, he resolved to leave it off. He was surprised to find the difficulty in his head almost immediately left him, and his general health became quite good.

"A gentleman of athletic frame, and about twenty-four years of age, applied to me for advice. He complained of insufferable faintness and distress of stomach, morning-sickness, vomiting, trembling, and prostration of strength. He diminished his tobacco considerably, and was immediately better, but had not resolution to abandon the pernicious practice.

"In our experience in the hospital, tobacco in all its forms is injurious to the insane. It increases excitement of the nervous system in many cases, deranges the

stomach, and produces vertigo, tremors and stupor in others. It is difficult to control its use with the insane, and though considerable suffering comes from its entire abandonment, it cannot be generally allowed with safety.

"One patient, while at labor, found a quantity of tobacco, and hid it in his bed. He used it freely, became sick, lost his appetite, and confined himself to his bed completely intoxicated. After some days diligent search was made, and a store of tobacco was found in his straw bed; when this was removed he almost immediately recovered, and in a few days was well as before.

"A person who came into the hospital a furious maniac, soon became calm and improved favorably. He labored in the field with propriety, and exhibited every indication of a favorable convalescence. Suddenly, without any apparent cause, he again became very violent and insane. It was soon discovered that he had in some way obtained tobacco. After he ceased to use it, he again became calm and convalescent.

"An aged lady was brought to us very insane. The practice of her friends for some time had been to give her ardent spirits to intoxicate her at night, and tobacco and snuff, in unlimited quantity, for the day. All these were withdrawn at once; her sufferings for some days were great; but after a time she became calm, and got better as soon as the influence of this excitement was over.

"I have already exceeded my intended limits in the detail of cases.

"It is very natural to suppose that an article possessing the active properties of this fascinating narcotic, should produce most deleterious effects upon health—particularly upon the brain and nervous system.

"The uninitiated cannot smoke a cigar, or use tobacco in any form, without unpleasant effects,—how then can it be possible that a poison so active can be used with impunity? The stomach and brain, subjected to such influences, will become diseased, and show their effects as certainly as if alcohol were used. If asked my medical opinion, which was safest, four glasses of wine or four quids of tobacco daily, I should say unhesitatingly the *wine*. Of the two evils this would, in my opinion, be the least. Tobacco is the strongest, most dangerous narcotic—the habit of its use is the strongest, and most difficult to overcome, and the influence felt from it most baneful and destructive to health."

Opium acts similarly to tobacco, but much more fatally, the exhaustion caused by it being much less readily recovered from. In fact, if a man once becomes impotent from using opium, it is a great chance if he ever recovers his powers.

Dr. McDougal says that many of his friends, inveterate smokers have remarked to him that a decrease of their sexual desires was one of the marked effects of their indulgence, and I have frequently been told the same. M. Lallemand also gives several instructive cases in which this fact is forcibly illustrated. The following is a counterpart of many that I see:

"I have a young man of very nervous temperament at present under my care, on whom nocturnal and diurnal pollutions have brought on pain in the loins, palpitation, difficulty of breathing, etc., symptoms which were supposed to arise from disease of the spinal cord, cardiac affection, and commencing phthisis. Among the exciting causes of these involuntary discharges, the effects of smoking occupy the chief place. The following is the patient's statement:

"At twenty years of age I wished to accustom myself to smoking, but a day never passed without my experiencing complete intoxication, attended with vomit-

ing, vertigo, and trembling of the limbs. I continued the habit, however, and I soon began to perceive that my sight became weak, and that I lost my memory; my hands shook, and my digestion became much disordered. I noticed also great debility of the genital organs; my erections ceased, and at the age of twenty-two I found myself completely impotent.' This patient had rarely practiced masturbation, and had never committed any excess when he first began to smoke; his health had, previously, been excellent. It is therefore evident, that the impotence, as well as the other symptoms, arose from the action of tobacco. Impotence at the age of twenty-two can only be produced by involuntary seminal discharges, provided there be no physical disability. In the present case there was no doubt on the point, the patient himself having discovered diurnal and nocturnal pollutions.

"The action of tobacco on those who smoke for the first time, is too well known to require description; more or less disorder of all the functions, varying according to the constitution of the individual, invariably arises from it; and this disorder always presents more or less of the characteristics of poisoning by narcotics. These effects go off by degrees as the patient becomes habituated to the use of tobacco, and generally, after a time, cease to be manifested at all. Some nervous and excitable individuals are unable to accustom themselves to the habit, as in the case just mentioned; in others again, smoking becomes an artificial habit, which, in many cases, is almost a necessity.

"But this empire of custom has its limits, beyond which the narcotic influence reappears. In such as are not easily affected, this acquired habit is generally supported with impunity; but even then, if it be indulged in to excess, it must, after a time, be injurious. Thus it is that the most accomplished smokers often experience vertigo, cephalalgia, anorexia, etc., when they have remained long in an atmosphere densely filled with smoke, which is then drawn into the lungs, and probably produces worse effects than when merely drawn into the mouth, or swallowed, as in smoking.

"In a word, then, if the power of habit can prevent the momentary effects of smoking from showing themselves, the frequent repetition of the use of tobacco produces more lasting effects on different organs. Disorder of the digestive organs is well known as occurring in inveterate smokers; that of the genital organs has not hitherto been noticed. [Many inveterate smokers among my professional friends, have mentioned to me the diminution of their venereal desires, as one of the effects of tobacco. I believe, however, that it is by no means rare."—H. J. McD.]

CHAPTER XLIX.

MASTURBATION AND OTHER SEXUAL ABUSES.

A VERY few years ago only it was thought wrong even to allude to such a subject as masturbation, much less to openly speak or write about it. Fortunately, however, people have become more rational, and now begin to see that this and similar practices are of the most hurtful character, and that no successful efforts can be made for their removal till they are more fully and generally understood. Various books have been published, lectures have been delivered, and even sermons have been preached bearing upon this subject, till much general information about it is now disseminated, and a very general desire is expressed for something more complete and scientific than has yet appeared. The greater part of the books written on the subject of onanism or masturbation are very incomplete, and not accompanied by those physiological and medical details that are requisite to give a clear view of the evil. The effects of this vice may be partly given in such works, though in an incomplete form, but the manner in which they are produced, their connection with other evils, and the philosophy of their treatment, cannot be understood without such a work as the present. I have therefore delayed speaking upon this subject till all the other topics have been introduced, so that the unnatural character of the vice and its terrible consequences may be clearly obvious.

The mere tolerance of discussion on this subject is a great point gained, and there is now a very general conviction that such a discussion is not only desirable, but imperatively demanded by the best interests of society. It is both curious and instructive to see how this tolerance has been gradually gained, and how a perception of the manifold evils of self-abuse has extended, though slowly, from a few philosophers to the great mass of the medical profession, and from thence to non-professional persons, till at last it has even been made the subject of *legislative action*.

I shall now proceed to show, by extracts from ancient medical writers, how this subject was regarded by eminent minds in former ages, and then to exhibit the more perfect knowledge and greater interest of modern times, including the approval, by existing legislators, of investigations bearing intimately upon it.

Several of these extracts are taken from the celebrated works of *Tissot* and others, and some being from the writings of the Fathers of Physic, who lived centuries before Christ, allowance must be made, in some few cases, both for unintentional exaggeration, and also for deficiency in scientific accuracy. Generally speaking, the statements are fully authorized, and the pictures by no means overdrawn; in fact, it is often the case that the *whole* truth is not told, simply because it was not known.

"Hippocrates, the oldest and most correct observer, has already described the diseases produced by abusing the pleasures of venery, under the term *dorsal consumption*. 'This disease,' says he, 'arises from the dorsal portion of the spinal marrow. It principally attacks young married people, or the licentious. They have

no fever, and although they eat well, they grow thin and waste away. They have a sensation of ants crawling from the head down along the spine. Whenever they go to stool, or evacuate their urine, a considerable quantity of very thin seminal fluid escapes from the urethra. They lose the power of procreation, yet often dream of venereal pleasures. They become very weak, and walking produces shortness of breath; they have pains in the head and ringing in the ears, and finally an acute fever (*Libiria*) supervenes, and they die.'

"Some physicians have ascribed to the same cause a disease which he has described in another place, and have termed it the *second dorsal consumption of Hippocrates*, and which has some relation to the first. But the preservation of the strength, which he mentions particularly, seems to us a conclusive proof that this disease does not depend on the same cause, but seems rather to be a rheumatic affection.

"These pleasures,' says Celsus, in his excellent work on the preservation of health, 'are always injurious to weak persons, and their abuses prostrate the strength.' We can find nothing more frightful than the description, by Aretæus, of the diseases produced by a too abundant evacuation of semen. 'Young persons assume the air and the diseases of the aged; they become pale, stupid, effeminate, idle, weak, and even void of understanding; their bodies bend forward, their legs are weak, they have a disgust for everything, become fit for nothing, and many are affected with paralysis.' In another place he mentions the abuse of these pleasures among the six causes which produce paralysis.

"Galen has seen diseases of the brain and nerves from the same cause, and the powers of the body impaired; and he also relates that a man who was convalescent from a violent attack of disease, died the same night after coition with his wife.

"Pliny, the naturalist, informs us that Cornelius Gallus, the old prætor, and Titus Etherius, a Roman knight, died in the act of copulation.

"Aetius says, 'The stomach is deranged, all the body wastes, becomes pale, dry, and the eyes sunken.' These remarks of the most respectable ancient writers, are confirmed by the moderns. Sanctorous, who has examined, with the utmost care, all the causes which act on our bodies, has observed that this weakens the stomach, destroys digestion, prevents insensible perspiration, the derangements of which produce such evil consequences, disposes to calculus diseases, diminishes the natural warmth, and is usually attended with a loss or derangement of sight.

"Lomnius, in his fine commentaries on the passages of Celsus, whom we have just cited, supports the remarks of the author by his own observations. 'Frequent emissions of semen relax, weaken, dry, enervate the body, and produce numerous other evils, as apoplexies, lethargies, epilepsies, loss of sight, trembling, paralysis, and all kinds of painful affections.'

"One cannot read without horror the description left us by Tulpius, the celebrated burgomaster and physician of Amsterdam. 'Not only,' says he, 'the spinal marrow wastes, but the whole body and mind become languid, and the patient perishes in misery. Samuel Vespertius was attacked first with a humor upon the back of his neck and head; it then passed to the spine, to the loins, to the lower and lateral region of the abdomen, and to the hips; this unhappy man was affected with so much pain that he was entirely disfigured, and was emaciated so gradually by a slow fever, that he more than once asked to be relieved from his misery by death.'

"Nothing,' says a celebrated physician of Louvain, 'weakens the system so much.'

“Blancard has known simple gonorrhœas, dropsies, and consumptions to depend on this cause; and Muys has seen a man of good age attacked with spontaneous gangrene of the foot, which he attributed to the same kind of excesses.

“In the *Memoires des Curieux de la Nature* is mentioned a case of blindness. It deserves to be given at length. ‘We are ignorant,’ says the author, ‘what sympathy the testicles have with the body, but particularly with the eyes.’ Salmuth has known a sensible hypochondriac to become a fool, and in another man the brain to be so collapsed that it was heard to rattle in the cranium, both from excesses in venery. I have known myself a man, fifty-nine years of age, who, three weeks after marrying a young wife, became blind, and in four months died.

“‘The too great loss of the animal spirits weakens the stomach and destroys the appetite; and nutrition not taking place, the action of the heart becomes more feeble; all parts languish, and the patient becomes epileptic.’ It is true we are ignorant whether the animal spirits and the seminal fluid are the same; but observations show, as we shall see hereafter, that these two fluids are very analogous, and that loss of one or the other, produces the same complaints. Hoffman has seen the most frightful symptoms ensue from the loss of semen. ‘After long nocturnal pollutions,’ says he, ‘the patient not only loses strength, becomes emaciated and pale, but the memory is impaired, a continual sensation of coldness affects all the extremities, the sight becomes dim, the voice harsh, and the whole body gradually wasted; the sleep is disturbed by unpleasant dreams, does not refresh, and pains are felt like those produced by bruises.’

“In a consultation with a young man, who, among other diseases produced by masturbation, was affected with weakness in the eyes, he says: ‘I have seen several instances of young men who, at mature age, when the body possesses all its strength, were attacked, not only with severe pain and redness of the eyes, but the sight became so feeble that they could neither read nor write.’ He adds: ‘I have even seen two cases of *gutta serena* from the same cause.’ The history of the disorder which gave rise to this consultation will be read with interest. ‘A young man commenced masturbation when fifteen years old, and having indulged in it till he was twenty-three, experienced so great feebleness in his head and eyes, that during the emission of semen there was severe pain in the latter. When he attempted to read anything, he had a feeling similar to that of drunkenness; the pupil was extraordinarily dilated; the eyes were exceedingly painful; the eyelids very heavy, and glued together every night; they were often filled with tears, and a whitish matter collected very abundantly in the two corners, which were very painful. Although he ate with a good appetite, still he was extremely emaciated, and after he had taken food appeared as if drunk.’ The same author has mentioned another case, of which he was an eye-witness, and which we think proper to mention here. ‘A young man, eighteen years old, who had had frequent connections with a servant girl, suddenly fainted, and trembled exceedingly in all his extremities; his countenance was red, and his pulse very small. He recovered from this state at the end of an hour, but continued very feeble. The same phenomena occurred very frequently, with severe pain, and at the end of eight days there was a contraction and tumor in the right arm, with a pain in the elbow, which was always increased during the paroxysm. The disease increased for some time, but was finally cured by Hoffman.’

“Boerhaave portrays these diseases in that masterly manner and with that precision which characterizes all his descriptions. ‘Too great loss of semen produces

weakness, debility, immobility, convulsions, emaciation, dryness, pains in the membranes of the brain, impairs the senses, particularly that of sight, gives rise to dorsal consumption, indolence, and to the several diseases connected with them.’

“The cases narrated by this great man to his auditors, in explaining to them this aphorism, which related to the different kinds of evacuations, ought not to be omitted. ‘I have seen,’ says he, ‘a sick man, where the disease commenced by a lassitude and feebleness in the body, particularly in the loins; it was accompanied by twitching of the tendons, periodical spasms, and loss of flesh, so as to destroy the whole body; also pains in the membranes of the cerebrum, pains which the patient terms (*ardeur seche*) a dry burning, which constantly inflames this most noble organ.

“‘I have also seen one young man affected with dorsal consumption. His figure was good; and although often cautioned against indulging in these pleasures, he did not regard it, and became so deformed before death, that the layer of flesh which appears above the spinous processes of the lumbar vertebræ entirely disappeared. The cerebrum, in this case, seemed to be consumed; in fact, the patient seemed to be stupid, and became so stiff that we have never seen the body so immovable from any other cause. The eyes are so dull that the sight is nearly lost.’

“De Senac mentions, in the first edition of his *Essays*, the dangers attending masturbation, and states that all who indulge in this vice will be affected in the flower of their youth with the infirmities of age.

“Ludwig, in describing the diseases resulting from too frequent evacuations, does not forget that of the semen. ‘Young people, of both sexes, who indulge in lasciviousness, ruin their health by wasting strength which was designed to make them vigorous, and finally fall into consumption.’

“De Gotter details the sad accidents arising from this cause, but they are too long to copy. We refer to the work all those who can read the language in which it is written.

“Van Swieten, after quoting the description of Hippocrates mentioned above, adds: ‘I have seen all these symptoms, and several others, in those unfortunate people who indulged in self-pollutions. I have employed uselessly, for three years, all the resources of medicine, for a young man who was diseased, in consequence of this practice, with wandering, frightful and general pains, with a sensation sometimes of heat and sometimes of cold, in every part of the body, but particularly in the loins. Afterward, these pains having diminished, his thighs and legs were so cold that, although they seemed of the natural temperature when touched, he was constantly warming himself by the fire, even during the warmest days of summer. I noticed particularly all this time, a continual rotatory motion of the testicles in the scrotum, and the patient felt a similar motion in the loins.’ This account does not mention whether this unfortunate creature died in three years, or continued to languish some time longer, which would be more dreadful; he could not have recovered.

“Kloekof, in a very fine work on the diseases of the mind which depend on the body, confirms by his observations what we have already mentioned. ‘A too great loss of semen weakens all the solid parts; hence arise weakness, idleness, phthisis, *tabes dorsalis*, stupidity, affections of the senses, faintings, and convulsions.’

“Hoffman had already remarked, that those young people who practice the infamous habit of masturbation lose gradually all the faculties of the mind, particularly the memory, and become entirely unfit for study.

“Lewis describes all these symptoms. We shall translate from his work only

what relates to the mind. 'All the symptoms which arise from excesses with females follow still more promptly, especially in youth, the abominable practice of masturbation, and it is difficult to paint them in as frightful colors as they deserve. Young persons addict themselves to this practice without knowing the enormity of the crime, and all the consequences which physically result from it. The mind is affected by all the diseases of the body, but particularly by those arising from this cause. The most dismal, melancholy indifference and aversion to all pleasures, the impossibility to take part in conversation, the sense of their own misery, the consciousness of having brought it upon themselves, the necessity of renouncing the happiness of marriage, all affect them so much that they renounce the world—blessed if they escape suicide.'"

The symptoms here given are precisely such as are ordinarily seen in cases of self-abuse, but there are many others, arising secondarily, which have only been recently ascribed to this cause. Idiocy and insanity, for instance, and that general failing of all the physical and mental powers, affecting both the individual and his offspring, which leads eventually to the extinction of his family and name. It is only of late that proper attention has been directed to these terrible evils, and that they have been thought to be at all under our control. Formerly they were looked upon as mysterious dispensations of Providence, much to be deplored, but only to be met with patience and resignation. Many eminent writers of the present age have distinctly recognized the influence of self-abuse in the production of idiocy, insanity, and constitutional degeneracy, and have especially urged the necessity of attending to it when treating those evils. Among other recognitions of this kind, I have been particularly struck with one, *a legislative document*, in which there is more wholesome truth told and more sound reasoning advanced, than in almost all the *medical* treatises on the subject put together. It is a REPORT on the subject of idiocy, presented to the Massachusetts Senate, by *Dr. S. G. Howe*, in February, 1848, in compliance with a former resolution of that body, directing such a report to be made. I am only surprised that such a document so valuable should be so little known, and that the Hon. Senators should not have seen that their duty was to give it as wide a circulation as possible. The influence of such a document, *from such a source*, must have been very great, and no doubt would accomplish more good, in the way of *prevention*, than all their asylums and medical treatment could in the way of *cure*. In time this and similar reports will be eagerly sought for, and their great value to the public at large will be universally admitted. I shall quote from the report here for the double purpose of corroborating by it my own statements, and also of making it more generally known.

In speaking upon the necessity that exists for boldly approaching this subject, notwithstanding the prejudice that many persons feel against doing so, *Dr. H.* makes the following forcible and sensible remarks:

"There is another vice, a monster so hideous in mien, so disgusting in feature, altogether so beastly and loathsome, that, in very shame and cowardice, it hides its head by day, and, vampire-like, sucks the very life-blood from its victims by night; and it may perhaps commit more direct ravages upon the strength and reason of those victims than even intemperance; and that vice is *self-abuse*.

"One would fain be spared the sickening task of dealing with this disgusting subject; but, as he who would exterminate the wild beasts that ravage his fields, must not fear to enter their dark and noisome dens, and drag them out of their lair;

so he who would rid humanity of a pest, must not shrink from dragging it from its hiding-places, to perish in the light of day. If men deified him who delivered Lerna from its hydra, and canonized him who rid Ireland of its serpents, what should they do for one who could extirpate this monster vice? What is the ravage of fields, the slaughter of flocks, or even the poison of serpents, compared with that pollution of body and soul, that utter extinction of reason, and that degradation of beings made in God's image, to a condition which it would be an insult to the animals to call beastly, and which is so often the consequence of excessive indulgence in this vice?

"It cannot be that such loathsome wrecks of humanity as men and women reduced to driveling idiocy by this cause should be permitted to float upon the tide of life, without some useful purpose; and the only one we can conceive is that of awful beacons, to make others avoid—as they would eschew moral pollution and death—the course which leads to such ruin.

"This may seem to be extravagant language, but there can be no exaggeration, for there can be no adequate description even, of the horrible condition to which men and women are reduced by this practice. There are, among those enumerated in this report, some who not long ago were considered young gentlemen and ladies, but who are now moping idiots—idiots of the lowest kind—lost to all reason, to all moral sense, to all shame—idiots who have but one thought, one wish, one passion, and that is the further indulgence in the habit which has loosed the silver cord even in their early youth, which has already wasted, and as it were dissolved, the fibrous part of their bodies, and utterly extinguished their minds.

"In such extreme cases, there is nothing left to appeal to—absolutely less than there is in the dogs and horses, for they may be acted upon by fear of punishment; but these poor creatures are beyond all fear and all hope, and they cumber the earth a while, living masses of corruption.

"If only such lost and helpless wretches existed, it would be a duty to cover them charitably with the veil of concealment, and hide them from the public eye, as things too hideous to be seen: but, alas! they are only the *most* unfortunate members of a large class. They have sunk down into the abyss toward which thousands are tending. The vice which has shorn these poor creatures of the fairest attributes of humanity is acting upon others, in a less degree, indeed, but still most injuriously, enervating the body, weakening the mind, and polluting the soul.

"A knowledge of the extent to which this vice prevails would astonish and shock many. It is indeed a pestilence which walketh in darkness, because, while it saps and weakens all the higher qualities of the mind, it so strengthens low cunning and deceit, that the victim goes on in his habit unsuspected, until he is arrested by some one whose practiced eye reads his sin in the very means which he takes to conceal it, or until all sense of shame is forever lost in the night of idiocy, with which his day so early closes.

"Many a child who confides everything else to a loving parent, conceals this practice in its innermost heart. The sons or daughters who dutifully, conscientiously, and religiously confess themselves to father, mother, or priest, on every other subject, never allude to this. Nay, they strive to cheat and deceive by false appearances; for—as against this darling sin—duty, conscience, and religion, are all nothing. They even think to cheat God, or cheat themselves into the belief that He who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity can still regard their sin with favor.

"Many a fond parent looks with wondering anxiety upon the puny frame, the

feeble purpose, the fitful humors of a dear child, and, after trying all other remedies to restore him to vigor of body and vigor of mind, goes journeying about from place to place, hoping to leave the offending cause behind, while the victim hugs the disgusting serpent closely to his bosom, and conceals it carefully in his vestment.

"The evils which this sinful habit works in a direct and positive manner are not so appreciable, perhaps, as that which it effects in an indirect and negative way. For one victim which it leads down to the depths of idiocy, there are scores and hundreds whom it makes shamefaced, languid, irresolute, and inefficient for any high purpose of life. In this way, the evil to individuals and to the community is very great.

"It behooves every parent, especially those whose children (of either sex) are obliged to board and sleep with other children, whether in boarding-schools, boarding-houses, or elsewhere, to have a constant and watchful eye over them, with a view to this insidious and pernicious habit. The symptoms of it are easily learned, and, if once seen, should be immediately noticed.

"Nothing is more false than the common doctrine of delicacy and reserve in the treatment of this habit. All hints, all indirect advice, all attempts to cure it by creating diversions, will generally do nothing but increase the cunning with which it is concealed. The way is, to throw aside all reserve; to charge the offense directly home; to show up its disgusting nature and hideous consequences in glowing colors; to apply the cautery seething hot, and press it in to the very quick, unsparingly and unceasingly.

"Much good has been done, of late years, by the publication of cheap books upon this subject. They should be put into the hands of all youth suspected of the vice. They should be forced to attend to the subject. There should be no squeamishness about it.

"There need be no fear of weakening virtue by letting it look upon such hideous deformity as this vice presents. Virtue is not salt or sugar to be softened by such exposure; but the crystal or diamond that repels all foulness from its surface. Acquaintance with such a vice as this,—such acquaintance, that is, as is gained by having it held up before the eyes in all its ugliness—can only serve to make it detested and avoided.

"Were this the place to show the utter fallacy of the notion that harm is done by talking or writing to the young about this vice, it could probably be done by argument, certainly by the relation of pretty extensive experience. This experience has shown that, in ninety-nine cases in a hundred, the existence of the vice was known to the young, but not known in its true deformity; and that, in the hundredth, the repulsive character in which it was first presented, made it certain that no further acquaintance with it would be sought."

This is speaking to the point, and Dr. Howe never rendered more important service to suffering humanity than when he laid down these momentous truths.

In another part of the Report the effects of ignorance are made terribly apparent, not only upon the unfortunate victim, but also upon society at large, and it is plainly shown what danger every one runs while that ignorance exists.

"In some families which are degraded by drunkenness and vice, there is a degree of combined ignorance and depravity, which disgraces humanity. It is not wonderful that feeble-minded children are born in such families; or, being born, that many of them become idiotic. Out of this class domestics are sometimes taken by those in

better circumstances, and they make their employers feel the consequences of suffering ignorance and vice to exist in the community. There are cases recorded in the appendix, where servant-women, who had the charge of little girls, deliberately taught them habits of self-abuse, in order that they might exhaust themselves, and go to sleep quietly! This has happened in private houses as well as in the almshouses; and such little girls have become idiotic!

"The mind instinctively recoils from giving credit to such atrocious guilt; nevertheless, it is there, with all its hideous consequences; and no hiding of our eyes, no wearing of rose-colored spectacles,—nothing but looking at it in its naked deformity, will ever enable men to cure it. There is no *cordon sanitaire* for vice; we cannot put it into quarantine, nor shut it up in a hospital; if we allow its existence in our neighborhood, it poisons the very air which our children breathe."

These remarks apply also to our public schools, in most of which this vice prevails to an alarming extent, and sometimes in the most open manner. I have been myself amazed at the revelations made to me on this subject, both by teachers and pupils, and clearly enough has it been proved, to my satisfaction, how that shunning of the subject, which many so systematically practice, leads directly to the production and continuance of the vice.

In some few cases masturbation is learned accidentally, or a knowledge of it arises spontaneously, but in a vast majority of instances it is taught, and hence the great importance of preventing, if possible, those who are addicted to it from contaminating those who are innocent. Dr. Howe remarks:

"There is one remarkable and valuable fact to be learned respecting this vice, from observation of idiots, and that is, that some of them, though they have no idea of right and wrong, no sense of shame, and no moral restraint, are nevertheless entirely free from it. They could never have been in the practice of it, else they would never have abandoned it.

"From this may be inferred, that it is a pest generally engendered by too intimate association of persons of the same sex; that it is handed from one to another like contagion; and that those who are not exposed to the contagion are not likely to contract the dreadful habit of it. Hence we see, that not only propriety and decency, but motives of prudence, require us to train up all children to habits of modesty and reserve. Children, as they approach adolescence, should never be permitted to sleep together. Indeed, the rule should be—not with a view only to preventing this vice, but in view of many other considerations—that after the infant has left its mother's arms, and become a child, it should ever after sleep in a bed by itself. The older children grow, and the nearer they approach to youth, the more important does this become. Boys even should be taught to shrink sensitively from any unnecessary exposure of person before each other; they should be trained to habits of delicacy and self-respect; and the capacity which nature has given to all for becoming truly modest and refined, should be cultivated to the utmost. Habits of self-respect, delicacy, and refinement, with regard to the person, are powerful adjuncts to moral virtues; they need not be confined to the wealthy and favored classes; they cost nothing; on the contrary, they are the seeds which may be had without price, but which ripen into fruits of enjoyment that no money can buy."

In the present state of society it is almost impossible, unfortunately, to prevent children from being taught this vice, either practically or by verbal instruction, and it is, therefore, necessary to guard them against it by timely information and warning.