

CHAPTER XL.

PHILOSOPHY OF AMATIVE INDULGENCE.

THOSE who suppose that sexual enjoyment is altogether immoral and unworthy of rational beings, and those who regard it as a mere sensual gratification, are both in error. The instinct or desire for it is innate in all beings, and exercises a most powerful influence, both upon individual action, and upon the destinies of nations. That influence may be productive of good or evil, according as those moved by it are ignorant or properly informed, but there is nothing necessarily wrong in the instinct itself, that gives rise to it. The charms of mutual love, the relations of family, and the compact of society, are all dependent upon it, and would never originate without. Dr. Dunglison remarks, in his *Human Physiology*, that "In man and the superior animals, in which each sex is possessed by a distinct individual, it is necessary that there should be a union of the sexes, and that the fecundating fluid of the male should be conveyed within the appropriate organ of the female, in order that—from the concurrence of the matters furnished by both sexes—a new individual may result. To this union we are incited by an imperious instinct, established within us for the preservation of the species, as the senses of hunger and thirst are placed within us, for the preservation of the individual. This has been termed the *desire or instinct of reproduction*; and, for wise purposes, its gratification is attended with the most pleasurable feelings which man or animal can experience."

The true origin of this instinct has been discussed in a former article, and frequent reference to it has been made in connection with various other explanations, so that its influence and uses are tolerably well shown already. It undoubtedly originates from the action of the sexual organs themselves, and its mental manifestations are merely caused by the reflex action of those organs on the brain. In proportion to the activity of the *testes* in the male, and of the *ovaries* in the female, is the extent of the sexual power, and in proportion to the number and sensibility of the *nerves* of certain parts is the intensity of sexual feelings and desire. To say that all these are experienced in different degrees, is but stating what is generally known, though few persons know the occasional extent of that difference. While some experience sexual desire so weakly that they can easily overcome it altogether, others feel it so overpoweringly, that every other impulse besides is utterly powerless, and for the sake of one indulgence, all risks are run, and all consequences madly braved. There are people even—females at least—who never even feel the slightest amorous propensities, and there are others in whom they become so imperious as to cause actual mania. It is, therefore, very difficult to be strictly *just*, when judging of the virtues or failings of people in this respect, and the utmost charity should at least influence our *thoughts*, whatever prudence may point out as requisite in our actions. There are, no doubt, many immaculate people who owe their virtue chiefly to organic deficiency, which lessens the inclination to indulge, and there are no doubt others

that fall, from unusual organic vigor, which, perhaps, few, if any, would have been more successful in withstanding. This is not said, be it remembered, as an excuse for licentiousness, nor to undervalue the power of a well-regulated mind, in controlling these impulses, but merely to state the case as it really exists. That the sexual powers and desires may be either exalted or depressed, by the state both of the mind and body, has already been abundantly shown, and all persons with sufficient knowledge may regulate that state in a great measure themselves. It is the duty, therefore, of those acquainted with such truths to make them generally known, and thereby hasten the time when the mere animal instinct will be controlled, at least sufficiently to prevent evil, by the intellect.

X The phenomena attendant upon copulation, or the actual union of the two sexes, have already been discussed, and also the causes that may be supposed naturally to lead to it. In both sexes, when the union is really desired, and no obstacle interferes, it leads to the highest and most absorbing excitement that animated beings can experience. Both sexes are thrown into a species of mental ecstasy and bodily fever, during which all other thoughts and functions are totally suspended, and all the vital forces are concentrated in the reproductive system. In the female, the uterus and vagina are engorged with blood, the labia are tumefied and irritable, and the clitoris becomes congested, erect, and highly sensitive. In the male similar changes are also observed, to fit the organ for its peculiar use. "It is first necessary that, under the excitement of the venereal desire, the organ should attain a necessary state of rigidity, which is termed *erection*. In this state the organ becomes enlarged, and raised toward the abdomen; its arteries beat forcibly: the nerves become tumid; the skin more colored, and the heat augmented. It becomes also of a triangular shape, and these changes are indicated by an indescribable feeling of pleasure."—(See Dunglison.)

At this time the adaptation of the male and female organs for each other becomes most manifest, and the *manner* of union is clearly indicated. The penis being drawn up toward the abdomen, it necessarily has an upward curve, which precisely adapts it, in the usual position, to the curve of the vagina, and brings the mouth of the urethra almost directly against the mouth of the womb. The cushion of the mons Veneris prevents injury by external pressure, and the increased flow of mucus from the vagina moderates the heat, and lubricates the walls of the passage.

Dr. Dunglison remarks, respecting the male organ, that, in all probability, "The arteries first respond to the appeal; the organ is, at the same time, raised by the appropriate muscles, its tissues become distended, the plexus of veins turgid, and the return of blood impeded. In this way the organ acquires the rigidity necessary for penetrating the parts of the female. The friction which then occurs keeps up the voluptuous excitement and the state of erection. This excitement is extended to the whole generative system; the secretion of the testicles is augmented; the sperm arrives in greater quantity in the vesiculæ seminales; the testicles are drawn up toward the abdominal rings, by the contraction of the dartos and cremaster, so that the vas deferens is rendered shorter, and, in the opinion of some, the sperm filling the excretory ducts of the testicle is in this manner forced mechanically forward toward the vesicles. When these have attained a certain degree of distension, they contract suddenly and powerfully, and the sperm is projected through the ejaculatory ducts into the urethra. At this period, the pleasurable sensation is at its height. When the sperm reaches the urethra, the canal is thrown into the highest excitement, and

the ischio-cavernosus and bulbo-cavernosus muscles, with the transversus perinei and levator-ani are thrown into violent contraction; the two first holding the penis straight, and assisting the others in projecting the sperm along the urethra. By the agency of these muscles, and of the proper muscular structure in the urethra, the fluid is expelled, not continuously, but in jets, as it seems to be sent into the urethra by the alternate contractions of the vesiculæ seminales. These muscular contractions are of a reflex character, being independent of the will, and incapable of being controlled by any exertion of it. They are induced, as in deglutition (swallowing), by a special excitant—the food in one case, the sperm in the other.”

This highest point of enjoyment is termed the *orgasm*, and in some it is so intense that all consciousness of everything but the intense pleasurable excitement ceases. The duration of the orgasm is short, it being over immediately the flow of semen is ended, which is usually in a few seconds. The momentary ecstasy is followed by a state of dreamy languor and exhaustion, which is often not devoid of pleasure, though of a different kind, and there is an almost invariable desire for repose. So intense is the orgasm in some cases, that the individual utters loud cries, and becomes delirious, or occasionally insensible. The exhaustion afterward is also sometimes very great, and the individual will be almost unable to move.

In the female, an orgasm is not always experienced, and many even know not what it is, though they may be capable of considerable excitement. When it does occur, it is exhibited in the same way as in the other sex, though often much more intensely, being accompanied by cries and convulsive motions of the most energetic character. The after-exhaustion is usually not so great in them as in the other sex, and the dreamy languor is more pleasing. It will often endure for hours.

In the male there can, of course, be but one orgasm at once, because no other can be experienced till a fresh supply of semen has been secreted, which requires more or less time. Some, however, can have two or three secretions in an hour or two; but it is unusual, and the effort is always very exhaustive and hurtful. I have known an instance in which a man has forced eight or ten orgasms in a single night; but in such a case I have no doubt there was a peculiar conformation of the organs, owing to which but a small portion of semen was emitted at once, and probably no more altogether than most men emit at once. In general, no repetition of the act is desired under several hours, or perhaps not for days, and it is certainly improper for it to be sought earlier than when naturally desired.

In the female the orgasm is not caused by any secretion, like that of the semen, and consequently the excitement is not necessarily subdued by the first, but several orgasms may follow each other in quick succession. This is sometimes carried to a great extent, each one becoming more vivid than the others, till fainting ensues. In general, however, there is but one, as with the male, and when there is a proper *adaptation*, the two orgasms correspond, which mutually heightens the pleasure of both, and conduces to conception, though not necessary to it in all cases.

The after state in females is not always the same, but is often one of sadness and weeping, or of violent hysterics. Some females even say that this is always the case *when they conceive*, and that they thereby know when that event occurs. It has been even said by some that during a vivid orgasm, resulting in conception, they could see, mentally, the new being they were about to bear, and one female assured me that in this way she had a perfect view of the form and features of her child as it afterward appeared at birth. Perhaps we ought rather to believe that the image so

strongly impressed on her mind, at such a moment, was given to the child in consequence of that impression.

In most females there is a sudden and increased secretion of mucus from the vagina at the moment of the orgasm, which is erroneously thought by the uninformed to be a species of semen, but it has nothing whatever to do with conception.

In many of them the orgasm is very difficult to be produced, and they therefore seldom experience it, and in some even it is never felt. In others, however, it is produced very readily, and will even occur during sleep, or from exciting the breasts. Owing to this peculiar nervous susceptibility sexual excitement will also often follow various moral emotions, and an orgasm will occasionally supervene without there being any licentious tendency. This peculiar liability is in fact the cause of many female enthusiasms, which are often only the results of this powerful emotion directed by circumstances and education. When strongly experienced, if conscientious motives are powerful enough to forbid its natural indulgence, it takes some other direction, and imparts that fervor and devotion which is so amiable a part of the female character, and which all admire, though few suspect its origin. This nervous susceptibility, however, is unfortunate for them in some respects, as it makes them liable to undesirable influences, and often overcomes them in spite of themselves.

It has been asserted, by a very eminent physician, that it is simply owing to the susceptible state of the sexual system that many females are so readily *impressed*, as it is termed, by *mesmerism*, and similar nervous excitements, and that those who are uninfluenced by such agents are always of cold temperaments. The truth of this, as a general rule, every medical man of experience must have perceived, and in some instances it has been proved by unfortunate and unlooked-for occurrences.

A short time ago I induced a lady, who was formerly much addicted to mesmeric practices, to give me her experience, written down, and a curious revelation it is. She confessed that whenever she was capable of being acted upon, mesmerically, the mesmeric state was always preceded by one of sexual excitement, often amounting to a perfect orgasm, and that if this feeling was not experienced she could not be mesmerized. Sometimes the exaltation of the nervous system was so great she could with difficulty control herself, and so many orgasms would follow each other that she would be completely exhausted, and would faint away. According to her statement, the mesmeric sleep, or ecstasy, was nothing but the dreamy languor following a sexual orgasm, and though it may not be precisely the same in all similar cases, yet I am satisfied it is in many. I have seen exhibitions of this kind with young females, in which I could plainly perceive, from observation of such phenomena, that sexual excitement, though modified and disguised, was the moving impulse. Several respectable ladies have also assured me that they were fully aware of this from their own partial experience when being mesmerized for the cure of disease, and they afterward refused to submit to such influences again, or to allow their daughters to do so. In short, I am satisfied that such influences are often dangerous to morals, and also destructive to health.

Similar results to the above often follow intense devotional excitement, when carried so far as to overpower the reason—such, for instance, as the wild fanaticism of a camp-meeting, or protracted revival meeting, the female actors in which are often so carried away by their fervid feelings as to be totally insensible to the nature of what they experience. This I say, of course, merely as a medical man, and from the number of patients I have had who have been the victims of these exhibitions, I feel fully jus-

tified in making the observations I have. Hysteria and other nervous affections, palpitation of the heart, and irregular menstruation are a few of the evils that I thus find produced, to say nothing of the liability to affections of the brain and chlorosis.

One of the most remarkable circumstances connected with the experience of the sexual feeling, in females, is the fact that it will often be felt with one companion, even to excess, but not with another, though there may be neither dislike nor disinclination. This shows how much it is under the influence of the mind with them, and to what an extent it is modified by other emotions. Some little matter, perhaps a mere association of ideas, may be sufficient to prevent excitement entirely, or raise it to the highest pitch. This also shows that there is a natural *adaptation* required between married persons, and that marriage is never precisely what it ought to be unless that adaptation exists. It is not easy, however, to say in what that adaptation is to be found, nor can its absence or presence be known precisely, except by experience.

In addition to its other uses, sexual excitement is undoubtedly beneficial in various ways to the organization generally. It serves as a wholesome stimulus to the nervous system at ordinary times, and as a means of expending surplus energy when the vital functions are too active. It is very seldom the case that there is perfect health without it, and scarcely ever is there an exemption from severe nervous affections. This accounts for the fact that married people are always longer lived, on the average, than those that remain single, notwithstanding that they have more anxieties, and that married females are subject to so many accidents. A celebrated physician (Pidoux), who had been much employed in nunneries, assures us that almost invariably the nuns are afflicted with floodings, and with other uterine diseases, after they attain a certain age.

In short, marriage, or the union of the two sexes, is ordained by nature, and this ordinance can no more be violated without evil consequences than can any other. The physical enjoyments appertaining to marriage also form part of that ordinance, and are undoubtedly both proper and advantageous within certain limits.

In all cases where the sexual system is mutilated, so that none of those feelings and desires are experienced, the individual remains ever after imperfect, both bodily and mentally. Proof of this is to be seen daily in our domestic animals, the nature and form of which are changed in the most remarkable manner by *castration* or *spaying*. The most remarkable effects of this kind, however, are seen among human beings, in those unfortunate creatures termed *eunuchs*. Stunted or deformed in body, imbecile in mind, and perverse in disposition, they drag on a wretched existence for a little more than half the usual term of human life. Decrepid and decayed while yet young in years, old age comes prematurely upon them, and an untimely grave closes their imperfect career. Nature, in short, seems to say, that where the generative apparatus is absent, the rest of the system is not worth preserving, and she therefore leaves it to speedily decay.

Even in after life, when all has apparently become perfected, the presence and proper action of these organs is necessary to maintain health and vigor. If any accident occurs by which they are destroyed, or their powers seriously impaired, everything else suffers, and the whole system speedily goes to decay; without them, everything else seems to be abandoned.

The sexual system is therefore necessary, at first, to effect the full development of

the whole organization, and it is equally necessary afterward, to maintain it in healthy and vigorous action.

Perfect continence, in those who have natural sexual tendencies, is always attended by a variety of evils, some of them of a serious character, showing that temperate indulgence, so far from being hurtful, is both necessary and beneficial. Perfect continence, in the male, leads to spermatocele, spermatorrhœa, and even insanity. In the female, it leads to ovarian and uterine diseases, hysteria, and mania, and in both it originates the most singular and distressing vagaries of mind and thoughts. In severe cases, it leads to erotomania, satyriasis, or nymphomania.

An instance occurred in England, of a young female, who became insane, from not being allowed to marry—though the true cause was not suspected—and who was confined in a private asylum in consequence; while there, one of the keepers noticed certain peculiarities in her conduct, and abused her for his own gratification. The result was, however, that she perfectly recovered her reason.

In short, it is with these as with all other organs, a temperate and proper use of them is conducive to health, and creates happiness, but abuse or destruction of them leads to misery and death.

Constant and healthy exercise of the whole *muscular* system is also of great importance to the preservation of sexual power. It is true that if a man takes little exertion—particularly if he lives high—he will be apt to exhibit an unusual tendency to amorous indulgence, because, as before remarked, gluttony and idleness lead to licentiousness. This effect, however, is only a temporary one, and, sooner or later, the individual finds that he has *permanently exhausted* his vital energy, and that his health and strength are seriously impaired. The vital power that may be *safely* expended in sexual indulgence is only the *surplus*, after every part of the system has appropriated its due amount, and if more be so expended, some part must suffer. In other words, we may suppose that every healthy man has a certain stock of vital energy, which we will call his *capital*, to which he keeps adding more or less, by the function of nutrition; this addition may be compared to *interest*, which may be expended without any loss of capital, and, of course, without making him any poorer. If, however, by any *excess* he expends more than this addition, the capital is proportionally diminished, *and permanently too, for it can seldom be made up again.*

Now, the idle man does not expend enough vital energy on his muscular system to keep it healthy, but at the same time gives a superabundance of it to the sexual organs, so that they are over-stimulated, and suffer from excess. They become habituated to great indulgence, and are constantly causing a drain on the vital power, that soon exhausts both principal and interest, and leaves the individual completely exhausted.

The philosophy of this has been frequently alluded to in the course of the present work, but it is so important that I wish to present it in a strong light. I am fully persuaded that there is no case of precocious or excessive sexual propensity, unless caused by disease, that cannot be easily subdued by *muscular exercise*. No matter how vigorously the seminal glands may act, in a state of leisure, they *must* become less active if the body be exhausted by active exertion, and to this rule there is scarcely any limit. One of the Reports of the Massachusetts Lunatic Asylum strongly impresses this truth, and shows conclusively that we have, in *hard labor*, a *certain means* of subduing this propensity to its proper limits under any circum-

stances. The application of this truth to young persons is obvious, numbers of them being made licentious only by bodily inactivity and over-feeding.

The invalid, or the man whose powers are impaired, must, of course, husband his strength, because he does not require exhaustion, but only sufficient exercise to insure health.

Exercise of the *mind* is also equally as important as exercise of the body. The man who is mentally idle, is nearly certain to experience too strongly the force of the animal propensities, and licentious thoughts are too often indulged merely from the absence of better ones. It must be recollected, however, that too much mental exertion, particularly if attended with care and anxiety, is most destructive to the sexual power, and frequently leads to impotence, as many of our cases have shown. Those who wish, therefore, to preserve their virility, should endeavor to maintain a happy medium, laboring with the mind sufficiently for health and utility, and endeavoring to preserve perfect calmness and equanimity.

One singular circumstance may be mentioned here, in connection with the genital organs, which is both curious and important. They appear to possess, in an eminent degree, the power of retaining animal fluids in their substance without those fluids becoming decomposed. Thus, in many cases, *sacs* of water, blood, and other fluids, have been formed and retained in these parts, both in males and females, for months and years, and yet no change has taken place in these fluids. Now, in all cases where such accumulations take place in other parts of the body, decomposition speedily ensues, an abscess forms, and perhaps serious wasting disease commences. The genital organs, therefore, possess a preservative power greater than any other part, and this is doubtless owing to their great vitality and vigorous circulation.