

improvement continued until I took my leave, on the fifth day after the commencement of the treatment. The treatment, so far as I witnessed it, was similar to what is pursued in the gastric fever of children (but which I should not have ventured upon in so old a person)—bathing the body with cold water and giving small quantities of iced water as a drink. The bowels acting spontaneously, of course required not to be interfered with. I called several times afterwards; always heard a favorable report; and at the end of three weeks paid her a personal visit and found her comfortably seated in her rocking-chair.

This is the true history of the case in its material features. I fear not the sneers of my brotherhood when I say that many parts of the hydropathic treatment may be pursued with great advantage. Early rising, cold ablution, a substantial breakfast of excellent bread and butter, with new milk and new-laid eggs; after the repast a vapour bath and plenty of exercise; then a good dinner, consisting of the best roast and boiled meats, with choice vegetables, followed by game and wholesome puddings. All this sounds well, but then comes, alas! the beverage, three jugs of cold, sparkling, spring water! It reminds me of the men of Magdalen College, Cambridge, who were called in former times, "three-kettle men," from their fondness for tea. Then comes, I repeat, the beverage! Here I must decline following the disciples of Preissnitz further. Give me a few glasses of generous port wine, and I will leave them to exult in the success of their practice. Let them sing "Io triumphe" in the elasticity of their renewed health, and write over the thresholds of their doors, in letters of crystal, emblematical of the spirit that they worship,—

"Hoc opus, hoc studium, parvi properemus, et ampli,

Sic patriæ volumus, si nobis vivere cari."

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

HENRY WAKEFIELD.

Landsdowne-place,

Dec. 19, 1843.

DEVERGIE'S MINERAL SOLUTION.—This is composed of arsenious acid, ten grains; carbonate of potash, ten grains; distilled water, six pints and a half; alcohol (*de mélisse composé*), fifty minims; tincture of cochineal, as much as required to colour the mixture sufficiently. Each drachm of this solution is said to be equivalent to four drops of Fowler's liquor arsenicalis. M. Devergie employs this remedy with advantage in long-standing cutaneous eruptions, particularly those of a squamous and impetiginous nature. He indicates, as a constant result and symptom of cure, the appearance of dark-brown spots on all parts of the skin previously diseased, which persist for some months afterwards."—*L'Experience*.

THE CONFLICTING OPINIONS ON SPERMATORRHOEA AND CONTINENCE.

TREATMENT OF SPERMATORRHOEA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am much pleased to observe that the subject of spermatorrhœa is beginning to receive from the members of the profession the attention which its great importance deserves. It is not my intention, at present, to enter fully into its pathology or therapeutics, but merely to examine the facts and opinions which may be adduced, either for the purpose of justifying the illicit intercourse of the sexes, or, on the other hand, with a view of convincing us that such licence is not only unnecessary for the cure of this malady, but that continence can never produce it, or in any way deteriorate the general health. This part of the subject is manifestly of considerable moment, and Dr. Bull merits our thanks for introducing it in THE LANCET.

There exists on this, as on too many other subjects, no small difference of opinion; all observers, however, agree that spermatorrhœa may be produced by onanism, excessive venery, worms, hæmorrhoids, and constipation, which latter, I feel persuaded, is by no means an uncommon cause, more particularly when it is complicated with the former.

Professor Lallemand, of Montpellier, who has paid much attention to the pathology and treatment of this disease, has come to the conclusion that prolonged chastity is, indeed, almost invariably succeeded by spermatorrhœa; and he accounts for this result by asserting that after the age of puberty the seminal fluid cannot with safety be suspended or decreased, for no sooner does it collect than it begets incessant erections and nocturnal or diurnal emissions, which cannot be prevented but by sexual congress:—"It is the sole effectual means, both for the *present* and *future*." His pupil, Dr. Dangerfield, has lately supported the same views.

The late Dr. Ryan, of London (*Manual of Midwifery*, 1831, p. 60), thus expresses himself:—"All healthy persons, at the time of puberty, most certainly feel the passion of physical love. It is a part of their health, and as natural a consequence as *hunger* or *thirst*." . . . "It exists *independently* of the will; it may be restrained, but not extinguished. Reproduction seems to be a *common* law of animal and vegetable life, and the disposition to reproduce it in all healthy subjects is most powerful. It is a passion that must be gratified." Again, when speaking of the treatment of impotence from seminal emissions, he maintains that marriage is the natural cure for the complaint; but, never-

theless, although concubinage is immoral, it "is so often acted on, in general, without a medical counsellor, that we must not be too ready to censure the faculty for occasionally proposing it." "Absolute continence," he adds, "from venery, in a healthy subject much disposed to it, induces many dangerous diseases, and even deaths."

M. Cruveilhier, of Paris (LANCET, 1843-4, vol. i., p. 328), on the contrary, does not believe that spermatorrhœa is ever caused by venereal abstinence, nor will he consent to the doctrine that continence is prone to make inroads on the health of individuals. In support of the former, he reminds us of the physiological law "that the less a secreting organ is exercised, the less secretion takes place," and in proof of the latter he appeals to his own personal observation among the young priesthood. To these deductions Dr. Bull consents, and contends that physiological and ethical laws can never be hostile to each other.

Dr. Carpenter (Principles of Physiology, 1842) concurs in these opinions, and censures those practitioners who recommend immoral connections. Such advice is "immoral, as well as unscientific." He thinks that the secretion of the testicles is very much under the influence of the mind, and it cannot be denied that his remarks are pertinent. In another part of his volume, however, he writes thus:—"To the use of the sexual organs for the continuance of his race, man is prompted by a *powerful instinctive* desire, which he shares with the inferior animals." . . . "This instinct, when once aroused (even though very obscurely felt), acts upon the mental faculties and moral feelings, and this becomes the source of the tendency to form that kind of attachment towards one of the opposite sex which is known as love."

Now, when we meet with such opposing and conflicting statements as the above just enumerated, it appears to me that a more extended and closer investigation is required before we can arrive at just or satisfactory results. The subject is altogether of too much importance to justify us in advancing, as facts, opinions which may be only the fruits of immature observation. At present, then, *lis sub judice est*. Whether continence be productive of spermatorrhœa, or not, in men who have never deviated from the paths of strict rectitude, I cannot undertake to determine; but that it is surely a cause of this disease in those who have at one period of their lives indulged in coition, but have subsequently abstained from it for any considerable time, I most assuredly believe; and that the best, if not the only, cure for the malady is a moderate employment of the venereal organs. To this view I have been led from a tolerably fair experience. But I may be wrong; and after all, the whole difficulty in the medical science consists in ascertaining with

certainly the precise influence which what we call causes exert on the animal economy. What is proved and received on one day is often disproved and rejected on the morrow. All must acknowledge the force of the objection urged by Cruveilhier. I cannot say that I have ever seen atrophy of the testicles in any healthy and normal individual, and I feel convinced that mental onanism (from which, perhaps, few are free) is alone sufficient to insure the secretion of the seminal fluid and to prevent the degeneration of the virile organs. Eunuchs even, according to Sir A. Cooper, are liable to erections and prostatic emissions.

I have been acquainted with but very few priests, but those whom I have known were healthy-looking persons. It is out of my power to say whether they lead a life of continence or otherwise, but I am aware that some, at least, of our own unmarried clergy gratify their amorous dispositions. I was once consulted by a clergyman, for constipation, who practiced masturbation. He had never copulated, but had a great wish to be married; the *res angusta domi* prevented. He defended the practice of onanism, and urged that a man who did not enjoy sexual union was led to it instinctively. John Hunter asserted that masturbation, if confined within proper limits, was not injurious to the system.

But whatever differences of opinion may exist among medical men, in relation to the influence which chastity exerts in the production of spermatorrhœa, one thing is undeniable, namely, that the governments of Europe wink at the practice of illicit connection. In the time of Henry VIII. the stews of London were located in Southwark, and in France stews are publicly recognised at this very day. Moreover, the fact cannot be disguised, that there are few persons who have not given way to this vice, which is called by the historian Gibbon, the most liberal of all, drunkenness being the most illiberal. Although an indulgence in this vice is immoral, and notwithstanding the Saviour has declared that of all sins that of fornication is the most inimical to his religion, yet it does appear that the members of society seem much more willing to defend or excuse it, when confined to single men, than almost any other. Now, although I do not agree with Dr. Bull in believing that continence cannot ever give rise to the presence of inordinate seminal discharges, or be otherwise obnoxious to the general health, but, on the contrary, that moderate sexual congress is required to preserve the health, still I cannot either advocate the practice of onanism, or justify fornication. The latter tends greatly to the demoralisation of the human species, and is frequently followed by the most wretched ailments. It aims a death-blow to the two great pillars of human society—marriage and parental care. No

man either, who endeavours to act up to the precepts inculcated in the New Testament, can consistently or quietly recommend it. Can any believer in Christianity advise his fellow-man (more particularly when he is suffering from a most distressing malady) to spurn the dictates of his Maker to follow the courses of Mammon? But, say others, is he, then, miserably to pine away and perish? I answer, no; let him rather marry, and "eat the bread of carefulness." What, urge a man to disgrace his family and to burthen the state by entering into a matrimonial alliance when he has not the means wherewith to do so? Would any Christian believe that there is a society in being which holds out pecuniary rewards to labourers to remain single till they have attained the age of thirty? Would they have men for a period of eight years go about trying to seduce their own daughters, perhaps, or those of their fellow-men? No; let them restrain their passions. Yes; but that is in the power of very few men to accomplish. If we could, indeed, command our appetites, life might approach truly unto happiness. Erroneous views of life usually lead to unnatural and unfair designs. Knowledge, if not necessary to virtue, is of great assistance to it. We are told by the apostle it is better to marry than burn, and that marriage is honourable to all men; but hear what the shrewd and learned Burton (himself a divine) says,—“No man shall marry until he be twenty-five, no woman till she be twenty—*nisi aliter dispensatum fuerit*. If one die, the other party shall not marry until six months after, and because many families are compelled to live niggardly, exhaust and undone by great dowers, none shall be given at all, or very little, and that by supervisors, rated; they that are foul shall have a greater portion; if fair, none at all, or very little; however, not to exceed such a rate as those supervisors shall think fit. And when once they come to those years *poverty* shall hinder no man from marriage, or any other respect; but all shall be rather *enforced* than hindered, except they be dismembered, or grievously deformed, infirm, or visited with some enormous hereditary disease, in body or mind, in which cases, upon a great pain or mulct, man or woman shall not marry; other order shall be taken from them to their content. If people over-abound, they shall be eased by colonies.” (Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy: Democritus to the Reader*.)* Of course, we have improved much since Burton’s time, and we now have an opportunity of reading the instructive pages of Malthus. “How odious and abominable are those rash vows which bind and inforce men

and women to vow virginity, to lead a single life against the laws of nature, opposite to religion, feeling, and humanity! so to starve, to offer violence, to suppress the vigour of youth! and all for base and private respects to maintain their gross superstitions, to enrich themselves by hindering some marriages, that the world be not full of beggars, and their parishes pestered with orphans.”

A few words as to *the treatment* and I have done.

The bowels must be kept regular by the use of mild aperients, or (what is better) by means of enemas, which should be thrown up every morning. The genitals and thighs to be sponged with cold water, and the greatest care should be employed to wash away the secretion which accumulates around the corona glandis. The general surface of the body may most advantageously be benefited by the daily ablution with salt and water. An injection, composed of twenty minims of the sedative liquor of opium in water, should be had recourse to every night on going to bed, care being taken to allow it to remain in the urethra for some time. A leech or two may occasionally be applied to the perineum, or under the root of the penis. The solid nitrate of silver I have found an excellent remedy when applied to the orifice of the meatus, but I have not employed it more than once a week. It affords much relief, but it is not permanent. I have never used it as lauded by Lallemand. The patient should sleep with his head high, and on his side: I have generally noticed that seminal emissions occur towards morning, when the person is lying on his back. The disulphate of quinine with sulphuric acid may be exhibited internally, and afterwards iron may be gradually persevered in. Tea and coffee should be avoided, and fresh milk used in their place. There is no objection to the patient’s taking mild bitter beer at dinner, but wine must be banished. Great restlessness is a constant attendant on this disease, and opiates have been extolled, but I have never given them a trial. When lettuces are in season one may be taken for supper, about an hour before bedtime. The bed-coverlets should be thrown down towards the foot for some time before the patient retires, and if towards morning the afflicted individual finds that he has had but little repose, he should turn them down again, and walk about the room for a few minutes. By this simple method sleep may often be procured, but under these circumstances he should not rise early. The patient should marry, but he must not indulge in venereal combats more than once or twice a week. Venery is very apt to cause balmy and refreshing repose,—“*Finito opere, cupido pacatur, irritatio summovetur, corpus solvitur, et somnus facilius obrepat.*” All mental

* This quaint, learned, and amusing work should be in the hands of every medical man.

onanism must be destroyed, for there can be doubt that the "lust of the eye" tends greatly to augment the complaint. Until it is perfectly cured, horse-exercise should be strictly prohibited; but walking may be undertaken daily. The attention should be fixed on some engaging occupation, and the society of indelicate females must be discarded. Frequent changes of scenery are of much service. Obediently yours,

T. C. LEWIS, M.R.C.S., &c.

Wolverhampton, Dec. 19, 1843.

ON THE PREVENTION OF SPERMATORRHOEA, AND THE SALUTARY EFFECTS OF EARLY MARRIAGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is with much pleasure that in your independent Journal, the pages of which are impartially open to combatants on either side of a question, I have lately read the communications of Dr. Dangerfield, Mr. Chatto, and Mr. Dudgeon, on the cure and prevention of spermatorrhoea. It is chiefly with respect to the remarks of the second-named gentleman (page 399) that I desire to trespass on your attention. Nothing that I could suggest is necessary to add force to his admirable letter, to the whole argument in which I cordially assent, and which I will now endeavour to follow up from a point at which Mr. Chatto has left the subject. To take "the bull by the horns," I would urge a strong doubt whether much of what the world calls "morality," with reference to continence, be really morality in the abstract. It is not so, unless morality consist in opposing physiological laws, which Dr. Bull agrees never can take place. Acts which directly or indirectly injure others, as murder, theft, and adultery (which last is, indeed, a species of theft), are directly denounced in the commandments of the Supreme Being, and are justly regarded by the common sense of mankind as *crimes*, and punished accordingly; but it is, at least, a great stretch of dogmatism to extend the term crime, or *immorality*, to acts which are in nowise emphatically forbidden, like the foregoing, by divine command, nor which the common sense of mankind (in civilised countries, at any rate) has yet learned to consider as coming under judicial cognisance,—acts, indeed, which not only of themselves cause no injury to other individuals, but are even self-preservative. For there is no need here to recapitulate the argument that every organ of the body demands due exercise for the maintenance of its healthy condition; this proposition already takes rank as an established fact; and, such being the case, I unhesitatingly assert

that to hinder the due employment of any organ to the extent commensurate with or necessary to health, is to contravene the laws of God and Nature in deference to the absurd and unnatural prejudices of man! Freely will I adopt Dr. Bull's own dogma, "The laws of physiology do not here, any more than elsewhere, infringe on those of morality."*

It has been truly enough said by an English poet,

"Who lives to nature rarely can be poor."

Neither, we may add, will he be habitually unhealthy; and it would have been well and wise if mankind in different ages, in forming their institutions, had kept the dictates of nature more steadily in view, and thereby built up their codes of "morality," upon a more rational and firmer basis. The laws of physiology displayed before us have been stamped upon the universe by its Creator, and are infallible, irrevocable, and co-existent with the universe itself: the laws of so-called "morality" consist in mere human dicta, wavering and uncertain, and have varied in each different clime and country, as all history will show. Future nations will arise, and future and different moral codes will replace those of our day. For our own part, we live, indeed, in so artificial a state of society that we can indulge little hope of speedily witnessing any great divergence of our code of morality to the side of reason and nature. It is scarcely possible to believe that, with the continual spread of rational information, the laws of physiology will remain equally neglected; and the philosophical inquirer, who pleases himself by looking beyond the present, may confidently anticipate an epoch when much of the pseudo-morality will find its true level, which at present disfigures an age claiming for itself the designation of an age of science.

Dr. Dangerfield, in his answer to Dr. Bull (p. 398), quite correctly adverts that he had, in his summary of spermatorrhoea (page 210), advocated nothing calculated to offend against the most fastidious rules of conduct, and that he by no means recommended what is termed illicit sexual intercourse as a remedy for spermatorrhoea and its attendant evils, but that his observations were entitled to a more kindly construction, as applying to early marriage. It were uncourteous, if not insulting, to Dr. Dangerfield to put another construction on what he says; for what practitioner of character and correct feeling is there, having the care of cases requiring the treatment under consideration, whose *first* impulse would not be to suggest marriage instead of a less honourable connection? And this is a fitting place enough to remark that were early marriage more often

* LANCET, Dec. 9, p. 329.