

# SEXUAL HEALTH.

A COMPANION TO

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“MODERN DOMESTIC MEDICINE.”

A PLAIN AND PRACTICAL GUIDE

FOR THE PEOPLE IN ALL MATTERS CONCERNING

THE ORGANS OF REPRODUCTION

IN

BOTH SEXES AND ALL AGES.

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rite, as is well known, was made one of fundamental religious importance among the Jews, but was by no means limited to the descendants of Abraham, and undoubtedly was established primarily as a sanitary precaution. The eighth day of life being the established one amongst a race of people scattered over all parts of the globe, shows conclusively that the act can scarcely be performed at too early an age if the infant be otherwise healthy. By all means, then, let every boy baby be circumcised at the earliest convenient day—of course committing the operation to a surgeon—and let every boy or man of whatever age also undergo the operation unless he can habitually retain the foreskin retracted so as to fully expose the glans penis.

But a long foreskin is by no means the only source of irritation from which the immature sexual organs must be protected. Great care must be taken to guard them from unnecessary handling, even in washing, and too much pains cannot be bestowed upon the choice of a nurse with regard to this very thing. Some nurses will endeavor to soothe a child to sleep by tickling the privates, and many a boy has thus been taught by his nurse to seek pleasures of which he should have had no knowledge whatever.

**For pleasure is associated** with many movements of the sexual parts in the earliest years of life, and it is probably to this fact that we must look for an explanation of the fondness children manifest for the amusement of sliding down a stair-balustrade, a form of play which ought to be looked upon with disfavor. Play in general, however—active, romping, boisterous

play, of boys and girls together, regardless of noise, dirt, and proprieties—is always to be looked upon as the most natural and healthful employment in which children can engage, and little fear need be felt of their having too much of it. The danger lies entirely the other way, for fashion and propriety, school-boards and, alas! poverty, combine to deny to the rising generation its fair share of out-door play, with the essential accessories of noise, dirt, and torn clothes.

**As the boy grows older** it becomes of the utmost importance that he should be actively employed, and that his parents should retain his perfect confidence. The more physical exertion and the more playmates, both boys and girls, a boy has, the less likely will he be to have any morbid tendencies toward habits which at his age are certainly not natural or dependent upon natural sexual instincts; for such instincts, if allowed to come of themselves, would wait upon the maturity of the organs through which they must find expression, and are hence unnatural, however strong, in earlier years. But playmates are apt to be the principal teachers of the young boy, and they often teach what would be better unlearned. It becomes, then, a matter of the utmost importance that parents hold on to the boy's confidence, so that nothing shall enter his mind to be concealed from them, and no teaching from whatever source shall be preferred to theirs. And while it is doubtless the best plan to keep the boy's mind as far as possible from the sexual organs and their uses, let no parent delude himself with the idea that thoughts of these things can be entirely excluded.

Too much of what goes on in the animal world, too much that is tolerated in the daily papers, comes under his notice, too many of his daily experiences are compared with those of his companions, to make it possible to exclude entirely from his mind questions that sooner or later will find their answers, perhaps in a way parents would not prefer. Boys will even make a competitive game of the simple emptying of their bladders, and in this act may easily begin a habit difficult enough to uproot.

**A boy should be taught** that the privates must not be handled except for washing and passing water. He can easily be shown that the urine is a fluid which carries impurities out of his body that would do him harm if retained, and that handling the privates may result in obstruction to the flow of urine, and thus make him sick. There is no need of teaching more till his questions demand it; but when his curiosity is aroused the safest course is to satisfy it with the wholesome article of truthful information, rather than run the risk of having the moral poison that circulates all too freely among the young, taken into the mind and accepted as sound teaching with regard to sexual relations.

**Fuller information** than this ought to be given a boy, regardless of his questions, not later than the advent of puberty. This crisis is signalized by the growth of hair at the lower part of the abdomen, and by the change of voice. At about the same time the organs of reproduction begin to secrete a fluid upon which depends their power to perform their part in the preservation of the species, and, as we shall see later, it is the

accumulation of this fluid, and the consequent desire to empty the organ in which it is contained, that gives rise to the sexual instinct upon which the life of the race depends. Nature will discharge this fluid spontaneously at long intervals; but its presence will awaken feelings that will need but little instruction, of a kind sure to come to every boy in the land, no matter where his home or how sacredly guarded, to start him upon a course of masturbation, or self-abuse, which may lead to very unhappy consequences. The hope of keeping a boy in ignorance of this practice, and the pleasure to be derived from it, may as well be abandoned first as last, for it is simply impossible. Nature has determined that the species shall be preserved at any cost, and the only way to guard a boy from the dangers of masturbation is by clearly recognizing the fact that temptation is inevitable, and that the only protection is in developing strength of character to resist, and by full instruction as to the nature, office, use, and abuse of the sexual organs.

**Teach him that these organs** have but one proper use, and were created with but one object—the preservation of the species. Show him that there is but one way in which they can properly fulfil their mission—through marriage. Call his attention to the fact that the Creator has provided for the rearing of a human being far more carefully than for the reproduction of lower animals, has designed that the child shall have the nurture and attention of both father and mother, and has made it evident, both in nature and in revelation, that no plan of preserving the species that does not provide each child with an acknowledged and responsible father, as

well as mother, can meet with His approval, or be for the best interests of the race. Show him that while pleasure is associated with this, as with all properly used natural functions, there is, and can be, no plan of securing that pleasure, without performing the associated duties, that will not cost more in pain and suffering, eventually, than it returns in pleasure. Teach him that his early inclination to seek such pleasure is one of his opportunities to test and strengthen his character; that the grade of his manhood is established by the amount he can overcome, and that his value in the world depends much on the question as to whether he will rule his body, or his body him; that by cultivating the mind and the other parts of the body he can hinder these organs and their desires from becoming too strong for him, while their natural growth will be associated with the development of gentleness, tenderness, unselfishness, and other mental traits which belong to nobility of character, and is intended to remind him in time of the duties of manhood to which he is approaching, in order that he may prepare for parenthood himself, first by the development of his own character, and second by the wise choice of a mother for his future children.

**Moreover, this boy should be taught** that no function of his body exhausts vitality so rapidly as the sexual function; that it is one intended to be shared, not only by all the members of his own body, but also by all those of another and different body, and that to drain the distinctively sexual organs in solitude is to abuse them, because it is to imperfectly and incompletely perform a very delicate, complicated, and

important act. He should have explained to him, also, the nature, strength, and danger of habit, because it is the *habit* of self-abuse that is to be most of all dreaded in this connection. But do not teach him that the simple act of self-abuse in itself is a thing of overwhelming danger, for this is not true, and the boy will unquestionably satisfy himself sooner or later that it is not true, and, detecting you in one falsehood, he will discredit all your teaching. Besides, when a boy gets his mind fixed on the idea that the act of self-abuse will of itself lead to dire consequences, he becomes the easy prey of designing quacks, who, through advertisements and circulars, some of which will be sure to reach his eye, will awaken fears that will torment him every time any ailment affects his body, and probably extort from him money for worse than useless, if not harmful, medication. Self-abuse is undoubtedly an evil in itself, because it is incomplete and unnatural, and sad is his state who has bound himself with the chains this vice can so deftly forge; but its chief danger is that it so quickly and easily becomes a habit, and then it is indulged beyond the power of the body to recuperate.

But if his state be sad who has lost his sense of manhood in the vice of self-abuse, how much sadder is his who has sacrificed self-respect, health, strength, and money in the house of the "strange woman." Nothing but shame and remorse wait for him who enters these portals. It is unfortunately true that some physicians advise those who have bound the chains of the habit of self-abuse about their lives, to seek to break them by binding over them the stronger chains of the strange

woman. Nothing could be more hopeless than to attempt to gain anything in this way. Illicit indulgence must from the nature of the case be irregular, under the influence of excitement if not of alcohol, degrading, and almost certain to result in diseases loathsome in the extreme, painful, and dangerous to life. That should be enough were it not also true that prostitution strikes at the very root and foundation of society—the family—and does nothing and can do nothing to help the individual out of the chains of bad habits.

**The best treatment** for these bad habits is the preventive, and that is applied by early instruction in their evil effects and tendencies, by providing for the development of both mind and body, and by guarding against moral poison in the reading or conversation of the growing boy. Keep an eye on what he reads, and consign all books, pamphlets, or circulars devoted to any special quack medicine to speedy destruction, and try to introduce such newspapers into the family as refuse to admit advertisements of quack medicines of any kind—a very difficult kind of newspaper to find, unfortunately. Keep the boy interested in active sports during his spare time by day, and in the evenings, besides wholesome games, teach him to read wholesome books, and be sure that you know where he is and what he is doing in the evenings. Try to give each boy his separate bed and bedchamber; at least let him have a single bed partitioned off by a screen if it must be in a room with others. Let him have plenty of society and send him to a mixed school, if possible; for the family model, male and female, man and woman, boy and girl, in constant association and

contact, is the true one for school-days as for all the other periods of life. But keep him out of the city public school, when you can make a choice. The pressure there is too great to be resisted, in favor of cramming facts and training memory to the neglect of true education—teaching principles and cultivating character—which should be the main object of school-work.

**But if habits of self-abuse**, with the consequent spermatorrhœa or seminal emissions (the so-called “wet-dreams”), have become seated, they must be broken up by some such plan as suggested for their prevention, with additions. Diet is an important consideration, and should be rather light but nutritious, consisting of grains, vegetables, brown-bread, rice and Indian puddings, fruit, fish, oysters, and, above all, milk. Meats should be used in great moderation and must be well cooked. The following named articles should be entirely forbidden during the treatment: viz., coffee, cinnamon, nutmeg, pepper, mustard, vanilla, radishes, horseradish, onions, rhubarb, tomatoes, water-cresses, and sorrel. Late meals must be avoided. The supper should be light, and taken not later than six o'clock. Other important elements in the treatment are, systematic gymnastic training, early hours, a hard bed, a cool sleeping-room and light bedcovers, insistence upon rising and dressing at the first waking moment, and, if possible, the constant day and night society of one who wishes to help in the cure of the habit and who is old enough and mature enough to be a guard while yet a companion. A daily cold sponge-bath before breakfast or at bedtime is also to be advised, and the moral nature must be aroused to fight to

the utmost against the degrading animalism that is betrayed by persistence in habits of sensuality.

The best medicine for the weakness upon which "wet-dreams" depend is *Phos. ac.* which may be taken in tablespoonful doses, four times a day, using a solution of twelve globules in two-thirds of a glass of water. A still better remedy is the sitz-bath taken twice daily, before breakfast and before supper, or before dinner and at bedtime—at least two and a half hours after supper. It must be exactly 95° F., must be taken in a common wash-tub of wood, in which the patient must sit quietly for full thirty minutes, allowing the water to cover his hips and belly. A sheet should be spread over the patient and tub and gathered about the neck so as to exclude draughts. Further treatment, if any be needed, should be under the direction of a physician, but choose one who will not rely upon medicines only, for these cases will not yield usually unless treated by the steel sound which must be passed into the bladder not oftener than once a week, and by a physician.

**The sexual organs** of a growing boy need no attention whatever except circumcision and cleanliness, unless, of course, some accident befall them. The more completely they are let alone the better, and some authors assert, that if they can be entirely left to themselves no fluid whatever will escape from them. This is probably a mistake, but the instances in which these organs receive absolutely no handling are so rare as to make it difficult to state what does occur under such circumstances. An occasional involuntary loss of the seminal fluid, say once a month, or even somewhat

oftener, is of no serious consequence unless it be associated with other evidences of the presence of disease. But frequent "wet-dreams" signify weakness of the sexual organs, and this is the usual result of self-abuse. The fluid itself seems to be an expensive one for the blood to elaborate, and its frequent discharge by even the most natural method, is something of a drain upon the resources of the body. When it accumulates in too large quantity, nature will discharge it during the relaxed state of the parts induced by sleep or disease, in the form of what are called "wet-dreams," and it may safely be said that no other form of discharge of this fluid, either by masturbation or sexual intercourse is *necessary* to the well-being and health of the reproductive organs at any time of life.

**It is a very prevalent opinion** that sexual desires indicate the necessity of sexual indulgence. It may safely be asserted that this opinion is an error. Sexual desires are among the strongest influences known to human nature; very few men are able to go through life without paying some heed to such desires; many have even confounded those desires with the strongest and loftiest passion known to the human heart, and have named these irrepressible longings with the sacred name of Love. But their strength simply indicates the importance put by Nature upon the preservation of the species, they assure permanent vitality to the institution of marriage and make it certain that men, as a class, will always provide themselves with wives—or worse.