Spermatorrhoea

Considered as a natural process.

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Various reasons have influenced me in selecting, as the subject of my Thesis, a consideration of the results of a prolonged investigation into the nature of what has hitherto been considered a serious disease, but which I believe to be a thoroughly natural process, such as we have numerous instances of in the human body.—

It is much to be regretted that even in the best medical text books, the subject of Spermatorrhoea as a disease,— which all of them admit to be a most important one— is treated in a most perfunctory & unsatisfactory manner.— Judging from the fulness with which they dwell on the dreadful consequences of the disease, it might reasonably be expected that its nature & symptoms would be fully discussed & clearly defined.— Thus however

is not the case, & only a brief description of a few ill-defined symptoms is given, to indicate, & enable the physician to diagnose, a disease, which, if its consequences be so serious as they are stated to be, is certainly entitled to a more thorough investigation than the authors of these text books seem to have made.— On this point a few lines may be quoted from the principal text book in general use.— Erichsen in Vol II p 787 says "Various forms of debility, of loss of power or of irregularity of action in the generative organs of the male are confounded together under the terms Spermatorrhoea & Impotence. These conditions require a more careful consideration on the part of the educated Surgeon than they have hitherto received as their existence is a source of the deepest mental depression & distress to the sufferer.— These affections which

"are of extreme frequency amongst all classes of
"the community, having scarcely as yet received
"that attention on the part of the profession
"generally that their importance deserves, the
"unfortunate sufferers from them are too often
"driven into the hands of those pestilent
"Quacks that flourish in the metropolis, & in-
"fest almost every town in the country, by
"whom they are not unfrequently ruined in health
"as well as in purse". — And as if to mark
the ignorance of the subject so much deprecated
in the above lines, the same able author,
discarding his usual mode of procedure, does
not indicate the symptoms of the diseases
he refers to, but contents himself with giving,
in lieu of symptoms, a vague & general descrip-
of the supposed ailment, combining in one confused
paragraph what he considers to be its causes,
manifestations, & after effects. — He says, in
the same Volume & page already quoted from, —
"True Spermatorrhoea is chiefly met with in

" young men usually from the ages of 18 to 30.—
" It is commonly the consequence of masturbation
" in boyhood, of debility of the generative organs
" induced by gonorrhoea, or of the continued
" struggle to repress the natural sexual desires
" by a life of forced or unavoidable continence.
" The generative organs are excited by slight
" emotional causes, or by trivial & ordinary
" physical stimuli — a thought, a look, a word,
" the movement of a carriage, the effort of
" straining at stool, will excite the secretion
" of the testes, which the debilitated state of
" the parts allows to escape with a feeble
" ejaculatory effort, or in a kind of leakage
" of a few drops from the urethra. — In the
" slighter cases, & in the earlier stages of
" the malady, these emissions take place but
" occasionally — three or four times a week —
" In the more advanced stages, the emissions
" occur once or oftener in the 24 hours, the
" semen at last when discharged, flowing

"back into the neck of the bladder, escaping into
"each discharge of the urine, or being squeezed
"out after defecation. — The patients physical &
"mental state becomes seriously implicated in
"these more advanced cases of the Spermatorrhœa.
"His countenance is pallid, anæmic, & sallow,
"his features are drawn, their expression is listless,
"his eyes lifeless, his spirits depressed, often
"to the lowest depths of despondency & despair."

It is needless to give further quotations in proof of the unsatisfactory condition of our present knowledge of Spermatorrhœa, as a disease — the most diverse & opposite opinions are held, as to its nature & cause, by the principal writers on the subject. — Lallemand, for example, holds that the disease is nearly always dependent upon irritation of the Prostate gland & its ejaculatory ducts; while Trousseau, supported by Bartholow of America, "believes it to be due to some imperfection "in the nervous system". — The treatment, of

course, differs in accordance with the difference of their opinions regarding the disease.—

It is here to be noted that Erichsen & the other principal authorities on the subject, assign much importance to the discovery of Spermatozoa in the urine, as a proof of the existence of a diseased condition of the generative organs, & as this is the point to which my remarks are mainly directed, with a view to its disproval, I have deemed it right to give these quotations in support of the statement.—

1. Dr Bryant's Surgery—another text book in very general use—the author says (P. 648 of 1872 Ed.) "Spermatorrhoea, as a disease, consists in the "discharge of Spermatic fluid, containing "Spermatozoa, with the urine, without sexual "desire or sexual excitement".—

2. Dr Tanner's index of Diseases, under the article Spermatorrhoea p 254. the author gives as a symptom of the disease "An escape of "Seminal fluid ---- which may render the urine

"slight albuminous" :-

3. Lallemand, the Chief writer on the subject, says (Mr Engalls' trans. of Lallemand on Spermatorrhoea p311) "Seminal discharges that take place during the "emission of urine, are the most serious most obstinate "of all, because they are the most often most easily "repeated." So much importance does this writer place on the discovery of Spermatozoa in the urine, as an evidence of disease, that he gives page after page of directions for the microscopic examination of urine with a view to discovering the animalcules, adding after one of the directions that "this is "especially important in examining fluid obtained from "diurnal pollutions" (i.e from urine containing Spermatic fluid) "because there are frequently only a few "Spermatozoa contained in it."-

4. Bartholow on Spermatorrhoea p36. says "The essential "symptom in Spermatorrhoea is the recurrence of "seminal losses .... which occur in some habitually without sensation"

5. Tulayson in his Clinical manual p403. says

"When Spermatozoa are present habitually in the urine
"they may afford evidence of Spermatorrhœa".-

That the passage of Seminal fluid through the urethra, though it be but in small quantities, should be considered to indicate genital disease, is in my opinion quite erroneous, & the following remarks have in view, to a great extent, the removal of this source of error in diagnosing diseases of the generative organs, by endeavouring to prove that, normally, there is an almost Constant discharge of Spermatic fluid into the urethra, from which canal it is naturally removed during micturition.

I believe that the erroneous idea in vogue, as to seminal fluid in the urine being an indication of serious genital disease, has much to do with the general ignorance of the subject, so much deplored by honest Physicians, & taken advantage of by Quacks.-

The indefinite & unsatisfactory Knowledge of the disease, obtained from such standard text-books as those quoted, first suggested to me the necessity for an investigation into the nature & cause of Spermatorrhœa with a view to acquiring a full & accurate Knowledge of the disease.- And the importance of such an investigation was

impressed on me by the frequency with which cases of supposed Spermatorrhoea came under my notice, the subjects of the imaginary disease, having, in almost all cases, obtained their information regarding it, from books on the subject which have been placed under legal prohibition. — It is a fact that, notwithstanding their attempted suppression, such books are in the possession of, & are eagerly perused by, a vast number of young men, with what results may be imagined from the following passages quoted from one of the most ably written & most widely circulated of the books in question - "Elements of Social Science". — Speaking of seminal discharges the anonymous author of this book says (page 90) "When once seminal weakness has been established "it is vain to seek to cure a patient without "natural sexual exercise. — It is not enough "that he be informed of the true physiological "remedy, but the necessity & natural duty of it "should be impressed upon him". — "There are

"many adjuncts to the treatment of this
"complaint, but they are all subsidiary to
"the main part of the treatment, sexual
"intercourse, to which they should be merely
"preparations or accessories".- And in his
remarks on Spermatorrhoea, the ailment under
consideration, the same author, after briefly
picturing the serious after effects of the disease,
says (Page 104) "Let us not imagine that
"this disease is of rare occurrence, for there
"are probably few men who have not suffered
"more or less in their health, moral and
"physical, from sexual derangement.- "With
"regard to the cure of Spermatorrhoea, it will
"be seen, from what has already been said,
"that the great object is to bring the genital
"organs into such a state, that they shall
"be able to enjoy & profit by sufficient &
"normal exercise.- To arrest the Spermatorrhoea
"& then leave the organs to be again enfeebled
"from disuse, is as fruitless as to cure a

"broken leg, & allow the patient to remain ever
"after on a sofa".— "With regard to the natural
"remedy of sexual intercourse, it is of great Con-
"-sequence that it be duly followed".—

Truly, if Spermatorrhoea be to a large extent
an imaginary disease, to make known the fact,
would be a Kindness to humanity.—

Besides removing erroneous mischievous ideas,
a study of the subject before us, suggests numerous
interesting & important questions, which, so far
as I have been able to ascertain, have not as
yet been answered with any degree of satisfaction.
For example, we know that every normal healthy
male person is possessed of special organs whose
function is the secretion of seminal fluid.— It
is interesting from a physiological point of
view to know what means nature has provided
for the removal of this secretion from the body.
Again, from the physicians point of view, it
is important to know with certainty the nature
& cause of Spermatorrhoea as a disease, for

without such knowledge, the diagnosis may be inaccurate, while the treatment must be empiric.—

It is now fully three years ago since my attention was first directed to the subject.— The line of investigation primarily adopted, was the very simple one of examining microscopically a number of specimens of different urines, with a view to selecting, for further investigation, those specimens found to contain spermatozoa.— This preliminary examination led to the discovery that, in a very large percentage of my specimens, these animalcules were to be found. On talking the matter over with a medical gentleman, who devotes special attention to urinary examinations, I ascertained that this fact was quite in accordance with his experience.— X. See slip annexed.

It has long been admitted by many authorities, that some unknown, or at any

X Dr. Finlayson already quoted says "when
"Spermatozoa are present habitually in the urine
"they may afford evidence of Spermatorhoea".—
And Milton of St. Johns Hospital London in his
work on Spermatorhoea, quoting Dr. Golding Bird
says p 42. "Spermatozoa are by no means very
"infrequent in urinary deposits".—

rate undiscovered arrangement exists for the removal of excess of the spermatic fluid from the system; the arrangement which has hitherto found most favor, being that of Absorption by the lymphatics, an arrangement however, against which serious objections can be stated.—

The knowledge acquired from my investigation & from my friends' experience, suggested the theory that in the normal state, by a more or less constant & involuntary discharge or exudation of the fluid into the urethra, such excess, when it exists, is got rid of; and the line of investigation now adopted, was with a view to test the accuracy of this theory.—

From March 1881. to March 1884 I examined 250 specimens of urine, got (50 from each) from five gentlemen, so circumstanced as to allow of specimens being obtained at almost any time, & on whose veracity I could unhesitatingly rely.— I arranged to make 50 weekly ex-aminations in the case of each gentleman, &

was enabled, in three of the groups of specimens to have each group examined weekly during 50 consecutive weeks.- In the other two groups, the occurrence of summer holidays broke to a slight extent the consecutiveness of the weekly examinations, but, for practical purposes, this slight derangement in the weekly examinations, is of no account whatever. To be methodical, I limited each examination to One hour, and on several occasions I used as many as ten slides, the number to which I had restricted myself in each examination. The result of these examinations was that in all the five groups of specimens Spermatozoa were found, & in the following proportions.

act aic 26.	In case	1. 46	out of 50 specimens contained Spermatozoa
act aic 35.	"	2. 43	" "
act aic 35.	"	3. 34	" "
act aic 29.	"	4. 36	" "
act aic 35.	"	5. 33	" "

In the highest group, 92 per cent of the

specimens contained the ammalcules, in the lowest group they were found in 66 per cent of the specimens. the average per centage over the whole five groups being 78. –

I also utilized rabbits in the prosecution of my investigation. – With this object in view I ~~procured~~ got specially made, a large wire cage, divided into compartments, with moveable hinged partitions, which could be raised & lowered at pleasure, & securely fixed in the desired position. – A pair of rabbits were placed together in a single compartment, & kept there until the pregnancy of the female proved the ~~activity~~ soundness & activity of the male organs of generation. – The male rabbit was then separated from the female, & kept securely isolated, without the possibility of coition. Eleven pairs of rabbits were treated thus, & after periods of isolation, varying from 3 to 19 months, the males were killed, & the contents of their spermatic ducts examined. – In every

one of the eleven, abundant Spermatozoa were found. — In three of them, the contents of only a smale portion of the duct, close to its termination in the urethra were examined, but even there Spermatozoa were plentiful. — I tried to secure Specimens of the rabbits' urine for examination, but found it impossible to obtain it of suppicent purity to be of any use. — I have not the least doubt however, from the close proximity to the urethra, of the Spermatozoa found in the three rabbits above referred to, that the animalcules would be found in the urine, had I been able to procure a suitable specimen of it. —

Stated briefly, the line of investigation adopted, & the facts ascertained from it, are as follows —

Fifty different Specimens of urine, obtained from each of five gentlemen,

(250 specimens in all) were examined microscopically in almost consecutive weeks.— The gentlemen from whom they were obtained were all in excellent health, were not subject to nocturnal emissions, nor emissions of any other kind.— Spermatozoa were found in 46. 43. 37. 36 & 33 of each of the 50 specimens respectively, making an average of 78 per cent of urines containing spermatic fluid.— Each examination of a specimen was limited to one hour, so that it was by no means exhaustive, & consequently the average of 78% does not fully represent the total number of specimens in which spermatozoa were to be found.—

Eleven male rabbits, which were proved to be capable of effective copulation, were isolated, & detained in solitary confinement, for periods varying from 3 to 19 months.— On being killed, numerous spermatozoa were found in the vasa deferentia of each of them.— In three of them, the animalcules were found close

to the urethral ends of the ducts.-

It will be observed, that the data from which conclusions on the subject in question may be drawn, are of two kinds, & though neither group of facts, nor even both taken together, conclusively establish any theory, yet each of them is, not only perfectly consistent with, but almost confirms, the belief, that normally, & when not otherwise voided, there is a constant & unconscious discharge of seminal fluid into the urethra.- And when the arrangements are considered, by which the secretions of other glands are removed from the body, the theory suggested relative to the removal of seminal fluid, is to my mind fairly established.- We have the lachrymal gland constantly secreting tears, which unconsciously pass through the nasal duct, to be removed along with the nasal secretion.- We have

also the bile, secreted by the liver, passing through the bile duct into the bowel, to be discharged from the body along with the intestinal excreta.- Is it not probable that, in the same way, the seminal fluid, secreted by the testicle, may pass along the vas deferens into the urethra, & be removed along with the urine.- The analogy is increased when we consider the effects of stimulation on the three secretions enumerated, for the testicle, like the lachrymal gland & the liver, pours out its secretion in increased quantity under the influence of stimulation.-

True, it may be urged that the secretions referred to - the tears & the bile - have each specific duties to perform, which renders necessary their constant production and discharge - thus tears moisten the eyeball, & bile acts with good effect on the intestinal contents.- Instead however of comparing the seminal secretion with these other

secretions as regards specific duties, it will be much more to the point, if we compare it with a corresponding phenomenon in the female, where however no constant specific duty is involved.— This change in the organs compared, does not by any means imply the impossibility of a further comparison between the testicle on the one hand, & the lachrymal gland & liver on the other, for, from one point of view, the comparison is completed, if we grant to the seminal fluid opportunities for the performance of its specific duty; from another point of view, it is equally completed, if we take from the tears & the bile, the opportunities for the performance of their specific duties.— Thus the lachrymal gland, if normal & healthy, will secrete & pour out tears (in diminished quantity no doubt) though there is no eyeball to be moistened, &

the healthy liver will, in the same way, secrete & give out its bile, though there be no intestinal contents to act on.— The comparison of the male & female generative organs, is made, simply to place the matter under consideration in a clearer light.—

We find that, in the female, there occurs, at short intervals, a natural discharge of what may be considered a secretion from the generative organs, & this discharge, originating in the ovaries, finds its way through a passage of considerable length, to the vagina, a duct common to it & to the urinary secretion.— Is it not probable, that an analogous discharge in the male, may have a termination similar in character, though varying somewhat in the minute details.—

In the female, we know that the menstrual discharge is quite consistent with good health, & that this is so in cases of

the imaginary disease under consideration, is proved by the authors already quoted, for Erichsen (Vol II p 789) says "Spermatorrhoea "often occurs in strong & otherwise healthy "men, accustomed to field sports & out-"-of-door exercises.— There is no evidence of "anaemia or of debility of any kind."— And the anonymous author before referred to says "Seminal emissions may occur in the strongest "men".—

Many other interesting questions centre round this subject, which it would be out of place at this time to discuss.— Of these may be mentioned, as being closely allied to the subject, the question of the necessity for sexual indulgence as a means of preserving health, with its important bearing on the condition of social morality & the question as to the special injurious effects, both of body & mind, said to be consequent to the non use of the virile powers.

If it be the case, as my investigations lead me to believe, that the generative organs in the male, exactly like those in the female, are active during a variable term of years, irrespective of their use or non use, then the question as to sexual indulgence resolves itself into a mere matter of taste, while the injurious effects, on which so much stress is laid - such as atrophy of the testicles -, may be calmly looked on as perfectly natural processes. -

It is an established fact that the female organs of generation become active at the age of 14 to 16 years, & cease to be so at the age of 45 to 50 years, & that irrespective of their having been "used" or not. - Is it reasonable to believe that the male organs of generation, which, it is also established, become active, just like those of the female, at the age of puberty, should retain their activity interminably. - Is it not more probable that they too, like those of the female,

should cease to be active after a certain term of years.—

The preceding remarks do not by any means claim for the male generative organs an immunity from disease.— They are intended to do away with the erroneous & widespread idea, that the mere fact of spermatic fluid being found in the urine, implies the existence of a serious disease.— They are intended to place the organs of seminal secretion in the same category as their similar glands— the lachrymal salivary glands, the liver the kidneys, & the ovaries.— These & all other secreting glands have a normal rate of secretion & discharge consistent with health, may conducive to it.— But all of them are liable to disease, which may abnormally increase or diminish their functions.— It is so with the testicles also.— And it is significant of the truth

of this view of the matter, that all writers on the subject, while - through ignorance - considering the symptom alluded to, a serious one, admit that it is often met with, in strong and healthy men. —

Approved -
John G. [illegible] Clerk

Also approved [illegible]
by [illegible].