

AUTO-EROTISM: A STUDY OF THE SPONTANEOUS  
MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SEXUAL IMPULSE.

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I.

Definition of Auto-erotism—Masturbation only Covers a Small Portion of the Auto-erotic Field—The Importance of this Study, especially To-day—Auto-erotic Phenomena in Animals—Among Savage and Barbaric Races—The Japanese *rin-no-tama* and other Special Instruments for Obtaining Auto-erotic Gratification—Abuse of the Ordinary Implements and Objects of Daily Life—The Frequency of Hair-pin in the Bladder—The Influence of Horse-exercise and Railway-traveling—The Sewing-machine and the Bicycle—Spontaneous Passive Sexual Excitement—*Delectatio Morosa*—Day-dreaming—*Pollutio*—Sexual Excitement during Sleep—Differences in the Erotic Dreams of Men and Women—The Auto-erotic Phenomena of Sleep in the Hysterical—Their Frequently Painful Character.

BY “auto-erotism” I mean the phenomena of spontaneous sexual emotion generated in the absence of an external stimulus proceeding, directly or indirectly, from another person. In a wide sense, which cannot be wholly ignored here, auto-erotism may be said to include those transformations of repressed sexual activity which are a factor of some morbid conditions as well as of the normal manifestation of art and poetry, and, indeed, more or less color the whole of life.

Such a definition excludes the normal sexual excitement aroused by the presence of a beloved person of the opposite sex; it also excludes the perverted sexuality associated with an attraction to a person of the same sex; it further excludes the manifold forms of erotic fetichism, in which the normal focus of sexual attraction is displaced, and voluptuous emotions are only aroused by some object—hair, shoes, garments, etc.—which, to the ordinary lover, are of subordinate—though still, indeed, considerable—importance. The auto-erotic field remains extensive;



it ranges from occasional voluptuous day-dreams, in which the subject is entirely passive, to the perpetual unashamed efforts at sexual self-manipulation witnessed among the insane. It also includes, though chiefly as curiosities, those cases in which individuals fall in love with themselves. Among auto-erotic phenomena, or on the border-land, we must further include those religious sexual manifestations for an ideal object, of which we may find evidence in the lives of saints and ecstasies.<sup>1</sup> The typical form of auto-erotism is the occurrence of the sexual orgasm during sleep.

I do not know that any apology is needful for the invention of the term "auto-erotism."<sup>2</sup> There is no existing word in current use to indicate the whole range of phenomena I am here concerned with. We are familiar with "masturbation," but that, strictly speaking, only covers a special and arbitrary subdivision of the field, although, it is true, the subdivision with which physicians and alienists have chiefly occupied themselves. "Self-abuse" is somewhat wider, but by no means covers the whole ground, while for various reasons it is an unsatisfactory term. "Onanism" is largely used, especially in France, and some writers even include all forms of homosexual connection under this name; it may be convenient to do so from a physiological point of view, but it is a confusing and antiquated mode of procedure, and from the psychological stand-point altogether illegitimate; "onanism" ought never to be used in this connection, if only on the ground that Onan's device was not auto-erotic, but was an early example of withdrawal before emission, or *coitus interruptus*.

While the name that I have chosen may possibly not be the

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> Letamendi, of Madrid, has suggested "*auto-erastia*" to cover what is probably much the same field. In the beginning of the century Hufeland, in his "Makrobiotic," invented the term "*geistige Onanie*" to express the filling and heating of the imagination with voluptuous images, without unchastity of body; and in 1844 Kaan, in his "Psychopathia Sexualis" used, but did not invent, the term "*onania psychica*." Gustav Jaeger, in his "Entdeckung der Seele," proposed "monosexual idiosyncrasy" to indicate the most animal forms of masturbation taking place without any correlative imaginative element, a condition illustrated by cases given in Moll's "Untersuchungen über die Libido Sexualis," B. I, pp. 13 *et seq.* But all these terms only cover a portion of the field.



best, there should be no question as to the importance of grouping all these phenomena together. It seems to me that this field has rarely been viewed in a scientifically sound and morally sane light, simply because it has not been viewed as a whole. We have made it difficult so to view it by directing our attention on the special group of auto-erotic facts—that group included under masturbation—which was most easy to observe and which in an extreme form came plainly under medical observation in insanity and allied conditions, and we have wilfully torn this group of facts away from the larger group to which it naturally belongs. The questions which have been so widely, so diversely, and—it must unfortunately be added—often so mischievously discussed, concerning the nature and evils of masturbation are not seen in their true light and proportions until we realize that masturbation is but a specialized form of a tendency which in some form or in some degree normally affects not only man, but all the higher animals. From a medical point of view it is often convenient to regard masturbation as an isolated fact; but in order to understand it we must bear in mind its relationships. In this study of auto-erotism I shall frequently have occasion to refer to the old entity of “masturbation,” because it has been more carefully studied than any other part of the auto-erotic field; but I hope it will always be borne in mind that the psychological significance and even the medical diagnostic value of masturbation cannot be appreciated unless we realize that it is an artificial subdivision of a great group of natural facts.

The study of auto-erotism is far from being an unimportant or merely curious study. Yet psychologists, medical and non-medical, almost without exception, treat its manifestations—when they refer to them at all—in a dogmatic and off-hand manner which is far from scientific. It is not surprising, therefore, that the most widely divergent opinions are expressed. Nor is it surprising that ignorant and chaotic notions among the general population should lead to results that would be ludicrous if they were not pathetic. To mention one instance known to me: a married lady who is a leader in social-purity movements and an enthusiast for sexual chastity, discovered, through reading some



pamphlet against solitary vice, that she had herself been practicing masturbation for years without knowing it. The profound anguish and hopeless despair of this woman in face of what she believed to be the moral ruin of her whole life cannot well be described. It would be easy to give further examples, though scarcely a more striking one, to show the utter confusion into which we are thrown by leaving this matter in the hands of blind leaders of the blind. Moreover, the conditions of modern civilization render auto-erotism a matter of increasing social significance. As our marriage-rate declines, and as illicit sexual relationships are, in England at all events, openly discouraged, it is absolutely inevitable that auto-erotic phenomena of one kind or another, not only among women, but also among men, should increase among us, both in amount and intensity.<sup>1</sup> It becomes, therefore, a matter of some importance, both to the moralist and the physician, to investigate the psychological nature of these phenomena and to decide precisely what their attitude should be toward them.

I do not purpose here to enter into a thorough discussion of all the aspects of auto-erotism. That would involve a very extensive study indeed. I wish to consider briefly certain salient points concerning auto-erotic phenomena, especially their prevalence, their nature, and their moral, physical, and other effects. I base my study partly on the facts and opinions which during the last twenty years have been scattered through the periodical and other medical literature of Europe and America; and partly on the experience of individuals, especially of fairly normal individuals. I could wish information gained in the latter way more extensive, but unfortunately the number of normal persons whom one may question on such points with the certainty of receiving reliable answers is necessarily limited.

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<sup>1</sup> A friend living in India writes: "From certain facts which have lately come to my knowledge, I believe masturbation is not uncommon among Englishmen in India, who, unless they are married, are quite cut off from any intercourse with white women. Many of them have an intense repugnance to sexual relations with native women, and are practically forced to help themselves in some other way. In the cases I know of neither health nor mental power seems to have suffered."



Among animals in isolation, and sometimes in freedom—though this can less often be observed—it is well known that various forms of spontaneous solitary sexual excitement occur. Horses when leading a lazy life may be observed flapping the penis until some degree of emission takes place. Welsh ponies, I learn from a man who has had much experience with these animals, habitually produce erections and emissions in their stalls; they do not bring their hind quarters up during this process, and they close their eyes, which does not take place when they have congress with mares. The same informant observed that bulls and goats produce emissions by using their forelegs as a stimulus, bringing up their hind quarters, and mares rub themselves against objects. Stags in the rutting season, when they have no partners, rub themselves against trees to produce ejaculation. Sheep masturbate; as also do camels, pressing themselves down against convenient objects; and elephants compress the penis between the hind legs to obtain emissions. Blumenbach observed a bear act somewhat similarly on seeing other bears coupling. Mammary masturbation, remarks Féré, is found in certain female and even male animals, like the dog and the cat.<sup>1</sup> Apes are much given to masturbation, even in freedom, according to the evidence of good observers; while no female apes are celibates, many of the males are obliged to lead a life of celibacy.<sup>2</sup> Male monkeys use the hand in masturbation, to rub and shake the penis.<sup>3</sup>

In the human species these phenomena are by no means found in civilization alone. To whatever extent masturbation may have been developed by the conditions of European life, which carry to the utmost extreme the concomitant stimulation and repression of the sexual emotions, it is far from being, as Mantegazza has declared it to be, one of the moral characteristics

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<sup>1</sup> Féré, "Perversions sexuelles chez les animaux," *Revue Philosophique*, May, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Tillier, "L'Instinct Sexuel," 1889, p. 270.

<sup>3</sup> Moll, "Libido Sexualis," B. 1, p. 76. The same author mentions (*ibid.*, p. 373) that parrots living in solitary confinement masturbate by rubbing the posterior part of the body against some object until ejaculation occurs.



of Europeans.<sup>1</sup> It is found among the people of nearly every race of which we have any intimate knowledge, however natural the conditions under which men and women may live.<sup>2</sup> Thus, among the Nama Hottentots, among the young women, at all events, Gustav Fritsch found that masturbation is so common that it is regarded as a custom of the country; no secret is made of it, and in the stories and legends of the race it is treated as one of the most ordinary facts of life. It is so also among the Basutos, and the Kaffirs are addicted to the same habit.<sup>3</sup> When the Spaniards first arrived at Vizaya and the Philippines, they found that masturbation was universal, and that it was customary for the women to use an artificial penis and other abnormal methods of sexual gratification. Among the Balinese, according to Jacobs (as quoted by Ploss and Bartels), masturbation is general; in the boudoir of many a Bali beauty, he adds, and certainly in every harem, may be found a wax penis to which many hours of solitude are devoted. Throughout the East, as Eram, speaking from a long medical experience, has declared, masturbation is very prevalent, especially among young girls. In India, a medical correspondent tells me, he once treated the widow of a wealthy Mohammedan, who informed him that she began masturbation at an early age, "just like all other women." The same informant tells me that on the *façade* of a large temple in Orissa are bas-reliefs, representing both men and women, alone, mas-

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. J. W. Howe ("Excessive Venery, Masturbation, and Continenence," London and New York, 1883, p. 62) writes of masturbation: "In savage lands it is of rare occurrence. Savages live in a state of Nature. No moral obligations exist which compel them to abstain from a natural gratification of their passions. There is no social law which prevents them from following the dictates of their lower nature. Hence, they have no reason for adopting onanism as an outlet for passions. The moral trammels of civilized society and ignorance of physiological laws give origin to the vice." Every one of these six sentences is incorrect or misleading. They are worth quoting as a statement of the popular view of savage life.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot recall any evidence of its existence among the Australian aborigines. Thus, Dr. W. Roth ("Ethnological Studies among the North-west-Central Queensland Aborigines," p. 184), who has carefully studied the blacks of his district, remarks that he has no evidence as to the practice of either masturbation or sodomy among them.

<sup>3</sup> Greenlees, *Journal of Mental Science*, July, 1895.



turbating, and also women masturbating men. Among the Tamils of Ceylon masturbation is said to be common. In Cochin China, Lorion remarks, it is practiced by both sexes, but especially by the married women.<sup>1</sup> Japanese women have probably carried the mechanical arts of auto-erotism to the highest degree of perfection. They use two hollow balls about the size of a pigeon's egg (sometimes one alone is used), which, as described by Joest, Christian, and others,<sup>2</sup> are made of very thin leaf of brass; one is empty, the other (called the little man) contains a small heavy metal ball, or else some quicksilver, and sometimes metal tongues, which vibrate when set in movement; so that if the balls are held in the hand side by side there is a continuous movement. The empty one is first introduced into the vagina in contact with the uterus, then the other; the slightest movement of the pelvis or thighs, or even spontaneous movement of the organs, causes the metal ball (or the quicksilver) to roll, and the resulting vibration produces a prolonged voluptuous titillation, a gentle shock as from a weak electric inductive apparatus; the balls are called *rin-no-tama*, and are held in the vagina by a paper tampon. The women who use these balls delight to swing themselves in a hammock or rocking-chair, the delicate vibration of the balls slowly producing the highest degree of sexual excitement. Joest mentions that this apparatus, though well known by name to ordinary girls, is chiefly used by the more fashionable *geishas*, as well as by prostitutes. Its use has now spread to China, Annam, and India. In China, also, the artificial penis—made of rosin, supple and (like the classical instrument described by Herondas) rose-colored—is publicly sold and widely used by women.

It may be noticed that among non-European races it is among women, and especially among those who are subjected to

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<sup>1</sup> "La Criminalité en Cochin-Chine," 1887, p. 116; also Mondière, "Monographie de la Femme Annamite," *Memoires Société d'Anthropologie*, tome ii, p. 465.

<sup>2</sup> Christian, article on "Onanisme," *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences médicales*, Ploss and Bartels, "Das Weib"; Moraglia, "Die Onanie beim normalen Weibe," *Zeitschrift für Criminal-Anthropologie*, 1897.



the excitement of a life professionally devoted to some form of pleasure, that the use of the artificial instruments of auto-erotism is chiefly practiced. The same is markedly true in Europe. The use of an artificial penis in solitary sexual gratification may be traced down from classical times.<sup>1</sup> The Lesbian women are said to have used such instruments made of ivory or gold, with silken stuffs and linen. Aristophanes ("Lysistrata," v. 109) speaks of the use by the Milesian women of a leather artificial penis, or *olisbos*. In the British Museum is a vase representing a *hetaira* holding such instruments, which, as found at Pompeii, may be seen in the museum at Naples. One of the best of Herondas's mimes, "The Private Conversation," presents a dialogue between two ladies concerning a certain *olisbos* (or *βανβών*), which one of them vaunts as a dream of delight. Through the middle ages (when from time to time the clergy reprobated the use of such instruments) to the Elizabethan age, when Marston, in his satires, tells how Lucea prefers "a glassy instrument" to "her husband's lukewarm bed," down to the present day, somewhat similar appliances may be traced in all centres of civilization. But throughout they appear to be largely confined to the world of prostitutes and to those women who live on the fashionable or semi-artistic verge of that world. Ignorance and delicacy combine with a less versatile and perverted concentration on the sexual impulse to prevent any general recourse to such highly specialized methods of solitary gratification.

On the other hand, the use, or rather abuse, of the ordinary objects and implements of daily life in obtaining auto-erotic gratification, among the ordinary population in civilized modern lands, has reached an extraordinary degree of extent and variety which we can only feebly estimate by the occasional resulting mischances which reach the surgeon's hands, because only a cer-

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<sup>1</sup>The *penis succedaneus*, remarks Burton in notes to "Arabian Nights," the Latin *phallus* or *fascinum*, is in France called *godemiche*, in Italy *passatempo* and also *diletto*, whence *dildo*, by which it is most commonly known in England. For men the corresponding *cunus succedaneus* is in England called *merkin*, which meant originally (as defined in old editions of Bailey's "Dictionary") "counterfeit hair for women's private parts."



tain proportion of such instruments are dangerous. Thus the banana seems to be widely used for masturbation by women, and appears to be marked out for the purpose by its size and shape (the mythology of Hawaii, one may note, tells of goddesses who were impregnated by bananas they had placed beneath their garments); it is, however, innocuous, and never comes under the surgeon's notice; the same may probably be said of the cucumbers and other vegetables more especially used by country and factory girls in masturbation; a lady living near Vichy told Pouillet that she had often heard (and had herself been able to verify the fact) that the young peasant women commonly used turnips, carrots, and beet-roots. In the last century Mirabeau, in his "Erotika Biblion," gave a list of the various objects used in convents (which he describes as "vast theatres" of such practices) to obtain solitary sexual excitement. In more recent years the following are a few of the objects found in the vagina or bladder whence they could only be removed by surgical interference:<sup>1</sup> Pencils, sticks of sealing-wax, cotton-reels, hair-pins (and in Italy very commonly the bone-pins used in the hair), bodkins, knitting-needles, crochet-needles, needle-cases, compasses, glass stoppers, candles, corks, tumblers, forks, tooth-picks, tooth-brushes, pomade-pots (in a case recorded by Schroeder with a cockchafer inside, a makeshift substitute for the Japanese *rin-no-tama*), while in one recent English case a full-sized hen's egg was removed from the vagina of a middle-aged married woman. More than nine-tenths of the foreign bodies found in the female bladder or urethra are due to masturbation. The age of the individuals in whom such objects have been found is usually from 17 to 30, but in a few cases they have been found in girls below 14, in-

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<sup>1</sup> See, *e.g.*, Winckel, "Die Krankheiten der weiblichen Harnrohre und Blase," 1885, p. 211; and "Lehrbuch der Frauenkrankheiten," 1886, p. 210. Grünfeld (Wiener medicinischer Blatter, November 26, 1896), collected 115 cases of foreign body in the bladder—68 in men, 47 in women; but while those found in men were usually the result of a surgical accident, those found in women were mostly introduced by the patients themselves. The patient usually professes profound ignorance as to how the object came there; or she explains that she accidentally sat down upon it, or (in the case of the bladder) that she used it to produce freer urination.



frequently in women between 40 and 50; the large objects, naturally, are found chiefly in the vagina, and in married women.<sup>1</sup>

Hair-pins have, above all, been found in the female bladder with special frequency; this point is worth some consideration as an illustration of the enormous frequency of this form of auto-erotism. The female urethra is not usually regarded as a normal centre of sexual feeling; so that the introduction of an object into it can only occur by mistake or by perversion of sexual feeling.<sup>2</sup> It should be added that when once introduced the physiological mechanism of the bladder apparently causes the organ to tend to "swallow" the object. Moreover, for every case in which the hair-pin disappears and is lost in the bladder, from carelessness or the oblivion of the sexual spasm, there must be a vast number of cases in which the instrument is used without any such unfortunate result. There is thus great significance in the frequency with which cases of hair-pin in the bladder are strewn throughout the medical literature of all countries. In 1862 a German surgeon found the accident so common that he invented a special instrument for extracting hair-pins from the female bladder, as, indeed, Italian and French surgeons have also done. In France, Denucé, of Bordeaux, came to the conclusion that hair-pin in the bladder is the commonest result of masturbation as known to the surgeon. In England cases are constantly being recorded. In New York one physician met with four cases in a short experience.<sup>3</sup> In Switzerland Professor Reverdin had a precisely similar experience.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Poulet, "Traité des Corps étrangers en Chirurgie," 1879. English translation, 1881, vol. ii, pp. 209-239. Rohleder ("Die Masturbation," 1899, pp. 24-31) also gives examples of strange objects found in the sexual organs.

<sup>2</sup> Pouillet, however, has suggested that the glands around the meatus and the erectile tissue of the urethra render this region a centre of voluptuous sensation.

<sup>3</sup> Dudley, *American Journal of Obstetrics*, July, 1889, p. 758.

<sup>4</sup> A. Reverdin, "Épingles à Cheveux dans la Vessie," *Revue Médicale de la Suisse Romande*, January 20, 1888. His cases are fully recorded and his paper is an able and interesting contribution to this by-way of sexual psychology. The first case was a school-master's wife, aged 22, who confessed in her husband's presence, without embarrassment or hesitation, that the maneuver was habitual, learned from a school-companion, and continued after marriage. The second was a single woman of 42,



There is, however, another class of material objects, widely employed for producing physical auto-erotism, which in the nature of things never reaches the surgeon. I refer to the effects that, naturally or unnaturally, may be produced by many of the implements of daily life that do not come in direct contact with the sexual organs. Children sometimes, even when scarcely more than infants, produce sexual excitement by friction against the corner of a chair or other piece of furniture, and women sometimes do the same.<sup>1</sup> Girls in France, I am informed, are fond of riding on the *chevaux-de-bois*, or hobby horses, because of the sexual excitement thus aroused; and that the sexual emotions play a part in the fascination exerted by this form of amusement everywhere is indicated by the ecstatic faces of its devotees. At the temples in some parts of Central India, I am told, swings are hung up in pairs, men and women swinging in these until sexually excited; during the months when the men in these districts have to be away from home the girls put up swings to console themselves for the loss of their husbands.

Several writers have pointed out that riding, especially in women, may produce sexual excitement and orgasm.<sup>2</sup> It is well known, also, that both in men and women the vibratory motion of a railway-train frequently produces a certain degree of sexual excitement, especially when sitting forward. Such excitement

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a *curé's* servant, who attempted to elude confession, but on leaving the doctor's house remarked to the house-maid, "Never go to bed without taking out your hair-pins; accidents happen so easily." The third was an English girl of 17, who finally acknowledged that she had lost two hair-pins in this way. The fourth was a child of 12, driven by the pain to confess that the practice had become a habit with her.

<sup>1</sup> "One of my patients," remarks Dr. R. T. Morris, of New York ("Transactions of the American Association of Obstetricians for 1892," Philadelphia, vol. v), "who is a devout church-member, had never allowed herself to entertain sexual thoughts referring to men, but she masturbated every morning when standing before the mirror, by rubbing against a key in the bureau-drawer. A man never excited her passions, but the sight of a key in any bureau-drawer aroused erotic desires."

<sup>2</sup> The fact that horse-exercises may produce pollutions was well recognized by Catholic theologians, and Sanchez states that this fact need not be made a reason for traveling on foot. Rohleder ("Die Masturbation," pp. 133-134) brings together evidence regarding the influence of horse-exercise in producing sexual excitement.



may remain latent and not become specifically sexual.<sup>1</sup> I am not aware that this quality of railway-traveling has ever been fostered as a sexual perversion, but the sewing-machine, especially in France, has attracted considerable attention on account of its influence in exciting auto-erotic manipulations. According to one French authority, it is a well-recognized fact that to work a sewing-machine with the body in a certain position produces sexual excitement leading to the orgasm. The occurrence of the orgasm is indicated to the observer by the machine being worked for a few seconds with uncontrollable rapidity. This sound is said to be frequently heard in large French work-rooms, and it is part of the duty of the superintendents of the rooms to make the girls sit properly.<sup>2</sup>

"During a visit which I once paid to a manufactory of military clothing," Pouillet writes, "I witnessed the following scene:—

"In the midst of the uniform sound produced by some thirty sewing-machines, I suddenly heard one of the machines working with much more velocity than the others. I looked at the person who was working it, a brunette of 18 or 20. While she was automatically occupied with the trousers she was making on the machine her face became animated, her mouth opened slightly, her nostrils dilated, her feet moved the pedals with constantly increasing rapidity. Soon I saw a convulsive look in her eyes, her eyelids were lowered, her face turned pale and was thrown backward; hands and legs stopped and became extended; a suffocated cry, followed by a long sigh, was lost in the noise of the work-room. The girl remained motionless a few seconds, drew out her handkerchief to wipe away the pearls of sweat from her forehead, and after casting a timid and ashamed glance at her companions resumed her work. The forewoman, who acted as my guide, having observed the direction of my gaze, took me up to the girl, who blushed, lowered her face, and murmured some incoherent words before the forewoman had opened her mouth, to advise her to sit fully on the chair, and not on its edge.

"As I was leaving I heard another machine at another part of the

<sup>1</sup> A correspondent to whom the idea was presented for the first time, wrote: "Henceforward I shall know to what I must attribute the bliss—almost the beatitude—I so often have experienced after traveling for four or five hours in a train." Penta mentions the case of a young girl who first experienced sexual desire at the age of twelve after a railway journey.

<sup>2</sup> Pouillet, "L'onanisme chez la Femme," Paris, 1880; Fournier, "De l'onanisme," 1885; Rohleder, "Die Masturbation," p. 132.



room in accelerated movement. The forewoman smiled at me, and remarked that that was so frequent that it attracted no notice. It was specially observed, she told me, in the case of young work-girls, apprentices, and those who sat on the edge of their seats, thus much facilitating friction of the labia."

In cases where the sewing-machine does not lead to direct self-excitement, it has been held, as by Fothergill,<sup>1</sup> to predispose to frequency of involuntary sexual orgasm during sleep, from the irritation set up by the movement of the feet in the sitting posture during the day. The essential movement in working the sewing-machine is the flexion and extension of the ankle, but the muscles of the thighs are used to maintain the feet firmly on the treadle, the thighs are held together, and there is a considerable degree of flexion or extension of the thighs on the trunk; by a special adjustment of the body, and sometimes perhaps merely in the presence of sexual hyperesthesia, it is thus possible to act upon the sexual organs; but this is by no means a necessary result of using the sewing-machine, and inquiry of various women, with well-developed sexual feelings, who are accustomed to work the treadle, has not shown the presence of any tendency in this direction.

Sexual irritation may also be produced by the bicycle in women. Thus, Moll<sup>2</sup> remarks that he knows many married women, and some unmarried, who experience sexual excitement when cycling; in several cases he has ascertained that the excitement is carried as far as complete orgasm. This result cannot, however, easily happen unless the seat is too high, the peak in contact with the organs, and a rolling movement is adopted; in the absence of marked hyperesthesia these results are only effected by a bad seat or an improper attitude, the body during cycling resting under proper conditions on the buttocks, and the work being mainly done by the muscles of the thighs and legs which control the ankles, flexion of the thigh on the pelvis being very small. Most medical authorities on cycling—English, French, and American—are of opinion that when cycling leads

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<sup>1</sup> "West-Riding Asylum Reports," 1876, vol. vi.

<sup>2</sup> "Das Nervöse Weib," 1898, p. 193.



to sexual excitement the fault lies more with the woman than with the machine. This conclusion does not appear to me to be absolutely correct. I find on inquiry that with the old-fashioned saddle, with an elevated peak rising toward the pubes, a certain degree of sexual excitement, not usually producing the orgasm (but, as one lady expressed it, making one feel quite ready for it) is fairly common among women. Professor Lydston finds that irritation of the genital organs may unquestionably be produced in both males and females by cycling. The aggravation of hemorrhoids sometimes produced by cycling indicates also the tendency to local congestion. With the improved flat saddles, however, constructed with more definite adjustment to the anatomical formation of the parts, this general tendency is reduced to a negligible minimum.

In a further class of cases no external object whatever is used to procure the sexual orgasm, but the more or less voluntary pressure of the thighs alone is brought to bear upon the sexual regions. It is done either when sitting or standing, the thighs being placed together and firmly crossed, and the pelvis rocked so that the sexual organs are pressed against the inner and posterior parts of the thighs.<sup>1</sup> This is sometimes done by men, and is fairly common among women, especially, according to Martineau,<sup>2</sup> among those who sit much, such as dress-makers and milliners, those who use the sewing-machine, and those who ride. Vedeler remarks that in his experience in Scandinavia thigh-friction is the commonest form of masturbation in women. It is found in female infants. Thus, Townsend records the case of an infant, 8 months old, who would cross her right thigh over the left, close her eyes and clench her fists; after a minute or two

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<sup>1</sup> Some women are also able to produce the orgasm, when in a state of sexual excitement, by placing a cushion between the knees and pressing the thighs firmly together.

<sup>2</sup> "Leçons sur les Déformations Vulvaires," p. 64. Martineau was informed by a dress-maker that it is very frequent in work-rooms and can usually be done without attracting attention. An ironer informed him that while standing at her work she crossed her legs, slightly bending the trunk forward and supporting herself on the table by the hands; then a few movements of contraction of the adductor muscles of the thigh would suffice to produce the orgasm.



there would be complete relaxation, with sweating and redness of face; this would occur about once a week or oftener; the child was quite healthy, with no abnormal condition of the genital organs.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the foregoing examples of auto-erotism are commonly included, by no means correctly, under the heading of "masturbation." There are, however, a vast number of people, possessing strong sexual emotions and living a solitary life, who experience, sometimes by instinct and sometimes on moral grounds, a strong repugnance for these manifestations of auto-erotism. As one highly intelligent lady writes: "I have sometimes wondered whether I could produce it (complete sexual excitement) mechanically, but I have a curious unreasonable repugnance to trying the experiment. It would materialize it too much." The same repugnance may be traced in the tendency to avoid, so far as possible, the use of the hands. It is quite common to find this instinctive unreasoning repugnance among women, a healthy repugnance, not founded on any moral ground. In men the same repugnance exists, more often combined with, or replaced by, a very strong moral and esthetic objection to such practices. But the presence of such a repugnance, however invincible, is very far from carrying us outside the auto-erotic field. The production of the sexual orgasm is not necessarily dependent on any external contact or voluntary mechanical cause.

As an example, though not of specifically auto-erotic manifestations, I may mention the case of a man of 57, a somewhat eccentric preacher, etc., who writes: "My whole nature goes out so to some persons, and they thrill and stir me so that I have an emission while sitting by them with no thought of sex, only the gladness of soul found its way out thus, and a glow of health suffused the whole body. There was no spasmodic conclusion, but a pleasing gentle sensation as the few drops of semen passed." (In reality, no doubt, not semen, but prostatic fluid.) This man's condition may certainly be considered somewhat morbid; he is

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<sup>1</sup>C. W. Townsend, "Thigh-friction in Children under one Year." Annual Meeting of the American Pediatric Society, Montreal, 1896. Five cases are recorded by this writer, all in female infants.



attracted to both men and women, and the sexual impulse seems to be irritable and weak; but a similar state of things exists so often in women, no doubt due to sexual repression, and in individuals who are in a general state of normal and good health, that in these it can scarcely be called morbid. Brooding on sexual images, which the theologians termed *delectatio morosa*, may lead to spontaneous orgasm in either sex, even in perfectly normal persons. If the orgasm occurs spontaneously, without the aid of mental impressions, or any manipulations *ad hoc*, though under such conditions it ceases to be sinful from the theological stand-point, it certainly ceases also to be normal. Sérieux records the case of a somewhat neurotic woman of 50, who had been separated from her husband for ten years, and since lived a chaste life; at this age, however, she became subject to violent crises of sexual orgasm, which would come on without any accompaniment of voluptuous thoughts. MacGillicuddy records three cases of spontaneous orgasm in women coming under his notice.<sup>1</sup> Such crises are frequently found in those unfortunate victims of sexual repression, both men and women, who, from moral reasons, ignorance, or on other grounds, are restrained from attaining the complete sexual orgasm, but whose sexual emotions are, literally, continually dribbling from them. Schrenck-Notzing knows a lady who is spontaneously sexually excited on hearing music or seeing pictures without anything lascivious in them; she knows nothing of sexual relationships. Another lady is sexually excited on seeing beautiful and natural scenes, like the sea; sexual ideas are mixed up in her mind with these things, and the contemplation of a specially strong and sympathetic man brings the orgasm on in about a minute. Both these ladies "masturbate" in the streets, restaurants, railways, theatres, without anyone perceiving it.<sup>2</sup> Evidently under these conditions there is a state of hyperesthetic weakness. Such cases are far from rare, but I do not purpose to deal with them here. They may more properly be considered when dealing with the sensory excitants of the sexual emotions.

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<sup>1</sup> "Functional Disorders of the Nervous System in Women," p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Schrenck-Notzing, "Suggestions-therapie," p. 13.



There is, however, a closely allied and, indeed, overlapping form of auto-erotism which may be considered here: I mean that associated with revery, or day-dreaming. Although this is a very common and important form of auto-erotism, besides being in a large proportion of cases the early stage of masturbation, it appears to have attracted little attention.<sup>1</sup> The day-dream has, indeed, been studied in its chief form, in the "continued story," by Mabel Learoyd, of Wellesley College. The continued story is an imagined narrative, more or less peculiar to the individual, by whom it is cherished with fondness, and regarded as an especially sacred mental possession, to be shared only, if at all, with very sympathizing friends. It is much commoner among girls and young women than among boys and young men; among 352 persons of both sexes, 47 per cent. among the women and only 14 per cent. among the men, have any continued story. The starting-point is an incident from a book, or, more usually, some actual experience, which the subject develops; the subject is nearly always the hero or the heroine of the story. The growth of the story is favored by solitude, and lying in bed before going to sleep is the time specially sacred to its cultivation.<sup>2</sup> No distinct reference, perhaps naturally enough, is made by Miss Learoyd to the element of sexual emotion with which these stories are often strongly tinged, and which is frequently their real motive. It is not uncommon to find, though by no means easy to detect, these elaborate and more or less erotic day-dreams in young men and especially young women. Each individual has his own particular dream, which is always varying or developing, but, except in very imaginative persons, to no great extent. Such a day-dream is often founded on a basis of pleasurable personal experience, and develops on that basis. It may involve an element of perversity, even though that element finds no expression in real life. It is, of course, mainly fostered by sexual abstinence;

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<sup>1</sup>Janet has, however, recently used day-dreaming—which he calls "*rêveries subconscients*"—to explain a remarkable case of demon-possession which he investigated and cured, "*Névroses et Idées fixes*," vol. i. pp. 390 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup>"Minor Studies from the Psychological Laboratory of Wellesley College," *American Journal of Psychology*, vol. vii, No. 1.



whence its frequency in young women. Most usually there is little attempt to realize it. It does not necessarily lead to masturbation, though it often causes some sexual congestion or even spontaneous sexual orgasm. The day-dream is a strictly private and intimate experience, not only from its very nature, but also because it occurs in images which the subject finds great difficulty in translating into language, even when willing to do so. In other cases it is elaborately dramatic or romantic in character, the hero or heroine passing through many experiences before attaining the erotic climax of the story. This climax tends to develop in harmony with the subject's growing knowledge or experience; at first merely a kiss, it may develop into any refinement of voluptuous gratification. The day-dream may occur either in normal or abnormal persons. Rousseau, in his "Confessions," describes such dreams, in his case combined with masochism and masturbation. A distinguished American novelist, Hamlin Garland, has admirably described in "Rose of Dutchers Coolly" the part played in the erotic day-dreams of a healthy normal girl at adolescence by a circus-rider, seen on the first visit to a circus, and becoming a majestic ideal to dominate the girl's thoughts for many years. Raffalovich<sup>1</sup> describes the process by which in sexual inverts the vision of a person of the same sex, perhaps seen in the streets or the theatre, is evoked in solitary reveries, producing a kind of "psychic onanism," whether or not it leads on to physical manifestations.

Although day-dreaming of this kind has at present been very little studied, since it loves solitude and secrecy, and has never been counted of sufficient interest for scientific inquisition, it is really a process of considerable importance, and occupies a large part of the auto-erotic field. It is largely cultivated by refined and imaginative young men and women who lead a chaste life and would often be repelled by masturbation. In such persons, under such circumstances, it must be considered as strictly normal, the inevitable outcome of the play of the sexual impulse. No doubt it may often become morbid, and is never a

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<sup>1</sup> "Uranisme," p. 125.



healthy process when indulged in to excess, as it is liable to be by refined young people with artistic impulses, to whom it is in the highest degree seductive and insidious.<sup>1</sup> As we have seen, however, day-dreaming is far from always colored by sexual emotion; yet it is a significant indication of its really sexual origin that, as I have been informed by persons of both sexes, even in these apparently non-sexual cases it frequently ceases altogether on marriage.

Even when we have eliminated all these forms of auto-erotic activity, however refined, in which the subject takes a voluntary part, we have still left unexplored an important portion of the auto-erotic field, a portion which many people are alone inclined to consider normal: sexual orgasm during sleep. That under conditions of sexual abstinence in healthy individuals there must inevitably be some auto-erotic manifestations during waking life a careful study of the facts compels us to believe. There can be no doubt, also, that, under the same conditions, the occurrence of the complete orgasm during sleep with, in men, seminal emissions, is altogether normal. Even Zeus himself, as Pausanias has recorded, was liable to such accidents: a statement which, at all events, shows that to the Greek mind there was nothing derogatory in such an occurrence.<sup>2</sup> The Jews, however, regarded it as an impurity,<sup>3</sup> and the same idea was transmitted

<sup>1</sup>The acute Anstie remarked nearly thirty years ago in his work on "Neuralgia": "It is a comparatively frequent thing to see an unsocial solitary life (leading to the habit of masturbation) joined with the bad influence of an unhealthy ambition prompting to premature and false work in literature and art." From the literary side M. Léon Bazalgette has dealt with the tendency in much modern literature to devote itself to what he calls "mental onanism," of which the probable counterpart, he seems to hint, is a physical process of auto-erotism. (Léon Bazalgette, "L'onanisme considéré comme principe createur en art," Magazine Internationale, September, 1896, and republished in the same author's book, "L'esprit Nouveau," 1898.)

<sup>2</sup>Pausanias, "Achaia," Chapter XVII. The ancient Babylonians believed in a certain "maid of the night" who appeared to men in sleep and roused without satisfying their passions. (Jastrow, "Religion of Babylonia," p. 262.)

<sup>3</sup>"If any man's seed of copulation go out from him, then he shall bathe all his flesh in water and be unclean until the even. And every garment, and every skin, whereon is the seed of copulation, shall be washed with water and be unclean until the even." Leviticus, XV, v. 16-17.



to the Christian church and embodied in the word *pollutio*, by which the phenomenon was designated in ecclesiastical phraseology. According to Billuart and other theologians, pollution in sleep is not sin, unless voluntarily caused; if, however, it begins in sleep, and is completed in the half-waking state, with a sense of pleasure, it is a venial sin. It is allowable to permit a nocturnal pollution to complete itself on awaking, if it occurs without intention; and St. Thomas even says: "*Si pollutio placeat ut naturæ exoneratio vel alleviatio, peccatum non creditur.*"

Notwithstanding the fair and logical position of the more distinguished Latin theologians, there has certainly been a widely prevalent belief in Catholic countries that pollution during sleep is a sin. In the "Parson's Tale" Chaucer makes the parson say: "Another sin appertaineth to lechery that cometh in sleeping; and the sin cometh oft to them that be maidens, and eke to them that be corrupt; and this sin men clepe pollution, that cometh in four manners"; these four manners being (1) languishing of body from rank and abundant humors, (2) infirmity, (3) surfeit of meat and drink, and (4) villainous thoughts. Four hundred years later Madame Roland, in her "Mémoires Particulières," presented a vivid picture of the anguish produced in an innocent girl's mind by the notion of the sinfulness of erotic dreams. She menstruated first at the age of 14. "Before this," she writes, "I had sometimes been awakened from the deepest sleep in a surprising manner. Imagination played no part; I exercised it on too many serious subjects, and my timorous conscience preserved it from amusement with other subjects, so that it could not represent what I would not allow it to seek to understand. But an extraordinary effervescence aroused my senses in the heat of repose, and by virtue of my excellent constitution operated by itself a purification which was as strange to me as its cause. The first feeling which resulted was, I know not why, a sort of fear. I had observed in my 'Philotée' that we are not allowed to obtain any pleasure from our bodies except in lawful marriage. What I had experienced could be called a pleasure. I was then guilty, and in a class of offences which caused the most shame and sorrow, since it was that which was most displeasing to the Spotless Lamb. There was great agitation in my poor heart, prayers, and mortifications. How could I avoid it? For, indeed, I had not foreseen it, but at the instant when I experienced it, I had not taken the trouble to prevent it. My watchfulness became extreme. I scrupulously avoided positions which I found specially exposed me to the accident. My restlessness became so great that at last I was able to awake before the catastrophe. When I was not in time to prevent it, I would jump out of bed with naked feet on



to the polished floor, and with crossed arms pray to the Saviour to preserve me from the wiles of the devil. I would then impose some penance on myself, and I have carried out to the letter what the prophet King probably only transmitted to us as a figure of Oriental speech, mixing ashes with my bread, and watering it with my tears."

To the early Protestant mind, as illustrated by Luther, there was something diseased, though not impure, in sexual excitement during sleep; thus, in his "Table Talk" Luther remarks that girls who have such dreams should be married at once, "taking the medicine which God has given." It is only of recent years that medical science has obtained currency for the belief that this auto-erotic process is entirely normal. Sir James Paget declared that he had never known celibate men who had not such emissions from once or twice a week to twice every three months, both extremes being within the limits of good health, while Sir Lauder Brunton considers once a fortnight or once a month about the usual frequency, at these periods the emissions often following two nights in succession. Quite lately there has been some tendency for medical opinion to revert to the view of Luther and to regard sexual excitement during sleep as a somewhat unhealthy phenomenon. Moll is a distinguished advocate of this view. Sexual excitement during sleep is the normal result of celibacy, but it is another thing to say that it is on that account satisfactory. We might then, Moll remarks, maintain that nocturnal incontinence of urine is satisfactory since the bladder is thus emptied. Yet we take every precaution against this by insisting that the bladder shall be emptied before going to sleep.<sup>1</sup> This remark is supported by the fact, to which I find that both men and women can bear witness, that sexual excitement during sleep is more fatiguing than in the waking state, though this is not an invariable rule, and it is sometimes found to be refreshing.

So far as I have been able to ascertain, there seem to be, generally speaking, certain differences in the manifestations of auto-erotism during sleep in men and women which I believe to be not without psychological significance. In men the phe-

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<sup>1</sup> Moll, "Untersuchungen über die Libido Sexualis," B. 1, p. 552.



nomenon is fairly simple; it usually appears about puberty, continues at intervals of varying duration during sexual life provided the individual is living chastely, and is generally, though not always, accompanied by erotic dreams which lead up to the climax, its occurrence being, to some extent, influenced by a variety of circumstances: physical, mental, or emotional excitement; alcohol taken before retiring; position in bed (as lying on the back), the state of the bladder, sometimes the mere fact of being in a strange bed, and to some extent apparently by the existence of monthly and yearly rhythms. On the whole, it is a fairly definite and regular phenomenon which usually leaves little conscious trace on awaking beyond probably some sense of fatigue and occasionally a headache. In women, however, the phenomena of auto-erotism during sleep seem to be much more irregular, varied, and diffused. So far as I have been able to make inquiries, it is the exception rather than the rule for girls to experience definitely erotic dreams about the period of puberty or adolescence.<sup>1</sup> Auto-erotic phenomena during sleep in women who have never experienced the orgasm when awake are usually of a very vague kind; while it is the rule in a chaste youth for the orgasm thus to manifest itself, it is the exception in a chaste girl. It is not, as a rule, until the orgasm has been definitely produced in the waking state—under whatever conditions it may have been produced—that it begins to occur during sleep, and even in a strongly sexual woman living a repressed life it is often comparatively infrequent. Thus, a young medical woman who endeavors to deal strenuously with her physical sexual emotions writes: "I sleep soundly, and do not dream at all. Occasionally, but very rarely, I have had sensations which awakened me suddenly. They can scarcely be called dreams, for they are mere impulses, nothing connected or coherent, yet prompted, I know,

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<sup>1</sup> I may here refer to the curious opinion expressed by Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, that, while the sexual impulse in man is usually relieved by seminal emissions during sleep, in women it is relieved by the occurrence of menstruation. This latter statement is flagrantly at variance with the facts; but it may perhaps be quoted in support of the view expressed above as to the comparative rarity of sexual excitement during sleep in young girls.



by sexual feeling. This is probably an experience common to all." It is possible that to this rarity in chaste women of sexual excitement during sleep we may in part attribute the violence with which repressed sexual emotion in women often manifests itself.<sup>1</sup> There is thus a difference here between men and women which is of some significance when we are considering the natural satisfaction of the sexual impulse in chaste women.

One of the most interesting and important characters by which the erotic dreams of women—and, indeed, their dreams generally—differ from those of men is in the tendency to evoke a repercussion on the waking life, a tendency more rarely noted in men's erotic dreams, and then only to a minor extent. This is very common even in healthy and normal women, and is exaggerated to a high degree in neurotic subjects, by whom the dream may even be interpreted as a reality, and so declared on oath, a fact of practical importance.

Hersman—having met with a case in which a school-girl with chorea, after having dreamed of an assault, accused the principal of a school of assault, obtaining his conviction—obtained the opinions of various American alienists as to the frequency with which such dreams in unstable mental subjects lead to delusions and criminal accusations. Dercum, H. C. Wood, and Rohé had not personally met with such cases; Burr believed that there was strong evidence "that a sexual dream may be so vivid as to make the subject believe she has had sexual congress"; Kiernan knew of such cases; C. H. Hughes, in persons with every appearance of sanity, had known the erotic dreams of the night to become the erotic delusions of the day, the patient protesting violently the truth of her story; while Hersman reports the case

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<sup>1</sup> It may be added that in more or less neurotic women and girls erotic dreams may be very frequent and depressing. Thus, J. M. Fothergill ("West Riding Reports," vol. vi, 1876) remarks: "These dreams are much more frequent than is ordinarily thought, and are the cause of a great deal of nervous depression among women. Women of a highly-nervous diathesis suffer much more from these drains than robust women. Not only are these involuntary orgasms more frequent among such women, but they cause more disturbance of the general health in them than in other women."



of a young lady in an asylum who had nightly delusions that a medical officer visited her every night, and had to do with her, coming up the hot-air flue.<sup>1</sup> I am acquainted with a similar case in a clever, but highly neurotic, young woman, who writes: "For years I have been trying to stamp out my passional nature, and was beginning to succeed when a strange thing happened to me last autumn. One night, as I lay in bed, I felt an influence so powerful that a man seemed present with me. I crimsoned with shame and wonder. I remember that I lay upon my back, and marveled when the spell had passed. The influence, I was assured, came from a priest whom I believed in and admired above everyone in the world. I had never dreamed of love in connection with him, because I always thought him so far above me. The influence has been upon me ever since—sometimes by day and nearly always by night; from it I generally go into a deep sleep, which lasts until morning. I am always much refreshed when I awake. This influence has the best effect upon my life that anything has ever had as regards health and mind. It is the knowledge that I am loved *fittingly* that makes me so indifferent to my future. What worries me is that I sometimes wonder if I suffer from a nervous disorder merely." The subject thus seemed to regard these occurrences as objectively real, but was sufficiently sane to wonder whether her experiences were not due to mental disorder.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. C. Hersman, "Medico-legal Aspects of Eroto-Choreic Insanities," *Alienist and Neurologist*, July, 1897. I may mention that Pitres ("Leçons cliniques sur l'Hystérie," vol. ii, p. 34) records the almost identical case of an hysterical girl in one of his wards, who was at first grateful to the clinical clerk to whom her case was intrusted, but afterward changed her behavior, accused him of coming nightly through the window, lying beside her, caressing her, and then exerting violent coitus three or four times in succession until she was utterly exhausted. I may here refer to the tendency to erotic excitement in women under the influence of chloroform and nitrous oxide, a tendency rarely or never noted in men, and of the frequency with which the phenomenon is attributed by the subject to actual assault. See H. Ellis, "Man and Woman," pp. 269-274.

<sup>2</sup> In Australia a man was charged with rape, found guilty of "attempt," and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, on the accusation of a girl of 13, who subsequently confessed that the charge was imaginary; in this case the jury found it impossible to believe that so



The tendency of the auto-erotic phenomena of sleep to be manifested with such energy as to flow over into the waking life and influence conscious emotion and action, while very well marked in normal and healthy women, is seen to an exaggerated extent in hysterical women, in whom it has, therefore, chiefly been studied. Sante de Sanctis, who has investigated the dreams of many classes of people, remarks on the frequently sexual character of the dreams of hysterical women, and the repercussion of such dreams on the waking life of the following day; he gives a typical case of hysterical erotic dreaming in an uneducated servant-girl of 23, in whom such dreams occur usually a few days before the menstrual period; her dreams, especially if erotic, make an enormous impression on her; in the morning she is bad-tempered if they were unpleasant, while she feels lascivious and gives herself up to masturbation if she has had erotic dreams of men; she then has a feeling of pleasure throughout the day, and her sexual organs are bathed with moisture.<sup>1</sup> Pitres and Gilles de la Tourette, two of Charcot's most distinguished pupils, in their elaborate works on hysteria both consider that dreams generally have a great influence on the waking life of the hysterical, and they deal with the special influence of erotic dreams, to which, doubtless, we must refer those conceptions of *incubi* and *succubi* which played so vast and so important a part in the demonology of the middle ages, and while not unknown in men, were most frequent in women. Such erotic dreams—as these observers, confirming the experience of old writers, have found among the hysterical to-day—are by no means always, or even usually, of a pleasurable character. "It is very rare," Pitres remarks, when insisting on the sexual character of the hallucinations of the hysterical, "for these erotic hallucinations to be accompanied by agreeable voluptuous sensations. In most cases the illusion of sexual intercourse even provokes acute pain. The

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young a girl could have been lying or hallucinated, because she narrated the details of the alleged offence with such circumstantial detail. Such cases are not uncommon, and in some measure no doubt they may be accounted for by auto-erotic nocturnal hallucinations.

<sup>1</sup> Sante de Sanctis, "I sogni e il sonno nell'isterismo e nella epilessia," Rome, 1896, p. 101.



witches of old times nearly all affirmed that in their relations with the devil they suffered greatly. They said that his organ was long and rough and pointed, with scales which lifted on withdrawal and tore the vagina."<sup>1</sup> (It seems probable, I may remark, that the witches' representations, both of the devil and of sexual intercourse, were largely influenced by familiarity with the coupling of animals). As Gilles de la Tourette is careful to warn his readers, we must not too hastily assume, from the prevalence of nocturnal auto-erotic phenomena in hysterical women, that such women are necessarily sexual and libidinous in excess; the disorder is in them psychic, he points out, and not physical, and they usually receive sexual approaches with indifference and repugnance, because their sexual centres are anesthetic or hyperesthetic. "During the period of sexual activity they seek much more the care and delicate attention of men than the genital act, which they often only tolerate. Many households, begun under the happiest auspices—the bride all the more apt to believe that she loves her betrothed in virtue of her suggestibility, easily exalted, perhaps at the expense of the senses—become hells on earth. The sexual act has for the hysterical woman more than one disillusion; she cannot understand it; it inspires her with insurmountable repugnance."<sup>2</sup> I refer to these hysterical phenomena because they present to us, in an extreme form, facts which are common among women whom, under the artificial conditions of civilized life, we are compelled to regard as ordinarily healthy and normal. The frequent painfulness of auto-erotic phenomena is by no means an exclusively hysterical phenomenon, although often seen in a heightened form in hysterical conditions. It is probably to some extent simply the result of a conflict in consciousness with a merely physical impulse which is strong enough to assert itself in spite of the emotional and intellectual abhorrence of the subject. It is thus but an extreme form of the disgust which all sexual physical manifestations tend to inspire in a person who is not inclined to respond to them.

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<sup>1</sup> Pitres, "Leçons cliniques sur l'Hystérie," vol. ii, p. 37 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Gilles de la Tourette, *loc. cit.*, p. 518.



Somewhat similar psychic disgust and physical pain are produced in the attempt to stimulate the sexual emotions and organs when these are exhausted by exercise. In the detailed history which Moll presents, of the sexual experiences of a sister in an American nursing guild,—a most instructive history of a woman fairly normal except for the results of repressed sexual emotion, and with strong moral tendencies,—various episodes are narrated well illustrating the way in which sexual excitement becomes unpleasant or even painful when it takes place as a physical reflex which the emotions and intellect are all the time struggling against.<sup>1</sup> It is quite probable, however, that there is a physiological, as well as a psychic, factor in this phenomenon, and Sollier, in his recent elaborate study of the nature and genesis of hysteria, by insisting on the capital importance of the disturbance of sensibility in hysteria, and the definite character of the phenomena produced in the passage between anesthesia and normal sensation, has greatly helped to reveal the mechanism of this feature of auto-erotic excitement in the hysterical.

No doubt there has been a tendency to exaggerate the unpleasant character of the auto-erotic phenomena of hysteria. That tendency was an inevitable reaction against an earlier view, according to which hysteria was little more than an unconscious expression of the sexual emotions and as such was unscientifically dismissed without any careful investigation. I agree with Breuer and Freud that the sexual needs of the hysterical are just as individual and various as those of normal women, but that they suffer from them more, largely through a moral struggle with their own instincts, and the attempt to put them into the background of consciousness.<sup>2</sup> In many hysterical and psychically

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<sup>1</sup>On one occasion, when still a girl, whenever an artist whom she admired touched her hand she felt erection and moisture of the sexual parts, but without any sensation of pleasure; a little later, when an uncle's knee casually came in contact with her thigh, ejaculation of mucus took place, though she disliked the uncle; again, when a nurse, on casually seeing a man's sexual organs, an electric shock went through her, though the sight was disgusting to her; and when she had once to assist a man to urinate, she became in the highest degree excited, though without pleasure, and lay down on a couch in the next room, while a convulsive ejaculation took place. (Moll, "Libido Sexualis," B. 1, p. 354.)

<sup>2</sup>Breuer and Freud, "Studien über Hysterie," 1895, p. 217.



abnormal women, auto-erotic phenomena, and sexual phenomena generally, are highly pleasurable, though such persons may be quite innocent of any knowledge of the erotic character of the experience. I have come across interesting and extreme examples of this in the published experiences of the women followers of the American religious leader, T. L. Harris, founder of the "Brotherhood of the New Life." Thus, in a pamphlet, entitled, "Internal Respiration," by Respiro, a letter is quoted from a lady physician, who writes: "One morning I awoke with a strange new feeling in the womb, which lasted for a day or two; I was so very happy, but the joy was in my womb, not in my heart." "At last," writes a lady, quoted in the same pamphlet, "I fell into a slumber, lying on my back with arms and feet folded, a position I almost always find myself in when I awake, no matter in which position I may go to sleep. Very soon I awoke from this slumber with a most delightful sensation, every fibre tingling with an exquisite glow of warmth. I was lying on my left side (something I am never able to do), and was folded in the arms of my counterpart. Unless you have seen it, I cannot give you an idea of the beauty of his flesh, and with what joy I beheld and felt it. Think of it, luminous flesh; and Oh! such tints, you never could imagine without seeing. He folded me so closely in his arms," etc. In such cases there is no conflict between the physical and the psychic, and therefore the resulting excitement is pleasurable and not painful.

The extreme form of auto-erotism is the tendency sometimes found, perhaps especially in women, though this is doubtful, for the sexual emotion to be absorbed and often entirely lost in self-admiration. This Narcissus-like tendency, of which the normal germ in women is symbolized by the mirror, is found in a minor degree in some men, and is sometimes well marked in women, but in association with an attraction for other persons, to which attraction it is, of course, normally subservient.

In the extreme form in which alone the name of Narcissus may properly be invoked, there is comparative indifference to sexual gratification or the admiration of the opposite sex. Such a condition seems to be rare, except, perhaps, in insanity. Since I called attention to this form of auto-erotism (*Alicnist and Neurologist*, April, 1898) several writers have discussed the condition, especially Nücke. Among 1500 insane per-



sons Nücke has found it in four men and one woman (*Psychiatrische en Neurologische Bladen*, No. 2, 1899). Dr. C. H. Hughes writes (in a private letter) that he is acquainted with such cases in which men have been absorbed in admiration of their own manly forms and of their sexual organs, and women likewise absorbed in admiration of their own mammæ and physical proportions, especially of limbs. "The whole subject," he adds, "is a singular phase of psychology, and it is not all morbid psychology either. It is closely allied to that esthetic sense which admires the nude in art."

A typical case known to me is that of a lady of 28, brought up on a farm. She is a handsome woman, of very large and fine proportions, active and healthy and intelligent, with, however, no marked sexual attraction to the opposite sex; at the same time she is not inverted, though she would like to be a man, and has a considerable degree of contempt for women. She has an intense admiration for her own person, especially her limbs; she is never so happy as when alone and naked in her own bedroom, and, so far as possible, she cultivates nakedness. She knows by heart the various measurements of her body, is proud of the fact that they are strictly in accordance with the canons of perfection, and she laughs proudly at the thought that her thigh is larger than many a woman's waist. She is frank and assured in her manners, without sexual shyness, and, while willing to receive the attention and admiration of others, she makes no attempt to gain it, and seems never to have experienced any emotions stronger than her own pleasure in herself. I should add that I have had no opportunity of detailed examination, and cannot speak positively as to the absence of masturbation.