

## A word to whom it may concern.

John Wesley

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To the serious reader.

I never yet saw any thing wrote on this subject, which a modest person could well bear to read. The well known English Treatise, entilted, *Onania*, is a most fulsome and shocking performance. And the French tract of Dr. Tissot lately translated, is if possible, more immodest and fulsome still. Some parts of it most of the London street-walkers, would be ashamed to read aloud. So gross, so indelicate, so more than beastly, is his manner of treating this most delicate subject!

What was useful in his treatise, you have in this Extract, and what was wanting in that, is here supplied: and how necessary is a tract of this kind? For thousands of men and women groan under bodily disorders, whereof this sin is the cause, and they never suspected it. Such are many, I had almost said, most of the disorders of the nervous kind. But 'till the cause of them is removed, the effect of it must remain. And thousands *make shipwreck of the faith*, and are again weak and *faint in their mind*, from the very same cause, which is equally destructive to the soul and body. If this has been *your case*, arise, shake yourself from the dust; the grace of God is sufficient for you! Give not place to the devil a moment longer/ From this instant escape for your life/ And *when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren!* Labour to help them in particular, who are still in the fatal *snare of the devil*, still *taken captive at his will*.

I. By self-pollution, the young of both sexes frequently contract the infirmities of old age. They become pale, effeminate, dull, inactive; they lose their Appetite, weaken their fight, their memory their understanding, and contract all the disorders attending weak nerves. Many bring on thereby a general weakness, and paralytic disorders of all kinds. Yea, lethargies, epilepsies, madness, blindness, convulsions, dropsies, and the most painful of all gout.

II. Dr. Hoffman observes, "After a long course of this kind, not only the strength diminishes, the body is emaciated, the face turns pale, but moreover the memory fails. A sensation of cold seizes al the limbs, the sight dims, the voice loses its clearness, the sleep is disturb'd by uneasy dreams, and the whole body decays. I have seen many who had hereby drawn upon themselves, not only redness and extream pain in the eyes, but such a weakness, that they could not read. I have seen two instances even of a Gutta Serena produced by this cause.

III. "I have seen, says Dr. Zimmermann, a man twenty-three years old, who by this practice fell into a compleat epilepsy. Nevertheless, I had so far cured him, that he had recovered his sleep, his strength, and his natural colour. But returning to the same, he came at length to be taken with fits in the streets: and he was found one morning dead, fallen out of bed, and bathed in his own blood."

Are such as cut their own throats, more guilty of Self-murder than this man?

N. B. Much of this treatice is extracted from Dr. Tissot.

IV A Child of Montpelier, not above six or seven years old, taught by a maid-servant, practised it so frequently as to bring on an hectic fever, which soon cut him off.

I subjoin two instances, communicated by Dr. Mieg, a celebrated physician of Basil.

"The Son of M-----, aged fifteen years, died of an Epilepsy, which was caused by self-pollution: And that notwithstanding all the Help that could be administered by the most experienced physicians."

I know also a young lady of twelve or thirteen years old, who has already, by this execrable practice, drawn upon herself a tympany, and incontinence of urine, the FluorAlbus, and a consumption. She is still in a languishing condition, and I dread the fatal consequence.

V. Several have also observed, That hereby the sense of hearing is weakened, & the growth of those who have not done growing checked: Many become hypochondriac to the highest degree, with melancholy, tears, sighs, palpitations; yea, suffocations, and frequent fainting fits, never to be removed while the cause continues: And many times, even when that subsists no more, they are not to be cured but by death.

VI. The most acute pains are likewise caused by this detestable practice. Some who have been guilty hereof, complain of their head, others of their stomach, or bowels, others of external pains, and some of a dull pain in all parts of the body. It occasions also, not only pimples on the face, which is one of the commonest symptoms, but even pusiules or blotches on the face, nose, breast, thighs, with cruel itchings on those parts. Numbers are attacked with a gonorrhoea, with stranguries, heat of urine, incontinence of urine, with very painful tumors in or near the parts, and some with piles, or stubborn costiveness. Let all who are troubled with any of these complaints, conder, if they are not owing to this cause.

VII. I shall now mention what has occurred to my own observation. L. D-----, a watch maker, had enjoyed good health, till the age of seventeen, when he gave himself up to self-pollution. There had not passed a whole year, before he began to feel a remarkable decay of Strength. Yet in spite of this, he repeated his crime, till he was seized with a kind of convulsion, just at the time, which at first lasted but a few moments, but in a while became habitual, and often attacked him without any apparent cause, with such violence too, that during the time of the fit, which sometimes lasted fifteen hours, and never less than eight, he suffered in the nape of his neck so violent pains that his outcries sounded like piteous howlings, and it was impossible for him, while the fit lasted, to swallow any thing liquid or solid. He totally lost his strength. Incapable of every thing, he languished for some months; being the more to be pitied, for that, some remains of memory, only served constantly to recall to him the causes of his wretchedness, I was told his condition. I went to him, and found him lying upon straw, meagre, pale, sallow, sending forth an infectious smell, and almost incapable of any motion. He bled at the nose a pale and watry blood, and was continually foaming at the mouth. Attacked too with a diarrhea, his excrements came from him without his perceiving.

The disorder of his mind was not less than that of his Body; without any other sensation but that of a pain which returned with every fit, as least once inn three days. I procured for him quickly relief from those violent fits. Being satisfied with having mitigated his tortures, I discontinued remedies, which could have no efficacy on the main of his disorder. He died at the end of a few Weeks in June, 1757.

VIII. Not all those who give themselves up to this odious habit, are, it is true, so severely punished; but there are none that do not suffer for it in a less or greater degree.

The pernicious consequences that have fallen under my observation, are, first, a disorder of the Stomach, which in some discovers itself by lots of appetite, or by the irregularity of its cravings; in others, by acute pains, especially in the time of digestion, by habitual nauseas or vomitings, which resist all remedies, while the cause is continued. Secondly, A weeking of the organs of respiration, whence frequently result dry husky coughs, almost always a hoarseness, and shortness of breath, on any little violence of motion. Thirdly, A total relaxation of the nervous system.

It does not require deep knowledge to be sensible that these three causes are capable of producing all the diseases of langour. The first ill consequences of them, besides those I have just pointed out, are diminution of strength, a less or greater paleness, sometimes a slight but continual jaundice, often pimples, which come and disappear only to make room for fresh ones, all over the face, but especially in the forehead, the temples, and about the nose; a notable leanness; an astonishing sensibility of the changes of weather, especially of cold; a weakness of sight; and a great impairment of the faculties, especially of the memory.

IX. I beg leave to insert here part of two letters, which confirm this observation.

“I had the misfortune, in my tenderest youth, being to the best of my remembrance, not above eight or ten years of age, to contract that pernicious habit of Self pollution, which very early ruined my constitution, but especially for some years past, I find myself under an extraordinary oppression: My nerves are extreamly weak,

my hands without strength, always shaking, and in a perpetual sweat. I have violent pains in my stomach, arms, legs, sometimes in my loins' and my breast. I am often troubled with a cough; my eyes are weak and dim; I have a devouring appetite, and yet I grow every lean.

Another writes, "I cannot walk two hundred paces without resting. My weakness is extream. I have continual pains all over my body, but especially in my shoulders. I preserve my appetite, but that is rather a misfortune, as I have pains of the stomach the moment I have eaten, and throw up whatever I have got down."

X. A consequence, and not a rare one, if this practise, is the Hypochondriac Disorder. And if those who are Hypochondriac, from other causes, abandon themselves to it, all the symptoms are exasperated and it becomes incurable.

I have seen the most cruel inquietude, agitations, anxieties result from these two causes united; and repeated observations have proved to me, that, in those Hypochondriacs, who are subject sometimes to attacks of phrenzy, self-pollution always hastens on the fit. The brain, weakened by this double cause, succesively loses its faculties, and the patients fall at length into a state of idiotism, which is seldom interrupted but by attacks of madness.

XI. Nor is this execrable practice less mischievius to the Female sex. Besides these symptoms which I have already described, women are particularly exposed hereby to hysteric fits, to dreadful vaporous affections; to incurable jaundices, to cruel cramps of the stomach and back; to sharp prickings of the nose, to the Fluor Albus, which is a perpetual source of the most torturing pains; to the falling down, yea, to ulcerations of the womb, and to all the infirmities which are the consequences of those two disorders. The face is the first part that gives outward signs of the inward disorder. The plumpness, and the fresh colour fade away, and leanness and paleness succeed. The eyes lose their lustre, the lips their vermilion, and the teeth their whiteness; nay, it is not rare that the whole figure receives damage by the total deformation of the shape.

XII. The Rickets is a disorder, as to which Boerhaave is mistaken, when he says, it does not attack persons after the age of three years. It is not uncommon to see young people of both sexes, but especially the female, who after their having been well shaped to the age of eight, ten, twelve, or fourteen, and even sixteen years, fall by little & little, into a distortion of shape, through the curvature of the spine; and this disorder sometimes becomes very considerable. It is not here the place for entering into an enumeration of the causes which produce it. But I ought not to omit, that self-pollution holds the first rank among them. And it produces numberless other disorders.

XIII. Young people of a weak constitution, have on a parity of crimes, worse consequences to fear than others. Those especially who have reason to apprehend any hereditary disease by the father or mother's side, such as the gout, the stone, the consumption, the king's evil; those who have any touches of a cough, an asthma, spitting of blood, the head-ache, or the epilepsy. All these ought to remember that every act of this sort, gives a severe blow to their constitution, hastens the attack of the evils they dread, and will throw them in the flower of their youth into all the infirmities of decrepid old age.

XIV. But notwithstanding all these miseries caused thereby, how hard is it to break loose from this accursed practice! As soon as the habit has gained strength, both body and soul concur in sollicitation to it. The Soul is so accustomed to loose ideas, that they continually recur, whether you will or no. And the very humours of the body affect the Soul, and drag her back into the mire. What a pity, but those who are yet untainted could foresee, that one false step, naturally brings on another; That in a while they will become absolute slaves, reason and religion having quite lost their force. And that in a little time they will find themselves cast into a sea of misery, perhaps without the aid of a plank, to bring them again to the shore!

XV [XVI]. So long as any continues in this practice, it is impossible to remove the effects of it. And what can enable one, habituated thereto, to break it off? Nothing less than the mighty power of God. This is only to be expected by those, who labour in every other instance, to preserve *a conscience void of offence, toward God and toward men*. For while a man indulges himself in any sin whatever, he will never conquer his besetting sin. But supposing he is really *exercising himself* in universal *godliness*, he will find the grace of God is sufficient to

preserve him from this, in the use of proper means.

XVI [XV]. Some of those means are 1) The avoiding all temptations, with the utmost care: all such pictures, books, company, as recall those ideas, which he wishes to forget for ever. 2) The having as little intercourse with the other sex, especially in private as possible, and abstaining sacredly from all those familiarities, which to others might be innocent. 3) The refraining from wine and strong drink and all salt, and high seasoned meats: likewise from oysters, eggs (unless physically used) and whatever other food has a tendency to inflame. 4) let them use the most plain and simple diet, and as little as it will suffice nature. 5) Let them eat either none, or at least easy and light suppers. 6) Let them lie either on a hard bed, or on the ground, and never on their back. 7) Let them take no more sleep than nature requires, and never lie in bed longer than they sleep. 8) If they are in health, let them use constant fasting, not less than once a week. 6) Let them take as much exercise every day, as their strength will bear. If they add to these, constant watching and Prayer, they shall not easily be overcome.

XVII [XIX]. But suppose the bodily health is destroyed, by what means can it be recovered?

If a person is much weakened and tending to a consumption, he must immediately leave off tea, using it its place either mint, balm, water gruel, milk or thin chocolate." I begin, says Dr. Storck, with nourishing broth: Beaf-tea (so called) is the best of all. Rice, oatmeal, barley boiled with broth, or milk, are all very serviceable; but it must be observed to let him eat but little at a time, and often; should the stomach be so weakened, that it will not bear even these light aliments without pain, the patient should be put to the female breast, a recourse which has retrieved many out of the most desperate condition. To restore strength and activity to the relaxed fibres, I would recommend the use of wine heated with a hot iron, bark, cinnamon. As soon as the patient has strength enough to walk, it will be of infinite service to him to go into the pure air of the cuntry.

But it would be of no use to fix on a place with a good air, if one do not choose to breathe it. "The air of chambers, if it is not continually renewed, is nearly the same in all. It can hardly be called a change of air, from a close room in town to a close room in the country. There is no enjoying the benefits of a healthy atmosphere but in the open fields. If infirmities hinder the going or being carried out, as least the air of the chamber should be renewed several times in a day; not simply by opening a door or a window, which renews it only a little, but by letting into the chamber a torrent of fresh air, by opening at once, two or three opposite inlets. There is no disorder that does not require this precaution; but do not expose the sick person to the current of air. And it is always very easy to place him out of the power of it.

XVIII [XXI]. It is also extremely important to breathe the morning air. Those who deprive themselves of it, for the sake of remaining in a stifling atmosphere between four curtains, renounce the most agreeable, and perhaps the most strengthening of all remedies. The freshness of the night will, by morning, have restored to the air all its vivifying principles; and the dew which evaporates, by degrees, after having loaded itself with all the balm of the flowers, renders the air truly medicinal; you solace your self in a vaporous bath of the essence of plants to which nothing can be equivalent.

I have seen the most sensible effects of it on some valetudinarians, and especially on such as were hypochondriacs: these experienced in the clearest manner that if they breathed the morning air, they were more chearful, and lively all the day.

XIX [XVIII]. In the choice of Aliments I would recommend the two following rules,

First, To take no aliments, but what under a small compass contain a great deal of nourishment, and are easy of digestion.

Secondly, To avoid all that have any acidity.

It is of great importance to restore to the stomach all its strength; but the dilation of the stomach y abundance of aliments would daily weaken it: besides, if it is too full, weak persons feel an uneasiness and melancholy, that augment all their disorders.

Upon these principles may be formed a catalogue of such as are proper, and of those which should be excluded. In this last class are all flesh meats naturally hard and indigestible; such as all flesh of old animals; all that has been hardened by salt or smoak, and all that are too fat, or greasy.

Indeed there is nothing which persons of a weak digestion ought more carefully to avoid, than greasy food. Rich pye-crust, is another sort of aliment much above the strength of a weak stomach. Flatulent garden stuff is also noxious; and such plants as have a taste and smell remarkable acid. Yea, fruits, which are so salutary in other disorders, if they are taken at all, must be taken quite ripe.

XX [XIX]. The proper food is the flesh of young animals, wholesomely fed; such as veal, young mutton, young beef, fowl, turkey, partridge, But lark thrushes, quails and other wild-fowl, with most sort of fish, are to be used more sparingly.

The best way to prepare these, is to roast them by a gentle fire, so as to preserve their gravy, and not dry them up too much.

But some persons cannot digest even these. To such we must give broth, extracted by a gentle boiling. It may be accompanied with some bread, and a dash of lemon juice, if they like it. And the use of it is, it prevents that putridity, which would be the consequence of mere animal food.

XXI [XX]. The best garden-stuff is the tender roots, herbs of the endive kind, artichoaks, asparagus, Farinaceous grains, prepared and boiled in light broth, are an aliment not to be slighted, as it combines every thing that is nourishing in the two kingdoms, animal and vegetable. While their mixture prevents the danger from each aliment given single, the broth hinders the meal from turning sour, the meal the broth from putrefying.

Eggs are an aliment of the animal kind, and an aliment extremely nourishing; they strengthen greatly, are easy of digestion, proved that they have but little or even no preparation by fire, for if the white is once hardened, it does not easily dissolve again. The best way of eating them, is just as they are new laid from the fowl, without any preparation, or in the shell, after only three or four dips in boiling water, or stirred into warm, and not boiling broth.

XXII [XXI]. There remains to mention milk: which unites all the qualities that can be desired, without having any of the inconveniencies that are to be dreaded. It is the most simple, and the quickest of all restoratives. Only it is to be observed, that there are some stomachs, which cannot bear it. At least, unless under the following regulations.

First, the female that furnishes it should be healthy, and live regular: Secondly, during the time of taking it, all aliments should be avoided that can turn it sour; such are all fruits, raw or prepared, and in general every thing that is acid: thirdly, it must be taken at times distant from other aliments; it not taking kindly any mixture: Fourthly, take only a little of it at a time: Fifthly, all the while take care to keep the breast, the bowels, and the legs extremely warm: and above all: Sixthly, (for without this precaution all the others would be useless) be very moderate as to the quantity of even the best chosen aliments. During this recourse to milk, there should be no trouble given to the stomach: the smallest over-load, the slightest indigestion, leaves in it a principle of corruption, which presently turns the milk, and may, of the most wholesome of aliments, make a violent poison.

XXIII [XXII]. Hardly any kinds of milk are now in use, but women's, asses milk, goat's, or cow's. Each has its different qualities: yet there are few case in which milk from the cow may not be used for all the others. That from women is generally believed the most strengthening.

It is thought that asses milk has the nearest analogy to this, but this is rather matter of opinion than of experience. It is the most ferous, and from that very quality, the most laxative. It is a most pernicious error, the imagining it the most strengthening. Daily observations demonstrate the contrary, and prove not only that it is not the most efficacious, but that it is perhaps, the least so. I have rarely seen any good effects from it;

sometimes I have seen bad ones.

XXIV [XXIII]. Before I quit this subject of aliments, I add the important counsel, to avoid mixtures.

It is obvious, how impossible it is for every different aliments to undergo, within the same time, a perfect digestion: this mixture it is which is one of the causes that ruin the healthiest constitutions, and it is mortal to weak ones.

Another circumstance equally necessary, and almost equally neglected, is, a thorough chewing. This is a help to digestion, of which even the most vigorous stomachs cannot be long deprived without hurt; and without which the digestion, in weak ones, is extremely imperfect.

XXV [XXIV]. The liquid part of aliments, is an article, of regimen as important as the solid.

All liquids should be forbidden that can augment the relation, and diminish the little that remains of the digestive powers, that can convey any acidity into the humours, or hurt the nervous system. Tea, with that, has all the others: Coffee has the two last; so that one ought rigorously to abstain from them.

Spirituous liquors, are still more hurtfull: their action is too violent, they irritate more than they strengthen: And if they sometimes strengthen, the weakness which succeeds is greater than before: Besides, they give to the Papillae of the stomach a hardness that robs them of that sensibility necessary to the creation of an Appetite, and take from the liquids that degree of fluidity, which they ought to have in aid of that sensation.

The best drink is water from the purest spring, mixed with wine neither too heady nor too acid; the heady kinds irritate the nervous system; they acid weaken the digestion. In places where good water is not to be had, it may be corrected by filtration, by hot iron, or an infusion of some agreeable aromatic, such as cinnamon, aniseed, or lemon peel.

XXVI [XXV]. Common beer is noxious. Mum which is properly an extract from grain, both nourishing and strengthening, may be of great use: It enlivens as much as wine, and is more nutritious.

Among the useful drinks, may be ranked chocolate; the cocoa contains a great deal of nutritious substance, and the mixture with it of sugar and aromatics corrects any detriment from its oilines.

“Chocolate made with milk (says M. Lewis) in such quantities as to pass easily off the stomach, is an excellent breakfast for a **tabid** constitution. I knew a child twelve years old who was in the last stage of a consumption, when given over by a physician, recovered by the mother's giving her chocolate only, in small quantities, often repeated.

XXVII [XXVI]. What is to be said of sleep, may be reduced to three points; its duration, the time of taking it, and the precaution necessary for quiet sleep.

In grown persons seven hours of sleep, or at the most eight, are sufficient for any one. There is danger in sleeping longer; and in remaining longer in a bed, which throws one into the same disorders as too much sleep. That term ought never to be exceeded, unless one has not the strength necessary left for the being long up.

The air of the night is less healthy than that of the day; and the weakly are more susceptible of its influences in the evening than the morning. Therefore it is best to go to bed early, and rise early. This is a precept so commonly known that it may appear trivial to mention it: but it is so much neglected, and the consequence of it seems to be so little felt, though infinitely greater than it is believed to be, that it is very allowable to reinculcate it.

In order to sleep quietly, we should take care.

First, Not to be in an hot air, and to be neither too much nor too little covered.

Secondly, Not to have the feet cold at lying down; an accident common to weak persons.

Thirdly. Not to lie down upon a full stomach: nothing more disturbs the sleep.

Therefore it is best to sup on the lightest food, and that two hours before we go to bed, that the first digestion may be over before we lie down to sleep.

XXVIII [XVII]. But exercise is as necessary as sleep: Walking is good, but for weak persons riding is better. The weakest may use a carriage. And when the weather does not allow of going out, some means of motion should be contrived, in the house. Particularly a wooden horse.

But observe, use no violent motion immediately after a meal. And do not eat while hot from exercise: which should be taken before a meal, allowing some moments of rest before we eat.

XXIX [XXVIII]. The noblest restorative is the *Cold Bath*. I time it in the Evening, when the dinner is fully digested: it contributes much to procure quiet sleep.

I prescribed for the young man whose case is described above, pills of which myrrh was the basis, with a decoction of bark; and this was attended with the happiest success. Except in this, that he had not, nor perhaps ever will have, the strength he would have had, but for his misconduct. The check, which the machine receives in its growing season, has consequences which are irreparable. Oh, that his truth were but strongly imprinted on the minds of youth!

XXX [XXIX]. But the best of all medicines, where it will agree, is Milk. And where it does not otherwise agree, it may be mixt with some absorbent powders; some spoonfulls of mint-water; nay, often, only a little sugar, will make it agree.

But if still it will not agree, I advise trying buttermilk. I prescribed it with success for a young man, to whom I durst not give milk itself. The bilious drink the butter-milk with pleasure, and are always the better for it; and indeed it ought always to be Preferred to milk, where there is any feverishness. It calms, it dilutes, it sweetens, it assuages the thirst, it refreshes, and at the same time nourishes and strengthens.

XXXI [XXX]. I have now only to remind you once more, who have well nigh destroyed your Souls and Bodies together, that you cannot escape out of this snare of the Devil, but by the mighty Power of God. Forget not this then among all your Remedies. Call fervently on Him against whom you have sinned: Study to please Him in all things, and He will heal your Soul, and do with your Body as he knows is best for you.

Finis.

## Vocabulary?

IV tympany = turgidity

FluorAlbus [also under XI] = white body fluid, flux

VI pusiules = ???

Stranguries = slow and painful discharge of urine drop by drop

Conder [= misprint for consider? ponder?]

XXI/XVIII valetudinarians = sickly, infirm, invalids

XXV/XXIV Papillae = pimples, nipples

XXV/XXVI tabid???