

[Tissot, Onanism, London, 1766 - suite]

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having kept his bed about a month, he died in a condition equally fit to inspire compassion and terror.

But does not this observation furnish also a fifth cause of the dangers particular to self-pollution?

When one loses one's strength by two means at once, the weakness must be considerably augmented. A person who is standing upright, or sitting, has need for the supporting himself in those postures, and especially in the first, of putting into action a great number of the muscular parts; and this action dissipates the animal spirits. Weak persons, who cannot keep, for an instant, in a standing posture, without feeling a weakness, and the sick, that cannot sit up without the like uneasiness, very evidently prove this. But in lying down, or in the being extended at full length, there is not required the same strain on the vital strength. Thence it is clear enough, that the same act, performed in the one or in the other attitude, will produce a much greater weakening in the first than in the last case.

SANCTORIUS has not failed to point out the danger of this attitude: "*Ufus coitus stando, lædit, nam musculos et eorum utilem perspirationem diminuit.*"

Other observations, well examined, afford a sixth cause, which may, at the first superficial view, appear of the slightest, but which

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particular to self-pollution.
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which no intelligent naturalist will readily pronounce null.

All living bodies perspire. Every instant there exhales through, perhaps, one half of the pores of our skin, a humor of extreme tenuity, and which is a great deal more considerable than all our other evacuations: at the same time, another kind of pores admit a part of the fluids which surround us, and convey them into the vessels. These are *the invisible torrents* (to use M. SENAC's happy expression) that have their egress and regress into our body (i). It stands demonstrated; that, in some cases, this insorption is enormous. The strong and healthy perspire the most: the weak, who have hardly any atmosphere of their own, inhale more. Now the miasms, or perspired matter of healthy persons, contains something nutritious and corroborative, which inhaled by another, contributes to give him vigor. These are observations, which explain why the *young virgin*, selected to cherish DAVID, by lying in his bosom, gave him strength; why the same experiment has succeeded with other

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(i) The demonstration of this truth may be seen in the part I am quoting of M. SENAC's treatise *On the Heart*, L. iii. §. 7. a work that seemed to have left nothing more to be wished for upon that subject, if its illustrious author had not, in his promise of a second edition, given us to understand, that he could yet render it more perfect. A great man may surpass himself, and see a point of perfection, which others do not so much as imagine.

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