

**HINTS FOR THE YOUNG IN
RELATION TO THE HEALTH
OF BODY AND MIND**

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Hints for the Young in Relation to the Health of Body and Mind by Samuel Bayard Woodward

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SAMUEL BAYARD WOODWARD

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Entered according to the act of Congress, in the year 1838,
by HENRY J. HOWLAND, in the Clerk's office of the Dis-
trict Court of Massachusetts.

NOTE.

A PART of the matter now published in the following pages, appeared in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, in 1835. The papers, in this way, had an extensive circulation among medical men, and they were written originally for professional gentlemen only. Other benevolent individuals, however, read them, and they were copied into newspapers, and thus reached many persons in the community. Since that time the writer has been frequently solicited to publish them in a more popular form, or to prepare something appropriate on the subject, and give it extensive circulation among parents, teachers and youth, to prove a PREVENTIVE as well as a CURE.

That the evil is wide spread and exceedingly injurious to the young, cannot be denied, or doubted. Its effects upon physical strength and constitutional stamina, are very prejudicial.

Its influence in prostrating the mind is no less appalling. Consumptions, spinal distortions, weak and painful eyes, weak stomachs, nervous headaches, and a host of other diseases, mark its influence upon the one—loss of memory and the power of application, insanity and idiotism, show its devastating effects upon the other.

It is equally opposed to moral purity and mental vigor. It keeps up the influence of unhallowed desires;—it gives the passions an ascendancy in the character—fills the mind with lewd and corrupt images, and transforms its victim to a filthy and disgusting reptile.

The evil is common; its danger little known. Let the young beware of it, and those who are in the way of danger, abandon it forever!

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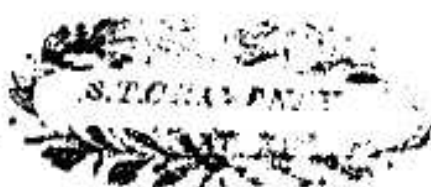
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HINTS FOR THE YOUNG.

CHAPTER I.

It can hardly be said that the attention of parents, teachers, or even the members of the medical profession, is duly awakened to the dangers which arise from the habit of Masturbation. Even at this time many doubt the expediency of bringing the subject before the public in any form, believing that diffusing information may be the cause of greater evil to the young, than the benefits which may arise from a knowledge of those dangers to all.—Those who hold to these opinions are hardly aware how extensively known the habit is with the young, and how early in life it is sometimes practised. I have never conversed with a lad of twelve years of age who did not know all about the practice, and understand the language commonly used to describe it. It is certainly

quite too common an opinion, that it is safe and harmless, and may be indulged with impunity to a certain extent. Till recently, I had supposed that this view of masturbation was confined to the ignorant and vulgar only; lately, however, I have seen a prescription from a physician of some reputation, in a case of spontaneous emission of semen, in which he directs *that the patient practise it twice a week* as a means of cure! Supposing that the patient might have some doubt of the propriety of the remedy, he proceeds to urge him to the practice as affording the surest mode of relief! Religious principles, conscientious scruples, and the common sense of the patient, led him to very different views of his case; he was not ready to resort to a practice for a cure, which he well knew to be the *cause* of all his affliction. By pursuing a course quite opposite to the one recommended, he is, in all respects, improving; he has the satisfaction of preserving both his health and moral purity—a consideration of no small value to the virtuous mind.

If the apprehension of physical evil is not sufficient to deter from a practice fraught with so disastrous effects, the conscientious scruples, and religious principles of every virtuous youth

should be awakened to deter him from the practice, or lead him to abandon it in future.

It is a vice which excites, to the greatest activity, the strongest and most uncontrollable propensities of animal nature; and these are rendered more active by indulgence, while the power of resistance and restraint is lessened by it in a tenfold degree. The moral sensibility becomes so blunted as to retain no ascendancy in the character, to control and regulate the conduct. Under such circumstances, the best resolutions to reform, and the firmest determination to abandon the habit, fail of accomplishment. In spite of himself, the victim sinks deeper and deeper in pollution, till he is overwhelmed at last in irretrievable ruin and disgrace.

Can a practice be innocent which so prostrates all the powers of body and mind, which corrupts the very fountain of moral virtue, and entails imperfection and imbecility on unborn generations?

From the hand of God himself we receive the noble attributes which distinguish us from the animals around us. This vice reduces us below their level. To Him are we responsible for this abuse of faculties which are given us

to improve and to cultivate for our own happiness and that of our fellow creatures. We cannot, with impunity, violate the laws of our being. This organic law of our formation, is imperative and abiding—no abuse of it will go unpunished—suffering will follow, if it be not scrupulously obeyed.

The propensity which leads to the evil in question, is ever active, and perhaps more frequently leads the young astray than any other ; it should, therefore, be more effectually restrained and more carefully controlled. Indulgence, instead of giving relief to its excitement, always increases it. Just in proportion to the gratification, will be the increase of desire. This is true of all the animal appetites and feelings.

There would be the same propriety in directing the intemperate man to resort to spirituous liquors to remove the appetite which his habit had created, as to recommend self-pollution to remove any symptom of disease which had previously arisen from it, or which had, in any other manner, become excited.

To those who doubt the corporeal or mental suffering from indulgence in this vice, I would commend the perusal of the following letter :