

**AN ESSAY ON MARRIAGE; BEING A
MICROSCOPIC INVESTIGATION INTO ITS
PHYSIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL RELATIONS;
WITH OBSERVATIONS ON THE NATURE, CAUSES,
AND TREATMENT OF SPERMATORRHEA, AND
THE VARIOUS DISORDERS OF THE PROCREATIVE
SYSTEM IN MEN**

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An Essay on Marriage; Being a Microscopic Investigation into Its Physiological and Physical Relations; With Observations on the Nature, Causes, and Treatment of Spermatorrhea, and the Various Disorders of the Procreative System in Men by R. Dawson

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R. DAWSON

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ON
THE NATURE, CAUSES, AND TREATMENT
OF
SPERMATORRHEA,
AND THE VARIOUS DISORDERS OF THE PROCREATIVE
SYSTEM IN MEN;
Illustrated by Cases.

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P R E F A C E .

AMONG the many works so constantly issuing from the medical press, replete with the most ingenious speculations, and enriched with principles founded upon the closest and most attentive observations, it unaccountably happens, that none have been specially devoted to the subject which constitutes the principal matter of the following pages. Indeed, it would seem not very inconsistent to infer that, in reality, no such diseases ever existed, as they could hardly have escaped the inquisitive vigilance of modern medicine. Strange, however, as this may appear, such diseases not only prevail, but to an extent hardly to be credited, unless by those who have devoted themselves to inquiries upon the subject. It is true that Impotency is noticed in systematic works upon the practice of physic, but in so vague a manner, and with so little precision, that we rise from the perusal as little instructed as when we first sat down. "Indeed," says Curling, "the little information we possess respecting it is chiefly to be found under the head of impotency in works on medical jurisprudence, in which it is cursorily considered, principally in relation to points of medico-

legal interest, and scarcely at all in reference to practice.*

In a practical point of view, the sources of information in this country may be regarded as an absolute nonentity, for I hardly know of any, except what his own experience may present to individual practitioners. Nor has this dearth been passed over without heed or complaint. Dr. Smyth, in a paper on Impotency, published in the *Lancet*, August 28, 1841, observes:—"It is a subject not less interesting to the moralist than to the medical practitioner; and it really is surprising to see that nothing worthy of notice is to be found on a matter so important in the various writings of standard authors. This circumstance appears remarkable and unaccountable, when experience convinces us that sexual weaknesses and imperfections, either hereditary or acquired, constitute the great majority, perhaps nine-tenths of the causes of nervousness, mental imbecility and derangement. How then are we to account for a fact like this?—a fact of such frequent occurrence, and so highly philosophic and instructive, as it undoubtedly is, having obtained so little attention. Can a general feeling of ill-exercised tenderness towards the depraved habits of most of the pitiable sufferers have operated in preventing the matter from having been duly investigated, and candidly avowed and discussed, or has it resulted from ignorance? The former we are disposed to think can scarcely have been the case; for with the medical practitioner, less frequently perhaps than with any other professionalist, from the confidence so readily reposed in his calling, does delicacy or prudery supersede utility."

* Curling on Disease of the Testis, page 39.

Perhaps the neglect with which practitioners have treated the subject of Impotency may be explained by the fact, that unless in the case of physical defects, we had no means of forming the diagnosis of such cases, nor were we capable of discriminating them from the mere common derangements of health. It is to the MICROSCOPE that we are chiefly indebted for the new light thrown upon this disorder. The discovery of the *spermatozoa* naturally led to the inquiry, what was the object of their existence in the spermatic fluid? Their existence in the seminal secretions of all animals proved that their presence was essential, and philosophy soon cleared up the mystery. Hence, the presence of these animalcules in the urethral discharges, and in the urine, furnished means for the diagnosis of this kind, hitherto one of the most obscure and intricate forms, of Impotency.

There are other forms of this disorder, caused by genital derangements, resulting from excesses and other kinds of imprudence. In many of these, I found the epididymis in a peculiar condition,—indurated, knotted, and tuberculated. I do not find this condition in connexion with Impotency noticed by any of the numerous authorities which I have consulted. When the epididymis is in this state, I have found nothing to effect the cure but the bichloride of mercury. All our efforts will prove futile without this medicine, which, unless in some inveterate cases, acts almost like a specific.

A residence for some time upon the Continent, and the kindness of the surgeons in charge of the large hospitals in France and in Germany, afforded me oppor-