

The second, "continence never injurious to the general health," or, in Cruveilhier's own words, "animal economy." Cruveilhier, in Dr. B.'s own quotation, asserts atrophied testes and impotence to be the result of prolonged continence. If this occurs in the athlete, why not in the Romish clergy? Unfortunately for the priests this is a medical Bull, and not an edict from his holiness, the pontiff. Having the concurring testimonies of Galen, Haller, and others, as to the condition of the Olympic continents, it is only a fair sequence to infer similar results as prevalent among the Catholic clergy. Thus continence, by *his own showing*, is proved to inflict physical and physiological injuries on some of those who observe the sacristic vow, as well as on those who have abided by their resolution under opposite duties.

In a subsequent paragraph M. Cruveilhier is stated "never to have seen a single case in which continence produced any evil consequences on the animal economy." Assuredly atrophied testes and impotence are injurious results; at least, most people would morally think so.

The third; "the laws of physiology *never* at variance with those of morality." The *negation* of this dogma is proved by Dr. Bull himself in his quoted opinions of ancient and modern physiologists.

In conclusion, I would remind Dr. Bull he has got to *prove* that the "laws of physiology are not at variance with morality." I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. W. MORGAN.

January, 1844.

CONTINENCE NEVER THE CAUSE OF SPERMATORRHEA.

REPLY OF DR. BULL TO HIS CRITICS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My letter on the above subject, published in your Journal of Dec. 9th, appears to have called forth no less than three replies (pages 398, 399, 401), as different in character as could well be. Although none of them has led me to change my opinions, I feel that some notice is perhaps due to each, which, if you can afford space to insert in your columns, I will promise not to trespass there again on the same subject.

Dr. Dangerfield, in his reply, scarcely broaches the point at issue, but complains principally of two things: that I have imputed to him opinions which he does not hold, and have ranked his name with that of the celebrated Lallemand. With regard to his opinions, I quoted two passages from Lallemand, but to the latter only did I append, distinctly, Dr. Dangerfield's coincidence; and for my justification in doing so I refer him to the conclusion of his first paper, quoted by himself in the present one.

Whether they do not both lead directly to the same immoral inference of which I complain and attempt to refute, I leave to deeper casuists than myself to decide; I am quite content, however, to disentangle Dr. Dangerfield's opinions, whatever they may be, from those of the Professor, and deal with the latter alone. If he conceives the courtesy of connecting them together to have been misplaced, I can have no objection to withdraw it. My own views of the subject remain unchanged; and so entirely were they directed, in my last letter, against those of Lallemand, that I have not to remove, with the simple coincidence of Dr. Dangerfield, one particle of the argument or authority adduced.

There is a considerable interval between puberty and marriage, which I, at least, had not overlooked; and Dr. Dangerfield's fears that I hold that holy ceremony to be an "immorality," are as causeless as his apprehension that I should again condescend to criticise, with or without attention, any productions of one who can regard as an attack upon character a simple contravention of opinions; and who, while inveighing against want of charity, truth, and intellect, in others, affords so shining an example of his own. Leaving, therefore, to Dr. Dangerfield the undisturbed credit of the next "mite" which he shall cast into the treasury of science, I here take my leave of him.

The letter of the next writer I turn to with pleasure; his gentlemanly tone and argumentative style demand notice of a very different description. Mr. Chatto has, unfortunately, mistaken my meaning at the commencement, and has thus attributed to me an argument which I have not used, and which I fully agree with him in pronouncing "fallacious." If he will oblige me by a re-perusal of my remarks, I am sure he will admit this. He makes me say that it is impossible that sexual intercourse should prevent spermatorrhœa;—whereas the true spirit of my argument was to the effect that continence alone was sufficient to prevent this disease, without the aid of sexual intercourse; that continence alone can never cause it; and that continence alone may even cure it in its earlier stages. I could not say that sexual intercourse, in moderation, will not prevent it, for, of course, it must, that being the natural function of the organ; but I will now add, what seems to have been latterly much overlooked, that sexual intercourse in excess will actually produce it. In proof of this, I have at the present time under my care an advanced case of this disease, for which not only the patient's candid admission, but also information from collateral sources, ascribe excessive sexual indulgence as the cause.

Mr. Chatto seems to admit, throughout his letter, that the laws of physiology and morality are naturally in accordance, but

that our artificial state of society disturbs this harmony. The laws of nature, it is true, will not "bend and twist" themselves altogether into a different channel, according to our artificial usages; but they admit of these, as is demonstrated by the great modifications so readily produced in their relative action to meet contingent necessities. This is especially the case with the laws of physiology, which are ever ready, by their action, to adapt all parts of the economy to the contingencies they may be subject to—exercise or repose, heat or cold, &c. &c. The more any part or organ of the body is exercised, the greater the increase both in size and function which is produced, and *vice versa* (diminution or emaciation being the result of perfect repose); always supposing, however, that this exercise be not carried to a degree which is inconsistent with the natural actions of the part.

Mr. Chatto goes on to say, with reference to our present subject, that "promiscuous sexual intercourse is only the lesser of two evils which the unfortunate arrangements of society force upon us," &c., referring, I suppose, to onanism or self-pollution as the other evil, for he does not mention the second. Here I disagree with him altogether, and contend that by simple continence both these evils may be avoided; and I maintain, also, that neither the one or the other is necessary for the preservation of health, or the continuance of the natural secretions from the testicles. It is only perfect continence, both mental and bodily, that is followed by the emaciation of the testicles and gradual suppression of their secretion, which I have alluded to as the result of a physiological law, and often observed (Cruveilhier) amongst the priesthood of the Romish church. In the present state of society, where the intercourse between the sexes is so intimate and habitual, it is almost impossible so to control the propensities and regulate the desires that the testicles should not be stimulated to continued secretion. But it does not follow from this that promiscuous sexual intercourse, or onanism, should take place, provided the inclinations and desires be properly resisted. The system can relieve itself, and will do so, at intervals, when the vesiculæ become loaded, and most frequently, too, during sleep, without the individual being aware of it, although the usual amount of orgasm may take place. Most young men, who are ordinarily moral, will have observed; this every few weeks, according to the circumstances in which they may be placed at the time. This relief, too, may be, and constantly is, repeated for years without an evil consequence whatever to the body, and without rendering in the least degree necessary any breach of the laws of morality.

Mr. Chatto notices the cadaverous and unhealthy aspect of many of the Romish

priesthood; but is not this rather owing to the prolonged fasts and rigorous discipline to which they are subjected by religious obligations, than to the simple fact of continence. Here let me repeat that Cruveilhier, with all his pathological skill and experience, has never seen a single case in which continence has produced any evil consequences on the economy, and he has had an ample field for observation amongst them.

I for one, too, am utterly opposed to Mr. Chatto's opinion, that all consequences are daily to be observed upon the health of women in consequence of forced celibacy, and which would be avoided by the system of early marriages—at the age of puberty—which he seems to recommend. There are various other and more important causes for their various ailments than continence, and gladly would I enter upon them on the present occasion if they were not too long and too complicated to be treated with any degree of satisfaction. Moreover, since Mr. Chatto has not dwelt upon it, in answer to him I am not called upon to do so.

The third letter I have, in great measure, anticipated in my observations on the last. Mr. Dudgeon cannot understand the axiom I would wish to establish, and I am sorry, for his sake, that I cannot put it in plainer terms. With the imperfections of human nature, and the doctrine of original sin, of course we have nothing to do. Principally, however, he quarrels with my expression "continence may cure, but cannot cause, spermatorrhœa," both of which conclusions he utterly denies, as a general rule. Continence cure spermatorrhœa! Aye, indeed, Mr. Dudgeon—indeed it will. Continence alone has effected many a cure in the earlier stages of the disease. Nay, more, Sir, continence, I assert, must take a part in every cure; and these deductions I have arrived at from actual observations, whatever you may think to the contrary. When, from habitual want of continence, the impotent, because exhausted, patient, as a last resource, feeling bitterly his error, endeavours at length to be continent, it is no wonder that he should find it fail. Continence will not cure confirmed irritability. That must first be reduced to enable the patient to be continent. Every cause of irritation must be removed, such as sexual intercourse, onanism, &c. &c., and the usual methods for reducing it resorted to most perseveringly, before it is possible for him to exercise it.

Here, I must be pardoned for making one brief digression, to condemn strongly the practice of many medical men of the present day who, when a case of confirmed spermatorrhœa presents itself, at once recommend sexual intercourse, though not unfrequently they get for answer that the patient is unable to effect it. If Lallemand be correct in ascribing it so generally to excessive irritability of the genital organs, of which there

seems to be little doubt, surely such a recommendation must be not only unscientific but worse than useless. Such advice I am inclined to think it is, that has so generally driven the treatment of such cases into the hands of empirics.

Mr. Dudgeon, however, approaches my views much more nearly than Mr. Chatto. He admits that "*many* can abstain from breaking this law of morality without having their health injured," and for this great concession I am, also, most willing to admit with him that some constitutions are naturally predisposed to this disease. The rock upon which he seems to me to have foundered is the extent of his credulity. But for this, we should hold the same opinions. Let me remind him that, in arriving at any conclusion as to the real cause of spermatorrhœa, it must never be overlooked that it is a disease of a class which, more than any other, renders the patient indisposed to assign the true one. If continence is allowed as a plea (which, I contend, it never can be, except with some great and evident constitutional peculiarity) it is not likely that the patient should refer it to incontinence. A person will rarely throw so great a reflection, even in confidence, on his moral character, if there be any loophole of escape, any way by which he may avoid it. No; I repeat, continence cannot cause it, and if Mr. Dudgeon reflects upon it I think he will soon admit this, and enter the ranks on the side of morality, for, if I am not mistaken, he has both candour and liberality enough to do so, as soon as he shall become convinced that it is the true one.

I have now, I trust, Mr. Editor, sufficiently aroused the attention of the profession to this subject, and having, I believe, answered all the arguments adduced by the gentlemen who honoured me by replying to my first letter; having endeavoured, to the best of my ability, to uphold physiology, and prevent the perversion of her admirable laws to the sanction of immorality and the encouragement of vice, I take leave of the subject, with the hope, however, that it may not rest here. May other and more able pens, whose directors have a greater inclination than I have for a public controversy, be exercised on this subject. They cannot be occupied more nobly, and I venture to assert that they cannot take firmer ground than when they shall attempt to maintain that THE LAWS OF PHYSIOLOGY ARE NEVER OPPOSED TO THOSE OF MORALITY; and, with reference to the present subject, that CONTINENCE CAN NEVER CAUSE SPERMATORRHŒA, OR BE PRODUCTIVE OF ANY OTHER EVIL CONSEQUENCES TO THE SYSTEM. I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

HENRY BULL, M.D., Edin.,
M.R.C.S.L. & E., &c.

Hereford, Dec. 30, 1843.

P. S.—I do not see THE LANCET until a No. 1062.

week after publication, therefore, on the present occasion, I have lost no time in writing the above letter, with the hope that you will be able to find room for it in your next NUMBER.

* * * Our correspondent will, ere long, be enabled to see THE LANCET on his table at Hereford on the day that it is published in London.—ED. L.

RELIEF IN CASES OF LYSSA.

To the Editor.—Sir: Attracted by your editorial remarks at page 337, of THE LANCET, in connection with an interesting letter of Mr. Turner, in which he recommends a trial of tracheotomy in the early stage of hydrophobia, I beg to forward a communication I had written, and intended to send to one of the medical journals many months ago. It was withheld only from a friend jocosely remarking that I should certainly be elected to the council of the besieged town. More than ever satisfied that the suggestion is not unworthy of consideration, I now beg the favour of its insertion in your columns. Our scientific friends, the veterinarians, unfortunately cannot put it in practice, for their patients have no uvula. In consequence of the remarks of Mr. Youatt I am inclined to ask, Is it the presence of the uvula which makes the spasm of the glottis so much more marked in man than in the lower animals? I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

J. YEARSLEY.

Saville-row, Dec. 23, 1843.

"I am induced, by the recent prevalence of hydrophobia, to throw out a suggestion relative to the treatment of that terrible and fatal disease. The most efficacious remedial means in spasmodic disorders allied to hydrophobia are, undoubtedly, those which inflict a sudden shock upon the nervous system. Excessive spasmodic action about the throat is well known to be a most prominent, and, probably, fatal symptom of the disease. It is this which occasions the difficulty of swallowing, and the extreme agony at the sight of liquids, or the bare idea of drinking or deglutition. Now, as excision of the uvula possesses in some cases a remarkable influence in controlling spasmodic action of the vocal and respiratory organs, it has occurred to me that it would be useful to perform this simple operation, as a slight shock to the nervous system, in the early or formative stage of hydrophobic disease. I have long intended to put this proposal to the test, should a case pass under my notice; may I hope the publication of the present letter will lead to a trial of its efficacy earlier than might otherwise occur. With the exception of the unsuccessful experiment of Magendie, of producing in an hydrophobic