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Nocturnal Emissions

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NOCTURNAL EMISSIONS.

Knowing how much harm is often done to young men by the injudicious, nay criminal, advice of young physicians and others, not to speak of the iniquitous advertising quack, and on the other hand how much good is done by a frank assurance that the "symptoms" so often feared are purely physiological and rendered abnormal only by morbid introspection, I, with some natural hesitation, submit this article in the hope that it may be widely read and may do something toward mitigating a real social evil.

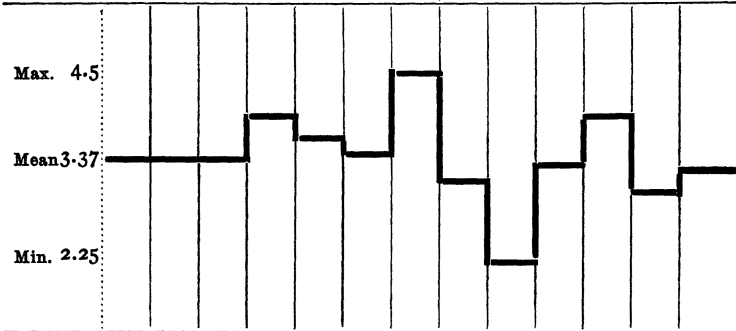
It is well known to physicians that a great deal of worry and misery is caused in young people by a lack of knowledge on their part, and on the part of their parents, regarding sexual matters. One great source of anxiety is nocturnal seminal emissions and the sexual or erotic dreams that commonly accompany them. These are regarded by ignorant youth and parents alike as a sign of depravity, and the consequences of this view are deplorable, physically, mentally and morally. Most physicians, and many persons who, like myself, are not physicians could give illustrations of the truth of this statement. Knowing this, and finding so much diversity of opinion regarding the subject, the present writer, a bachelor who has no record as a rake, undertook to record his own emissions—involuntary of course—and began to keep a record of them and of such accompanying dreams as he could recall early in October, 1895, when just turning thirty. This I have continued to do to the present (Sept. 30, 1903), namely eight years. As I know of no previous record of this kind and scope,¹ I think it worth publishing for the information of the physiologist, the psychologist and the physician, and indeed for all men, for it should have an interest for all whether married or unmarried.

I shall first give a table showing the number of emissions per month throughout the whole period, and then a curve showing the rise and fall of the number of emissions per calendar month on an average.

From the table it is evident that the number of emissions per year is pretty constant, varying between thirty-seven and fifty, or an average of between three and four per month

¹ While this article was printing, my attention was called to the following previous articles on the subject. Perry Coste: *Sexual Periodicity in Men*, in Havelock Ellis's *Psychology of Sex*, Vol. II, pp. 251-266; which gives average per year as 37. Nelson, Julius: *A Study of Dreams*, *Am. Jour. of Psy.*, May, 1888, Vol. I, pp. 367-401 (especially pp. 390-401); which gives curve of nocturnal emissions ("ekbole").

YEAR.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Totals
1895										2	2	3	7
1896	4	4	2	6	5	5	5	7	2	2	6	2	50
1897	4	5	4	4	4	1	9	3	1	3	7	4	49
1898	3	4	3	2	3	3	5	2	3	3	6	2	39
1899	3	2	4	2	2	6	7	3	1	1	4	2	37
1900	3	2	5	2	4	5	1	2	3	7	1	4	39
1901	5	6	6	6	2	1	7	3	3	6	2	4	49
1902	3	3	3	.5	5	4	2	2	3	3	2	3	38
1903	2	1	2	4	4	3	0	3	2				21
Totals,	27	27	27	31	29	28	36	25	18	27	30	24	329
Average,	3.37	3.37	3.37	3.88	3.62	3.5	4.50	3.12	2.25	3.37	3.75	3	41.12



throughout the time, except during the last year, when for the nine months recorded the average is a little less. This falling off may be due to the unusual demands made upon the system to repair an injury I received in February, which crippled me for several months. The exact average per month for the eight years is 3.43. That is to say the writer's normal or physiological sexual capacity is between three and four emissions per month. This capacity will no doubt vary greatly in different individuals. In some it will be greater, in others less than this, but there is decidedly a physiological limit. There is here a warning both to the unmarried masturbator and the married incontinent, who are equally foolish and blameworthy.

The average curve is also interesting as showing a spring and summer rise in the number of emissions and a corresponding fall, naturally following upon the seasonal welling up of life. Such a seasonal phenomenon is another link that unites us with the rest of organic creation.

The emissions, besides varying greatly in amount, are very irregular in time. The least interval between them was one day—not counting two taking place the same night, which

occurred, but very rarely. The interval of one day occurred in about 8.5 per centum of the cases. Forty-one per cent. took place in intervals of one, two, three or four days, fifty-nine per cent. with intervals of a week or less. Thirty per cent. took place in intervals of from eight to seventeen days, and but eleven per cent. with longer intervals. The longest interval between emissions was forty-two days. While both the amount and the frequency seemed to be influenced slightly by conditions of temperature, food, sexual excitement, etc., the influence was only temporary and made no difference in large periods of time. It has been said that urinating will relieve the pressure and quiet erection. I gave this a fair trial for a long period and found no difference in the net result, though sometimes an emission might be thereby postponed a day or so. Getting out of bed and walking up and down to allay erection was of similarly temporary effect. Illness, however, or poor condition, as also over-work and loss of sleep, certainly tended to make the emissions less frequent.

The time at which the emissions took place was generally in the early morning. Frequently I could not tell just when they occurred, as I knew nothing of it till I awoke. Generally, however, the emissions were accompanied by sexual dreams, which I was able to recall more or less clearly and out of which I sometimes awoke at the orgasm. Inhibition was very seldom possible and never more than temporary. I need scarcely say that the emission was never induced. I examined it once under a microscope and saw numbers of spermatozoa, proving it to be true semen.

The emissions, as I have said, were generally accompanied—or rather preceded—by dreams of a more or less erotic nature. Needless to say that legs and breasts often figured prominently in these dreams, the other sexual parts, however, very seldom and then they turned out to be male organs in most cases. There were but two instances of copulation dreamt. Girls and young women were the usual *dramatis personæ*, and, curiously enough, often the aggressors. Sometime the face or faces were well known, sometimes only once seen, sometimes entirely unknown. The orgasm occurs at the most erotic part of the dream, the physical and psychical running parallel. This most erotic or suggestive part of the dream was very often quite an innocent looking incident enough. As for example: While passing a strange young woman overtaken on the street, she calls after me some question. At first I pay no heed, but when she calls again, I hesitate whether to turn back and answer or not—emission. Again, walking beside a young woman, she said, "Shall I take your arm?" I offered it and she took it entwining her arm around it and raising it high—

emission. I could feel stronger erection as she asked the question. Sometimes a word was enough, sometimes a gesture. Once emission took place on my noticing the young woman's diminished finger-nails. Another example of fetichism was my being curiously attracted in a dream by the pretty embroidered figure on a little girl's dress. As an illustration of the strange metamorphoses that occur in dreams, I one night in my dream (I had been observing partridges in the summer) fell in love with a partridge, which changed under my caresses to a beautiful girl, who yet retained an indiscrivable wild-bird innocence, grace and charm—a sort of Undina! Imaginative writers doubtless owe much to their dreams, in which the imagination has such free play. Sometimes the effort was made to inhibit the tendency to emission, but this was very seldom successful. Occasionally inhibition was due to the entrance (in dream of course) of a third person upon the scene. I did not find that the position of the body in sleep mattered much. Generally I was on my back, but sometimes on my side and rarely on my stomach. If I went to bed late very tired or unable to sleep much for thinking, the usual morning erection would generally not take place. Sometimes the erotic dream and emission left a strained or tired and unpleasant feeling behind; at other times I felt refreshed, relieved and the better for it. The erotic dream and emission frequently seemed to be the climax to a gradually increasing feeling of well-being or euphoria lasting some days.

Throughout these years my health has continued very good with rare exceptions, generally in spring, when I have suffered for short periods from tonsillitis; and my weight has varied but little.