

CHAPTER VII

OF MATTERS WHICH ARE INJURIOUS IN THE ACT OF GENERATION

Know, O Vizir (to whom God be good!), that the ills caused by coition are numerous. I will mention to you some of them, which are essential to know, to avoid them.

Let me tell you in the first place that the coition, if performed standing, affects the knee-joints and brings about nervous shiverings; and if performed sideways will predispose your system for gout and sciatica, which resides chiefly in the hip-joint.

Do not mount upon a woman fasting or immediately before making a meal, else you will have pains in your back, you will lose your vigor, and your eyesight will get weaker.

If you do it with the woman bestriding you, your dorsal cord will suffer and your heart will be affected; and if in that position the smallest drop of the secretions of the vagina enters your urethral canal, a stricture may result.

Do not leave your member in the vulva after ejaculation, as this might cause gravel, or softening of the vertebral column, or the rupture of the bloodvessels, or lastly inflammation of the lungs.

Too much exercise after coition is also detrimental.

Avoid washing your member after the copulation, as this may cause canker.

As to coition with old women, it acts like a fatal poison; and it has been said, "Do not rummage old women, were they as rich as Karoun."¹ And it has further been said, "Beware of mounting old women; and if they cover you with favours." And again, "The coitus of old women is a venomous meal."

Know that the man who works a woman younger than he is himself acquires new vigor; if she is of the same age as he is he will derive no advantage from it, and, finally, if it is a woman older than himself she will take all his strength out of him for herself. The following verses treat on this subject:—

"Be on your guard and shun coition with old women;
In her bosom she bears the poison of the arakime."²

A proverb says also, "Do not serve an old woman, even, if she offers to feed you with semolina and almond bread."

The excessive practice of the coition injures the health on account of the expenditure of too much sperm. For as butter made of cream represents the quintessence of the milk, and if you take the cream off, the milk loses its qualities, even so does the sperm form the quintessence of nutrition, and its loss is debilitating. On the other hand, the condition of the body, and consequently the quality of the sperm depends directly upon the food you take. If, therefore, a man will

passionately give himself up to the enjoyment of coition, without undergoing too great fatigue, he must live upon strengthening food, exciting comfits,³ aromatic plants, meat, honey, eggs, and other similar viands. He who follows such a regime is protected against the following accidents, to which excessive coition may lead.

Firstly, the loss of generation power.

Secondly, the deterioration of his sight; for although he may not become blind, he will at least have to suffer from eye diseases if he does not follow my advice.

Thirdly, the loss of his physical strength; he may become like the man who wants to fly but cannot, who, pursuing somebody cannot catch him, or who carrying a burden, or working, soon gets tired and prostrated.

He who does not want to feel the necessity for the coition uses camphor. Half a mitskal⁴ of this substance, macerated in water, makes the man who drinks it insensible to the pleasures of copulation. Many women use this remedy when in fits of jealousy against rivals,⁵ or when they want repose after great exercise. Then they try to procure camphor that has been left after a burial, and shrink from no expense of money to get such from the old women who have the charge of the corpses.⁶ They make also use of the flower of henna, which is called faria;⁷ they macerate the same in water, until it turns yellow, and thus supply themselves with a beverage which has almost the same effect as camphor.

I have treated of these remedies in the present chapter, although this is not their proper place; but I thought that this information, as here given, may be of use to many.

There are certain things which will become injurious if constantly indulged in and which in the end affect the health. Such are: too much sleep, long voyages in unfavourable season, which latter, particularly in cold countries, may weaken the body and cause disease of the spine. The same effects may arise from the habitual handling of bodies which engender cold and humidity, like plaster, etc.

For people who have difficulty in passing their water the coitus is hurtful.

The habit of consuming acid food is debilitating.

To keep the member in the vulva of a woman after the ejaculation has taken place, be it for a long or a short time, enfeebles that organ and makes it less fit for coition.

If you are lying with a woman, do her business several times if you feel inclined, but take care not to overdo it, for it is a true word that "He who plays the game of love for his own sake, and to satisfy his desires, feels the most intense and durable pleasure; but he who does it to satisfy the lust of another person will languish, lose all his desire, and finishes by becoming impotent for coition."

The sense of these words is, that a man when he feels disposed for it can give himself up to the exercise of the coitus with more or less ardour according to his desires, and at the time which best suits him, without any fear of future impotence, if his enjoyment is provoked and regulated only by his feeling the want of lying with a woman.

But he who makes love for the sake of somebody else, that is to say, only to satisfy the passion of his mistress, and tries all he can to attain that impossibility, that man will act against his own interest and imperil his health to please another person.

As injurious may be considered coition in the bath or immediately after leaving the bath; after having been bled or purged or such like. The coitus after a heavy bout of drinking is likewise to be avoided. To exercise the coitus with a woman during her courses is detrimental to the man as to the woman herself, as at that time her blood is vitiated and her womb cold, and if the least drop of blood should get in the man's urinary canal numerous maladies may supervene. As to the woman, she feels no pleasure during her courses, and holds the coitus in aversion.

As regards the copulation in the bath, some say that there is no pleasure to be derived from it, if, as is believed, the degree of enjoyment is dependent upon the warmth of the vulva, and in the bath the vulva cannot be otherwise than cold, and consequently unfit for giving pleasure. And it is not to be forgotten that the water penetrating into the sexual parts of man or woman may lead to grave results.

It is pretended that to look into the cavity of the vagina is injurious to the eyes. This is a question for a physician and not for a mere advisor.

It is told with regard to this subject that Hacem ben Isehac, Sultan of Damascus, was in the habit of examining the interior of women's parts, and being warned not to do it he said, "Is there a pleasure preferable to this?" And thus before long he was blind.

The coitus after a full meal may occasion rupture of the intestines. It is also to be avoided after undergoing much fatigue, or at a time of very hot or very cold weather.

Amongst the accidents which may attend the act of coition in hot countries may be mentioned sudden blindness without any previous symptoms.

The repetition of the coitus without washing the parts ought to be shunned, as it may enfeeble the virile power.

The man must also abstain from copulation with his wife if he is in a state of legal impurity,⁸ for if she become pregnant by such coition the child could not be sound.

After ejaculation do not remain close to the woman, as the disposition for recommencing will suffer by doing so.

Care is to be taken not to carry heavy loads on one's back or to over-exert the mind, if one does not want the coitus to be impeded. It is also not well to constantly wear vestments made of silk⁹

as they impair all the energy for copulation. Silken cloths worn by women also affect injuriously the capacity for erection of the virile member.

Fasting, if prolonged, calms the sexual desires; but in the beginning it excites them.

Abstain from greasy liquids, as in the course of time they diminish the strength necessary for coition.

The effect of snuff, whether plain or scented, is similar.

It is bad to wash the sexual parts with cold water directly after copulation; in general, washing with cold water calms down the desire, while warm water strengthens it.

Conversation with a young woman excites in the man the rection and passion commensurate with the youthfulness of a woman.

An Arab addressed the following recommendations to his daughter at the time when he conducted her to her husband: "Perfume yourself with water!" meaning that she should frequently wash her body with water in preference to perfumes; which are not suitable to everyone.

It is also reported that a woman having said to her husband, "You are then a nobody, as you never perfume yourself!" he made answer, "Oh, you sloven! it is for the women to emit a sweet odour."

The abuse of coition is followed by the loss of the taste for its pleasures; and to remedy this loss the sufferer must anoint his member with a mixture of the blood of a he-goat with honey. This will procure for him a marvellous effect in making love.

It is said that reading the Koran also predisposes for copulation.

Remember that a prudent man will beware of abusing the enjoyment of the coition. The sperm is the water of life; if you use it economically you will be always ready for love's pleasures; it is the light of your eye; do not be lavish with it at all times and whenever you have a fancy for enjoyment, for if you are not sparing with it you will expose yourself to many ills. Wise medical men say, "A robust constitution is indispensable for copulation, and he who is endowed with it may give himself up to pleasure without danger; but it is otherwise with the weakly man; he runs into danger by indulging freely with women."

The sage, Es Sakli, has thus determined the limits to be observed by man as to the indulgence of the pleasures of coition: Man, be he phlegmatic or sanguine, should not make love more than twice or thrice a month; bilious or hypochondriac men only once or twice a month. It is nevertheless a well established fact that nowadays men of any of these four temperaments are insatiable as to coition, and give themselves up to it day and night, taking no heed how they expose themselves to numerous ills.

Women are more favoured than men in indulging their passion for coition. It is in fact their specialty; and for them it is all pleasure; while men run many risks in abandoning themselves without reserve to the pleasures of love.

Having thus treated of the dangers which may occur from the coitus, I have considered it useful to bring to your knowledge the following verses which contain hygienic advice in this respect. These verses have been composed by the order of Haroun er Rachid¹⁰ by the most noted physicians of his time, whom he had asked to inform him of the remedies for combating ills caused by coition.

"Eat slowly, if your food shall do you good,
And take good care, that it be well digested.
Beware of things which want hard mastication;
They are bad nourishment, so keep from them.
Drink not directly after finishing your meal,
Or else you go half way to meet an illness.
Keep not within you what is of excess.
And if you were in the most susceptible circles,
Attend to this well before seeking your bed,
For rest this is the first necessity.
From medicines and drugs keep well away.
And do not use them unless very ill.
Use all precautions proper, for they keep
Your body sound, and are the best support.
Don't be too eager for round-breasted women;
Excess of pleasure soon will make you feeble.
And in coition you may find a sickness;
And then you find too late that in coition
Our spring of life runs into women's vulva.
And before all beware of aged women,
For their embraces will to you be poison.
Each second day a bath should wash you clean;
Remember these precepts and follow them."

Those were the rules given by the sages to the master of benevolence and goodness, to the generous of generous.

All sages and physicians agree in saying that the ills which afflict man originate with the abuse of coition. The man therefore who wishes to preserve his health, and particularly his sight, and who wants to lead a pleasant life will indulge with moderation in love's pleasures, aware that the greatest evils may spring therefrom.

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1. This Karoun, the Cora of the Bible, is reported by the expositors to have constructed a palace all covered with gold, the doors being of solid gold. He generally made a white mule covered with golden trappings.
2. Note of the autograph edition.—Arakime is the plural of Arkeum, the name of a hedious serpent whose sting is fatal.
3. These comfits are called madjoun, and are prepared from fruit, particularly from cherries and pears cooked with honey. According as they may be wanted more or less spiced there are added, in varying quantities, cinnamon, musk, etc.

4. The mitskal is a weight of three-sevenths of a dirhem, corresponding to a drachm and a half of our old system of weights and is equal to one gramme and ninety centigrammes.
5. The word derair—the singular number of which is derra, and which is rendered in the translation with rivals—comes from a root which signifies to be injurious.
6. With the Mussulmans it is customary to wash the dead with the greatest assiduity with perfumed waters before they are buried.
7. Henna is a plant which is in great demand with Arabs. The dried leaves of it are reduced to a powder or stepped in water, and are then used to rouge the nails, feet, hands, hair and beard.
8. Note in the autograph edition.—Legal impurity is due to different causes, enumerated by Sidi Khelil, in chap. i. of his "Religious Jurisprudence." The same disappears by ablution or by lotion. To give an example, I shall cite the following extract from that chapter. "The lotion is obligatory for any male person arrived at the age of puberty who has introduced only the gland of his verge, be it in carnal connection with a woman, or with an animal, or with a corpse, or (in case of malformation, or on account of flaccidity) who has thus introduced part of his verge to the length of the gland." (Translation of Perron.)
9. It is probably owing to the great warmth developed by silk that the author thinks the wearing of silken stuffs to be injurious with respect to coition. It may, in fact, be admitted that they have that effect.
10. The Haroun er Rachid in question was Kalif in the year 170, and was acknowledged to have been one of the most meritorious, eloquent, cultured and generous rulers.