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100
years ago

Erotic Dreams in Normal Persons [Il Sogno Erotico nell'uomo normale]. (Riv. di Psicol., January–February, 1908.) Gualino, L.

The subject of sexual activity during sleep has been touched on by various psychologists and alienists and studied in detail in a few individual cases. Gualino appears to be the first to investigate it on a larger scale, and bases his paper on the experiences of 100 persons among his acquaintances, doctors, teachers, etc. (apparently all men), to whom he addressed a series of questions. They had all had experience of the phenomenon which Gualino regards as entirely normal.

Gualino finds that erotic dreams, with emissions (whether or not seminal), began somewhat earlier than the period of physical development as ascertained by Marro for youths of the same part of northern Italy. Gualino found that all his cases had had erotic dreams at the age of seventeen; Marro found 8 per cent. of youths still sexually undeveloped at that age, and while sexual development began at thirteen years erotic dreams began at twelve. Their appearance was preceded in most cases for some months by erections. In 37 per cent. of the cases there had been no actual sexual experiences (either masturbation or intercourse); in 23 per cent. there had been masturbation; in the rest some form of sexual content. The dreams are mainly visual, tactual elements coming second, and the *dramatis persona* is either an unknown woman (27 per cent. cases) or only known by sight (56 per cent.), and in the majority is, at all events in the beginning, an ugly or fantastic figure, becoming more attractive later in life, but never identical with the woman loved during waking life. This, as Gualino points out, accords with the general tendency for the emotions of the day to be latent in sleep. Masturbation only formed the subject of the dream in four cases. The emotional state in the pubertal stage, apart from pleasure, was anxiety (37 per cent.), desire (17 per cent.), fear (14 per cent.). In the adult stage anxiety and fear receded to 7 per cent. and 6 per cent. respectively. Thirty-three of the subjects, as a result of sexual or general disturbances, had had nocturnal emissions without dreams; these were always found exhausting. Normally (in more than 90 per cent.), erotic dreams are the most vivid of all dreams. In no case was there knowledge of any monthly or other cyclic periodicity in the occurrence of the manifestations. In 34 per cent. of cases they tended to occur very soon after sexual intercourse. In numerous cases they were peculiarly frequent (even three in one night) during courtship, when the young man was in the habit of kissing and caressing his betrothed, but ceased after marriage. It was not noted that position in bed or a full bladder exerted any marked influence in the occurrence of erotic dreams; repletion of the seminal vesicles is regarded as the main factor.

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