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AN
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

Menstruation

SUBMITTED TO THE

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BY

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Menstruation

This subject should engross our most particular attention for it is a function performed by woman the kindest and best of God's creatures and is frequently subject to derangements which if not skillfully treated will too surely snap the silver chord of life and place the victim even in the flower of youth beneath the cold damp sod. For a number of years the wisest heads of the medical profession have been engaged in investigating this subject and the fact that it still yields ground for dispute proves that the dark veil of mystery which envelops it, has not yet been uplifted. But many circumstances

connected with it, which have heretofore given rise to disputes. have been clearly and satisfactorily explained, and I may not be too sanguine in predicting that ere the lapse of many years. as brilliant a light will be thrown over the subject of my thesis as now shines over the circulation of the blood. By Menstruation is meant a function peculiar to the female of the human race by which a fluid resembling blood is thrown off from the uterus. The discharge in most women occurs periodically once in each month beginning at the age of puberty and continuing so long as she is capable of bearing children, unless it be suspended by pregnancy or disease. No healthy adult female is exempt from it unless

There exist pregnancy or some malformation of the genital organs. Usually about the time for their appearance of the discharge, an evident change is observed in the female. Her face assumes an expression that was not wont to reside there. The eyes throw off the accustomed look of girlish glee and assume a settled look of melancholy. The mammae expand and form those voluptuous mounds which so beautifully adorn the female chest. The pelvis too becomes expanded and the limbs become more full and rounded = Nor does the change stop here. The wild gaiety of her girlhood is lost and she becomes more settled more thoughtful. Her girlish fancies give place to

more durable affection, and in fine
an evident change is wrought over
her whole being. How often do we
hear it remarked of a young girl
who has just passed this critical
period! How beautiful she has
become! The symptoms which
announce the near approach
of the discharge are - a dulness
of the eyes; languid look; generally
a dark circle under the eye lids;
headache; lassitude and wear-
-ness after exertion; inequality
of spirits; pain in the back; a
sense of weight and pain in
the region of the uterus and
down the thighs and sometimes
fever. But these symptoms may
occur once or twice without any
discharge. I have said that the

discharge first appears at the age of puberty, and as climate exercises an influence over the advent of this period of life, so also does it influence the appearance of the Catamenia. For instance menstruation occurs earlier in warm climates than in more temperate ones. It is said that mode of life too has an influence over it.

But I hasten over these facts to come more quickly to things of more importance, lest these pages by becoming long become also tedious.

From the fact that the discharge occurs at regularly monthly periods it is called the menses. It bears also other names as the monthlies, monthly courses, or sickups. &c. but technically it is called the Catamenia. In most

cases the discharge flows from four to six days so that taking this into consideration the woman is free from it from twenty four to twenty six days during the month. The quantity thrown off from the uterus at each menstruation differs much in different persons. I believe however that about six ounces is generally set down as an average.

For a long while there was a controversy as to the character of this discharge, some contending that it was a secretion from the uterus; others that it was a mere exhalation, and I believe there is still contention on this point. Those who say it is a secretion attempt to bring forward proof which has nearly all been overthrown

The question of most importance in connection with this subject which now interests the medical profession, is the cause of its periodicity and numerous theories and conjectures have been given to the world in reference to it.

From the fact of its regular appearance each month some have falsely concluded that this periodicity depended on the influence of the moon.

Others have attributed it to a degree of local plethora. This appears to be a more reasonable conclusion for it is universally agreed that there is a degree of plethora and congestion in these parts during menstruation.

But few however are favourable to this opinion. There are other theories too of less importance whose ^{value} I deem insufficient to entitle them to enumeration.

And here without wishing to arrogate to myself in the least I will ^{leave} these books and give my own views upon this subject.

I am aware that many will think me vain and foolish in thus giving my views upon so important a subject. I would not, in the language of Young resemble ocean into tempest wrought to waft a feather or to crown a fly, but I am inclined to the opinion that my views are as much to me, as Sir Isaac Newton's was to him provided I can sustain them. At all events I will give my opinion for what it is worth and beg to be pardoned if I become too tedious.

It is the function of the ovaria to prepare the ova and discharge them, the function of the uterus is chiefly to receive these ova and lodge them until the full term of utero-gestation.

This it can not do unless its volume be increased, and as blood is the material from which every tissue of the body is formed whenever ~~the~~ it becomes necessary for the womb to increase in its size, the blood is determined to that organ. It is a law of God given to man to increase his race, and for this purpose he has made a special provision. The ova are discharged from the ovaria each month after the woman has reached the age of puberty, and in order to aid man in obeying his law God has so arranged that whenever an ovum is discharged the uterus is brought in order to lodge it until the full term, provided this ovum be vivified by the male sperm.

The ovum has been discharged and vivified, and by the time it reaches

the uterus the blood has been determined to it; the membrane has been formed and all things ready to lodge it until the proper time for expulsion, unless disease or some external cause prevent. Then the ovum is lodged in the uterus and the blood instead of being thrown off by the menstrual discharge is retained for the increased growth of the uterus. Therefore we have no menstrual discharge during the period of pregnancy.

Suppose now that an ovum is about to be discharged but has not been impregnated. The uterus then aware of what is going on in its neighbor organ, and for fear that the ovum may be impregnated before it reaches its cavity again prepares itself for the reception of the ovum.

This ovum then is discharged and may instead of passing to the uterus through the Fallopian tubes, be dropped into the pelvic cavity and not being vivified perish there. But the uterus has prepared itself as though an impregnated ovum were expected and none has come. Now it would be a deplorable affair if this state were to continue in the uterus - and it were to go on increasing in size and nothing contained in its cavity. To prevent this God has made a provision and we see it in the discharge of the menstrual fluid. To prevent this state the blood must be taken from the part and to effect this it exudes through the lining membrane of the uterus constituting what we call the catamenial discharge.

Or if the ovum pass to the cavity of the uterus it can not increase in size because it has not been vivified. Then to prevent the same dreadful consequences the blood is discharged from the uterus and carries with it the perished ovum. The reason why we have no menstrual discharge before the age of puberty is, because the woman is not capable of becoming pregnant, no ova are discharged and consequently there would be no use for an undue amount of blood in the uterus. But whenever the ova become mature and the woman becomes capable of generating the species, we see that this discharge is set up and it continues just so long as the woman can become pregnant and no longer."

Even this fact is sufficient of itself of showing that there is a very close relation between the discharge of ova and the catamenial flux.

I believe that just before the appearance of the menstrual flux that the uterus is in the same condition that it is in the incipient stages of pregnancy and by I am strengthened in this opinion by an able physiologist who has investigated this subject very closely. I allude to Dr Dunglison. He says that he has examined many subjects who died during the period of the discharge and found on the inner surface of the womb slight appearance of a membrane like that formed in the earliest stages of pregnancy.

I have thus given in a very brief manner my views on the cause

of the periodicity of the menstrual
discharge and in so doing I earnestly
hope that I have not bowed myself
in the estimation of any one - and
I beg those whose duty it is to
criticise these pages

To scan me not with a critic's eye
But pass my imperfections by.