

AN  
INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

*Amenorrhœa*

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## Amenorrhoea

In offering a short treatise on this subject to the Faculty, I do not suppose it will be expected of me, (one who can boast of little or no experience in its treatment) to offer anything original; my knowledge of it consisting in what I have learned from the books, elucidated by our able teachers in the Medical school of Nashville.

Therefore I claim no originality for what I may say on the subject, but believe it to be in accordance with <sup>the</sup> best, or nearest correct doctrine taught in the present day, on the subject.

The term Amenorrhoea is applied to those diseases peculiar to women wherein there is suppression or re-  
=tention of the menses.

As absence of the Menses depends on various causes, so may Amenorrhoea be divided into several varieties.

But for our present purpose it is sufficient to comprehend the disease in two divisions.

The first division, which we make, is where the Menstrua have never made their appearance; This condition has been denominated "Emanatio Mensium"

The second, is that wherein the Menstrua had made their appearance, but afterwards, from some abnormal condition of the system, had been suspended

This has been called "Suppressio Mensium". We shall proceed to notice these divisions somewhat in detail, but first we had better, probably, say something concerning Menstruation

Menstruation is a process peculiar to childbearing women

It usually commences about the age of fifteen, and terminates ordinarily, about the age of forty five.

It consists of a regular periodical discharge from the Uterus, which occurs once every Lunar month, or once in every twenty eight days. Consequently it is sometimes denominated the "Monthly - periods" "Monthlies" "Monthly sickness" &c,

Also called by various other names, as Menses, Menstrua, Catamenia &c, &c,

Various have been the speculations concerning the nature of this discharge

Some have considered it a secretion of the Uterine organs, but the most generally received opinion is, that it is an elimination of blood from the

congested Uterus, The congestion being caused by the formation, maturation and evolution of Germs or Ovula

These Germs or Ovula are prepared by the ovaries, which are a couple of organs attached by ligaments to either angle of the womb; one on the right and the other on the left of that organ,

Each Ovary is about an inch in length, half an inch in depth, and more than a Quarter of an inch thick

The shape is like that of a flattened Olive. Within each of these Ovaries may be seen, with a good lens, from twelve to fifteen eggs or yolks inclosed within their proper capsules or Ovisacs, which are commonly called Graafian cells or follicles

At the completion of the puberic age

Ovula are matured within these Graafian cells, and the woman continues to mature or ripen them, as long as she continues susceptible of impregnation.

These Ova, contained within these Graafian follicles, are matured periodically, This, it is observed, obtains, among all animals——in women once a month, in other animals at stated intervals; in the larger animals once a year, and in some, as the Elephant for instance, still longer

Why this periodicity should obtain is not accounted for; not is it necessary, for we need only to cite to that great universal law <sup>of nature,</sup> which seems to govern all animal and vegetable creation.

That the Catamenial fluid is blood; has been proven by

The valuable researches of Purkinje, Coste, Bischoff, and other acknowledged authorities, who are sustained by the best authors and teachers of the present day, in both Europe and America

But the blood must necessarily be impure by admixture with the mucus secretions of the Uterus, vagina &c.,

It has long been a subject of interest among Medical men, as to what influence the Ovaries exert over the Menstrual discharge, but from the undeniable evidence adduced by various Medical Philosophers, the above named facts seem to be established

I hardly need mention, experiments to prove the correctness of the theory.

We have continual illustrations, in the inferior animals, For instance, the

Farmer spaying the sow pigs, furnishes a very familiar example of it, The operation consisting in the removal of the Ovaries, thus, not only destroying the powers of generation, but also the sexual desire, or period of rut which corresponds to the period of menstruation in women, M<sup>r</sup> Percival Pott furnishes an interesting case in which the Ovaries were removed in an operation for Hernia, She had previously menstruated regularly, but after the operation the Menstrua appeared no more and sexual desire ceased

Although we have said the Menses usually made their appearance about the age of fifteen, yet we must add that the time varies exceedingly with the people of different parts of the world



And even in our own temperate climate the age of Puberty varies according to the constitution of the girl; and to the exciting causes to which she may have been exposed.

Among the exciting causes may be enumerated, voluptuous conversation and company, rich stimulating diet, warm clothing &c. &c.

Medical Men long thought, and think yet, that climate exercises considerable influence over the early or tardy development of Puberty.

It is known that in warm climates, girls menstruate at a very early age, even as early as at ten or twelve years of age; while in extremely cold climates that process is delayed till as late as eighteen or twenty years of age.

But according to the researches of Mr. Robertson, it is neither so much

earlier in warm climates, nor so much later in cold ones, as has been supposed.

He says that the facts which give grounds for the prevailing opinion in the matter, are that early intercourse are generally to be found in hot climates—hence early development.

But it is not our purpose, in our present limited space, to investigate the different opinions expressed in relation to the early or tardy development of Puberty, in the different parts of the world.

We have assumed the age of fifteen, which is a fair medium of the age in which it appears in this temperate climate of ours. And if it is delayed much beyond that period, the girl may be said to have that form of Amenorrhoea which has been denominated, "Emansio Mensum"

Some females are observed to pass beyond the usual period, without ever experiencing anything like a change in the uterine functions— Her health may be good in every respect; her proportions may have assumed all that attractiveness so much admired by the opposite sex— which seems due to the maturation of the ovaries, and yet there has been no catamenial discharge. This state of things will not fail to elicit the anxiety of the female and her friends. But while she continues in this situation— her health continuing good, medical interference will be unnecessary. Such might be the result where the womb is wanting— Such cases are on record; Dr Meigs relates an interesting case where the womb was

entirely absent, and the vagina a  
small cul-de-sac. She never menstruated  
— yet her health was good, and he  
says she presented all that fine exterior  
which bespoke a perfect woman.

Sometimes the ovaries themselves  
are absent, or may be atrophied and  
their peculiar endowments lost.

In this condition there would be  
no menstruation; and again medical  
interference would be unnecessary.

A female in this condition, ap-  
=proaches the masculine in appearance  
and disposition. Her breasts are  
shriveled, her flesh loses its charac-  
=teristic smoothness, straggling hairs grow  
out upon the chin and face, and the  
voice becomes coarse.

That this state of things result from

a want of the ovaries; has been proven in those cases where the ovaries were removed, and the above stated facts were the result

Again, the ovaries and Uterus both may be developed and yet no outward signs of Menstruation. In this condition the Catamenia may be retained in Utero in consequence of obstruction of the canal of exit; and fatal results obtain if relief is not afforded by the Surgeon

The fluid will continue to collect in the womb, distending it to its utmost tension, and it may finally burst, giving rise to fatal Peritonitis. The poor girl not only suffering death from her disease, but often the subject of

suspicion and ridicule among the ignorant— In such cases the general health will, necessarily, become very much impaired

The Physician seeing continual efforts to menstruate, and the Abdomen distending, should proceed at once to make a per vaginal examination

The Hymen may be imperforate; which will be fortunate, for the operation of puncturing it is quite simple— merely to pierce the thin delicate membrane with a pointed instrument, and the retained fluid will come away—

Or the walls of the vagina may be adherent, or the vagina obliterated

In this case an artificial one must be made with the knife— if the

space between it and the Rectal canal will permit; if not the parts should be forcibly separated. Great care will be required to keep the ~~parts~~ new canal open, which may be done with bougies, sponge tents,

The canal through the Cervix Uteri may be closed or impervious

In this case an artificial one must be made with the Trocar, or some other suitable instrument

The membrane covering the mouth of the womb must be punctured and afterwards the parts kept dilated.

In performing these operations the Physician must guard against inflicting injury on the surrounding parts

And afterwards he should strive

to prevent serious consequences from  
local inflammation

Teeshes, Cold applications, warm fo-  
-mentations or poultices may be nec-  
-essary, with the internal administra-  
-tion of gentle aperients &c.

Considerable benefit may be derived  
from the injection of warm water  
into the vagina, together with the  
proper adjustment of a broad binder  
around the Abdomen as a means of  
Support.

After the danger  
of inflammation are over, some of  
the Ferruginous preparations may be  
given, generous diet, with wine,  
pure air, lively exercise &c. &c.

Attending particularly to the state  
of the bowels,

There are other conditions of the



System that retard the appearance  
of the menses; such as bad health  
Scrofulous diatheses, Enemia, Plethora &c.,  
but as these are often the causes of  
suppressed menstruation also; we shall  
notice the treatment under the head  
of "Suppressio Mensium,"

This depends on various ~~on various~~  
conditions of the system

Diseases of any kind, preying upon  
the life forces of the woman, consumes  
the blood without leaving a surplus  
to be thrown off by the Menses

But occasionally we find a woman  
or girl who does not menstruate and  
yet the cause not attributed to any  
particular disease, or exciting cause,

Such a female may be enemiacal  
Young girls are oftener found in this

condition, than women who have men-  
-struated.

They generally present  
what the writers call the "Chlorotic"  
appearance.

Her face is pale, - almost  
colorless, the lips and gums present  
pretty much the same appearance.

Her constitution is very feeble,  
Her appetite is capricious, the pulse is  
generally feeble, soft and compressible.

This state of health may continue  
for months without giving serious  
alarm; but without a change, we  
will discover the extremities begin  
to swell.

First the feet and legs,  
and finally the whole body will  
present a dropsical appearance.

In this condition the patient  
will feel languid and dull, easily  
fatigued &c.

This condition

clearly depends on an impoverished  
condition of the blood

There is a deficiency of red corpuscles,  
and a super-abundance of serum or the  
watery element of the blood. This  
thin fluid exudes through the parietes  
of its inclosing ~~cavities~~ vessels and  
permeates through the different  
tissues, producing general Edema

This is what is called anemia or  
anemiacal condition of the system

And while it obtains, the senses  
will be suspended, from the fact the  
system has no more blood than is ac-  
-tually required for sustenance

The treatment here plainly  
indicated is something to correct  
the crisis of the blood.

For this we advise a wholesome

nutritious diet, moderate exercise a cold shower bath at morning, a warm hip-bath at night, and Iron all the time in some of its forms, according to the condition of the bowels which should be particularly attended to

Give the Sulphate when the bowels are costive, and the Carbonate when they are lax.\* The Tincture is extensively used; and other preparations; especially the impalpable powder of Iron by Hydrogen, which has been highly extolled by authors and teachers high in authority. I would suggest its exhibition in conjunction with Emmenagogue Cathartics &c., when they may be required.

But when the blood has been properly corrected, the menses will flow without

\* Prof. John M. Watson

<sup>the</sup> aid of Emmenagogues, Unless the uterine organs are in a morbid condition, or the system is suffering from some other disease, either general or local.

Such diseases should be treated according to their nature, the Iron being persevered in till general good health is established.

Enemia is by far the most frequent cause of Tardy menstruation in girls, and a common

cause of suspended menstruation in women, but there is another condition, called Plethora which is the reverse of Enemia, but may bring about the same result.

In plethora there is a superabundance of red corpuscles and a deficiency of serum, or watery constituent of the blood.

The habits full face, tongue, lips

and gums red. Besides this abnormal richness or thickness of the blood, producing Amenorrhoea, it should not be denied that there might exist a torpidity of the Uterus, that might hinder the flux of menstruation.

Such patients should be freely bled, put on light diet, with a free exhibition of Emmenagogue Cathar-

-tics. Tincture of Cantharides, Cups or Leeches to the Sacrum, warm hip-bath &c. Women are constantly sub-

-ject to arrest of the Menses. The most frequent cause is impaired health, which should be restored before the menses can be expected to flow again. But frequently there are exciting causes, during, or just previous to, the appearance of the Catamenial flow.

Such as a sudden attack of Colic, Exposure  
Cold or wet feet, &c, Sudden frights  
anxiety of mind, Crude ingesta in  
the Stomach, Unwholesome food, and  
sometimes, even Sexual intercourse, it  
is said, will arrest the discharge.

When the Menses thus suddenly dis-  
appear, the woman is said to have  
the acute form of Amenorrhoea

This is characterizet by general excite-  
ment; Quick and hard pulse, throob-  
ing of the Temporels, hot and dry skin,  
flushed face, pain in the back &c.

Here the Antiphlogistic treatment is  
indicated. The most important  
remedy is Venesection

If there be much pain about the  
Lumbar region, Cupping may do  
good. An Emetic may be necessary

Saline Cathartics should be given  
A warm hip-bath, warm poultices  
to the abdomen  
Diaphoretics will be of advantage, with  
a Dover's Powder at night

Anodynes are of considerable service  
If, after the febrile excitement is  
subdued, there still remains suppression  
of the menses, it may be considered  
chronic and treated as such

The chronic form is generally  
the result of the acute attack  
- frequently the result of feeble  
health, The woman complains  
of severe pains in the head side  
and back - She soon becomes pale  
and emaciated, The face and lips  
are palid, dark areola, coldness  
of feet and hands, great lassitude



and the slightest physical exertion produces great fatigue

The bowels are generally costive, requiring an aperient every day — Tongue frequently foul, slow and feeble pulse — Appetite capricious &c, &c.

If this state of things be not arrested, Phthisis Pulmonalis will supervene — In treating this form of the disease, particular attention must be paid to the constitution and habits of the person,

Correct what may seem at fault; then give tonics, the best of which is Iron, given as heretofore directed.  
Charles, H. Edwards