



AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION

ON

*Amenorrhoea*

SUBMITTED TO THE

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF TRUSTEES, AND MEDICAL FACULTY

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE,

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

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1854.

CAMERON & FALL,

PUBLISHERS OF THE MEDICAL JOURNAL, BOOK AND JOB PRINTERS, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE.

# Amenorrhoea

The delicate and impressionable nature of the female economy - consequent upon her sexual organization and functions, impare upon her diseases peculiar to herself. Of these there are perhaps none more distressing, to our female patients than amenorrhoea, and probably none for the removal of which the female is more frequently urged to the necessity of placing herself under the care of the physician or surgeon; notwithstanding the great sacrifice of modesty, that they not unrequently have to make in so doing. By the term amenorrhoea, I mean the absence of the menstrual flow. There are two varieties - *emansio mensuum* when

They have never appeared, and suppress mensium, when there is a want of their return, after having been well established, when not interrupted by gestation or lactation. The menstrua consist in a periodical discharge of a quantity sanguineous fluid from the uterus, and may be considered as peculiar to the human female.

In the healthy female they return once in twenty-eight days, and continue three, five or seven days according to the constitution of the woman, and the quantity eliminated varies greatly in different women, and even in the same woman at different times, and under different circumstances. The period at which



the catamenia appear, may be stated at the fourteenth or fifteenth year of age, and that of the decline at forty five or fifty. In consequence of the peculiarity of her living economy; the female in order to health, is necessarily compelled to perform that great function, to wit menstruation, to the healthy performance of which, the perpetuity of the human species, is indebted. Having a knowledge of these facts, we as physicians, should endeavor to familiarize ourselves, with all causes or combinations of causes which tend to exert an unhealthful influence upon the execution of this function, whether they <sup>are</sup> of a physical character or such as are independent of physical conformation

and farther-more, should acquire a knowledge of the means best calculated to remove these causes, and to combat their effects.

The form of amenorrhoea which I will consider first is emansio mensium. I will consider the most common conditions of the system, with which it is connected, and point out the treatment, which, according to my views of their pathology, promises greatest success. Climate, habits &c generally, determine a period for the appearance of the menses in each particular portion of the globe, and they so constantly appear at this established period, (æstivis paribus) that any deviation in this respect is by some regarded as a state

of derangement or even disease.  
When menstruation does not take place at the ordinary time, the physician, after having carefully scrutinized the general health, and having found no general nor functional derangements, should be ready to make allowance for the delay; and to distinguish this condition or delay from that which is referable to some morbid state of the system.

In order to menstruation it is essential that the uterus and ovaria be developed, and in a healthy condition, and this necessary development of the genital organs is indicated by corresponding changes in certain other portions of the system.

The period at which menstruation



sets-in, is, as before stated, variable, and should the female, not having evidences of the developement of her genital organs, transcend the ordinary period two or three years or even more, she should not be tortured by the use of the reputed emmenagogues, but on the other hand, should the evidences of womanhood, have declared themselves, and her health seem to suffer in consequence of the non establishment of this function, the cause or causes of such delay should be diligently sought for, and when found, promptly removed. *Emansio mensium* is not an unrequent consequence of physical obstacles, and when so can only be remedied by surgical means. The most frequent of these are

imperforate hymen, and adhesion  
of the vaginal walls, and, as occasional  
causes may be mentioned, - absence of  
the vagina either in part or entirely,  
occlusion of the os uteri, absence of the  
uterus, ovaria etc. An imperforate state  
of the membrana hymen will very  
probable not be ascertained to exist,  
untill it is evinced by its disturban-  
ce to that physiological act of the  
female, which declares her competent  
for the the performance of the great  
function of reproduction. Atresia vaginae  
from imperforate hymen is a congeni-  
tal occurrence. The remedy consists  
in the destruction of the obturating  
membrane, which may be done by  
thrusting a trocar through it, while  
a finger in the rectum <sup>gives</sup> a clear notion



of the direction to be given to  
the trocar, the bladder  
and rectum having been previously  
evacuated in order that they may  
be out of harm's way. When the  
trocar is withdrawn, and the detained  
fluid evacuated, the membrane  
should be divided into four triangu-  
lar flaps by passing a narrow straight  
bistoury with a probe point through the  
membrane, and carrying the incision  
down nearly on a level with the vag-  
inal walls. Care, however, should be  
taken, once the menstrual fluid has  
been evacuated, that the divided sur-  
faces do not unite and cicatrize. This is  
to be obviated by pressing in the opening  
once in two or three days, a silver  
gutt bougie of proper size - thus the  
woman is freed from danger of  
laceration, to which she, possibly, would  
have been otherwise exposed, by the  
constriction of the vagina, should she

ever be placed in circumstances of labor, *Emansio mensium*, as before mentioned, is occasionally the result of occlusion of the os uteri and closure of the vagina, from congenital or accidental causes. The former of these conditions, may be relieved by making an incision in the region of the os tinea, and subsequent dilatation, and the latter by gradual dilatation. There are other physical causes of *emansio mensium*, though, not very frequent, such are a want of development of the uterus and ovaria or their absence and absence of the vagina either in part or entirely. The symptoms produced by the accumulation and retention of the menstrual fluid from this latter cause, may be sufficiently serious to render it imperative to attempt to form an artificial passage for it, but I have no means to propose for the palliation or restoration of the former conditions.



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The womb, not un frequently, becomes enlarged or develope<sup>d</sup> for the reception of the monthly contribution of menstruation when there are obstacles to its elimination, and from want of circumspection or knowledge of the sympathy ~~subs~~isting between the uterus and mammae in their pathological, as well as, in their physiological states, the physician would be liable to run into error, hence, the necessity of being carefull in making out a diagnosis in such cases.

If upon a scrupulous examination of the case, there is found no possible cause of the emanatio, the physician may reasonably conclude that the fault consists in a torpid, sluggish and insensible uterus. For this condition of her uterus, the young woman should use stimulating articles - called emmenagogues. The vol. tinct, of quercum tinct, of cantharides etc may be used internally - at the same time using the bath



fomentations, cataplasms, synapisms &c

The above-mentioned medicines and means, tend to increase the vital activity of the parts about the pelvis, and we may reasonably expect their useful coincidence with constitutional measures in arousing the dormant sensibilities of the womb, There are other causes that are of a constitutional character which prevent the establishment of menstruation in the young female.

It may be traced to various debilitating diseases—such as phthisis pulmonalis, scrofula, a chlorotic or impoverished condition of the blood etc, What I have to offer in regard to the pathology and treatment of these conditions, will be mentioned when considering the succeeding part of my subject.

However well established the menstrual discharge may be it is liable to be interrupted from a variety of causes independently of pregnancy and suckling,

One very common cause is anaemia in which case the blood is incapable of developing the innervative force in sufficient amount for the regular and healthful operation of the ordinary functions. In this condition of the system no attempt should be made to re-establish menstruation in order to the cure of the anaemia, but *(mutatis mutan-*  
*-di)* the healthy condition of the circu-  
-lating <sup>mass</sup> should be restored in order that it may enable the "nervous mass to entreat the vis vitae in sum equal to the demands of the general, as well as the special wants, of the economy." In the anaemical condition of the system the diminution of the menstrual flow may gradually go on *pari passu* with the deterioration of

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the blood untill it finally ceases altogether under its influence without there being any uterine disease or any other uterine symptom, then the scantiness and final disappearance of the secretion or haemorrhage, as some choose to call it, In order that the innervations of the patient be perfect and powerfull there must be a just proportion between the dose of oxygen and the biotic power to be evolved, and the indications, to be met in this condition of the system, consist in the regulation of this proportion.

To this end we should endeavor to thicken to enrich the blood in order that the rich and perfect compound may be enabled to absorb and take from the air the necessary amount of



oxygen for the wants of the system.

The remedies, which I propose for the accomplishment of this end, are the preparations of iron - Vallett's mass or the impalpable powder &c. bark, wine etc. to be used pro re nata. The diet should be nutritious and easily of digestion - the <sup>bowels</sup> kept soluble the mind cheerful and attention paid to the dress - moderate exercise taken in the fresh air etc. There are many things which will present themselves to the mind of the observing physician that might concur in the great end of improving the general health, which, being renewed, the catamenia follow as "light follows the uprising of the morning sun".

When amenorrhoea can be traced to any of the various diseases of debility by which the female is liable to be

assailed, the best treatment is the treatment of the disease to which it is referrible. These remarks upon the suppression of menstruation are applicable to *emansio mensium* when associated with like conditions of the system.

Exposure to cold in some of its forms may be considered as the most frequent of the remote causes of this suppression.

When cold is applied in the interval with sufficient force to prevent the recurrence of the catamenial discharge, the first notice the woman has of its influence, is the want of return of the discharge at her next periods.

In most cases, at first, the woman experiences neither pain nor inconvenience, but if she fails menstruating, for several consecutive periods the approach of ill

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health is observed. The woman now becomes pale, emaciated and very much enfeebled to which may be superadded a variety of nervous symptoms such as palpitation of the heart, difficulty of breathing, a sense of suffocation etc to these may be added "whites" or leucorrhoea.

If cold be applied at the approach of the menstrual discharge or after they have flowed some time the woman may present quite a different train of symptoms. She is attacked with violent pain in the head, back or bowels and this may be with such severity, as not unfrequently to excite great anxiety for her safety.

For the relief of these cases recourse should be had to blood-letting, purging, warm bath, camphor opium assafoetida &c.

The discharge can very rarely be



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re-established after having been thus interrupted, nor should we at all times attempt its re-establishment from the fact that we, while the force of our endeavours is directed to this end, might do much injury by neglecting the consequences of the suppression. After bleeding, purging &c have been performed, if pains <sup>be experienced</sup> still exist in the region of the womb, advantage may occasionally be derived from the use of the warm bath or hot fomentations to the abdomen or if the pains be very severe injections of thin starch and laudanum may be used with good effects.

We should treat these female symptoms upon general principles for they are subject to the laws by which diseases in general are governed. When our object is to invite the return of the menses,

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we should use such of the uterine stim-  
ulants and in such forms, as seem to be  
indicated by the wants of each individual  
case, and we should at the same time  
employ <sup>all</sup> ~~every~~ possible means of invigorating  
the general health, of vitalizing the economy,  
and of promoting the regular play of the  
various functions. The female is sometimes  
troubled with vicarious menstruation. in  
this our first efforts should be directed  
to the restoration of the integrity of the  
uterine organs if it be impaired, we should  
then, by the means enumerated, endeavor to  
divert the motum hæmorrhagicum of men-  
-struation from its abnormal into its  
natural channel,

I will say nothing more in special  
reference to amenorrhœa, but will add  
that we, to be successful in the treatment

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of the great host of diseases to which the female is liable, have much to study, as to her, that is not strictly medical, but psychological and moral, we should explore the history of those wonderful functions and destinies, which she by her sexual nature is enabled to fulfill, and the strange influences that her organs by their peculiar endowments, are capable of exerting either in sickness or health not on her body alone, but on her mind and her very soul. We should endeavor to increase the boundaries of our knowledge in every thing that appertains to the female, yea, we should suffer ourselves to "grow pale by the reflection of the midnight lamp" rather than not have a knowledge of the means ascertained to be most efficient in giving comfort both to her body and mind.