

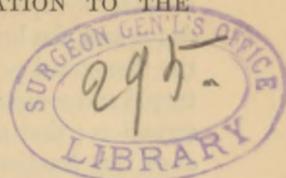
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REMARKS ON THE RELATION OF MENSTRUATION TO THE
SEXUAL FUNCTIONS.

BY

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THE menses are defined by Dr. Dunglison as "a flow of blood from the uterus occurring in the healthy female every twenty-eight days, or a lunar month." Hence the synonyms "lunaria," "courses," "flowers," "menses," "menstruation," "catamenia," "monthly periods," etc.

The term "flowers" marks the analogy of the person with vegetable life, and this analogy holds true through the whole phenomenal process of flowering, germinating, and fruit-bearing in both animal and plant life.

There is no physiological action occurring in our own systems that we cannot find its counterpart in lower animals and plants. It is only when civilized man thwarts nature that we find deviation from her laws, and inharmony and suffering ensues.

Physiologists fail to tell us of the causes of menstruation. The menstrual differs from venous blood in its peculiar odor and in its not coagulating. The function is evidently connected with the condition of the ovaries and, it has been supposed, with the periodical discharge of ova from them.

Menstruation may be arrested or suppressed by a shock, a sudden fright, a sudden fit of anger or jealousy, great anxiety or any powerful emotion; these may also cause its appearance and even so affect the maternal organ as to expel the impregnated germ.

The breasts and uterus exhibit the most intimate relationship. When menstruation begins, the breast develops and becomes a feature of beauty. When the uterus or ovaries become diseased, the breasts lose their elastic rotundity and become atrophied and flabby.

I have seen inflamed breasts coincident with a congested cervix, and spontaneous relief to the breasts when the congestion or ulceration was successfully treated. I believe certain patho-

logical conditions of the womb may be inferred from tumefactions of the breast.

Very little is recorded by writers on these subjects as to the intimate sympathetic relation between the womb and its appendages and the breasts. We are all familiar with the fact that at the menstrual periods the breasts and nipples become somewhat turgid and sometimes painful; that lactation is vicarious to menstruation; that amorous toying with the nipples and breasts, and even the traction of a baby's mouth on the nipples will excite the ovaries and womb.

Menstruation is physiologically arrested by pregnancy and lactation, and pathologically by certain conditions of malnutrition that prevent the formation of red blood-corpuscles. Hence the necessity of ferruginous preparations to increase the blood-making power. An ulcer may bleed at every monthly period, or epistaxis may occur regularly, thus establishing a vicarious flow.

The age at which the human female menstruates varies with race and climate. People inhabiting the temperate zones usually begin at 14 and cease at 45. In tropical countries, both animal and plant life mature much more rapidly, so that girls have become mothers at 8 years of age, and frequently at 10 and 12. In 1880, I sent to the lying-in hospital a girl 13 years of age, and who even looked younger. She was the oldest of four, and her mother had never been married. She was born on a boat running from Bangor to Boston. She had, from her earliest recollection, cohabited with boys and men without restraint from her mother or any one else.

In 1858, there was living in Taunton, Mass., at the public charge, a mother not quite 11 years of age. Barnum's baby woman menstruated and had pubic hair, well-developed breasts, and intense amorous desires at 3 years of age.

A woman who, a few years ago, lived in Saratoga Co., N. Y., was a grandmother at 28. An old journal describes a case of a child menstruating at 1 year old, and, becoming pregnant at $9\frac{1}{4}$ years, was delivered of a female child weighing seven and three-fourths pounds; age of mother, 10 years and 13 days.

Sir Astley Cooper cites a case of a child menstruating regularly at 4 years and another at $3\frac{1}{2}$.

The ovum exists before the generative function is established ;

it is found without difficulty in the new-born female, and may even be detected in the fetus before birth.

Although ova exist in the young girl, they are without functional activity until near the period of puberty.

Dalton says there are exceptional cases in which fertility exists without menstruation and menstruation without ovulation. There are exceptional cases where women menstruate without the least show of color. I believe these cases are more frequent than we think. It is proved by the fact that many women have been pregnant who apparently never menstruated. We have reason to suppose that germ production takes place all through the period of lactation, but less energetically, the woman not perceiving that she menstruates. The lacteal secretion becomes vicarious to the sanguineous flow.

The period of puberty is manifested in various ways. Birds change their plumage—the colors become more varied and brilliant. In the barn-yard fowls, the comb or crest enlarges, becomes red and vascular. In the deer the hair, which is mottled with white, changes to a dun or reddish tinge and loses its spots.

The girl shows more change at puberty than the boy. Her form becomes plump and rounded, showing an increased healthful stimulant to all the forces of growth and nutrition; her eyes become bright and expressive, showing a corresponding increase in her intellectual capacity; her voice more full and musical; timidity is out-grown, courage greatly enhanced; she now finds herself an individual with mental powers and ideas, with courage to express them. At this age personal magnetism becomes a potent factor.

In the adult female, successive crops of eggs ripen and are discharged by the rupture of the Graafian follicles. This is done by an independent, individual functional activity of the female organism, irresponsive of sexual intercourse. Hens lay eggs, though, without the official action of the cock, they will not hatch chicks. The examination of animals, both wild and tame, shows that Graafian follicles have matured, ruptured, and discharged their eggs, though no sexual intercourse has taken place. This ovulation is the chief business of the feminine functions, and the health and happiness of the female depends upon the integrity with which it is performed.

This period of ripening and rupturing of the Graafian folli-

cles is known as the rutting season, or period of œstruation. At this period, the female always tempts the male to feasts of sexual love, and experiences an inexpressible disappointment when not having her natural healthy desires responded to. This is as true of the human female as it is of the animal, domestic or wild. If man would take a lesson from the lower animals, and not coerce or over-persuade, but await the wife's invitation at this time, when her husband is a hero in her eyes, he would enjoy more and suffer less. The health of both would be greatly augmented, strength of body and mind would be generated, and blissful, peaceful rest ensue. Men often act in such a manner towards their females as to cause in them not only disgust, but actual suffering, and all inadvertently from want of comprehension of their extreme sensitiveness at certain periods. Females feel often that they are not appreciated, that they have no one to confide in; then they become morose, angular, and disagreeable as a result of continual disappointment to their social and sexual longings. Even those married may become the victims of sexual starvation when the parties are mentally, magnetically, and physically antagonistic.

Much is said and written in our day of the "age of consent." Heretofore legislative bodies have deemed it due to the female to place it at the age of her maturing to womanhood, as indicated by menstruation. Doubtless abuses occur that may be partially remedied by considering girls infants till eighteen years of age, but this law bears with cruel severity upon many young females, and interferes with their opportunities for marriage, of which woman, according to our social laws, has only a negative choice.

Better than enacting arbitrary laws would it be to instruct both men and women in the natural law, and thereby enable them to respect and love each other for the mutual benefit, and not for the indulgence of mad passion. This is done by people and nations that we stigmatize as heathen and barbarous.

One expert on this function maintains that if children, male and female, before the nubile age, were educated to use the love nature, as universally manifested through the sexual impulse, in a natural way, and not unduly repressed, but cultivated by loving embraces, the effect would be to place ovulation, menstruation, and conception entirely under the control of the individual.

Under the status of such a social law, when a woman desired to become pregnant, all that would be necessary to bring that about would be to repress her impulses to loving embraces and abstain from sexual expressions of love a month or two, when ovulation, menstruation, and conception would come along duly in their order.

The social custom prevailing for generations and centuries among the Zulus of South Africa would seem to prove this, as their custom is to instruct the children to have sexual embraces from infancy up, and yet they never get pregnant until they are married; then it is accounted a disgrace not to have children. In our present state of society, there is no possibility of proving this.

In Ceylon, man attains his majority at sixteen, and a woman at the age of puberty, say from eight to fourteen years of age. The Singhalese are said to be indulgent husbands, and easily forgive the wife's offence where other nations would deem it unpardonable.

Goldsmith says the Hindoos regard marriage as a religious duty, and very few exempt themselves from the obligation. It is forbidden to purchase the wife for money, though the father expects an endowment for his daughter. The father has the right of disposal of his daughter till three years after the age of puberty; if not married then, she may dispose of herself. They are usually betrothed while very young and immature. Severe laws are enacted against unchastity, but more for preserving caste than morality, as the indiscretion is easily forgiven if caste is not involved. In Rapootana, women are held in high esteem and are consulted on all important occasions. They have a proverb: "When wives are honored the Deity is pleased, and angry when they are dishonored."

The king of the Sandwich Islands deems his wives sufficiently moral if they restrain themselves from sexual love after menstruation till he has had a sexual embrace; then they may, without sin, cohabit with whomsoever they choose, till they menstruate again.

We read of the most revolting cruelties and crimes against women in the highest enlightened nations of Europe and America. The mother of Anne Boleyn warned Henry VIII. against marrying Anne, as she asserted that he was her father. Anne was, however, at the time pregnant by Henry VIII. A few years later Anne was executed by order of Henry for adultery

and incest, the incest being with her half-brother, Lord Rochford. Surely there is something wrong in our "social ethics" that renders these things possible. Now that *something* is trying to place man's laws higher than God's natural law.

The old Levitical law made it a sin for a wife to be unwell, and prescribes the sin offering and priestly atonement therefor.

Many of our customs and laws are about as absurd.

There is ample authority for the statement that in no city or capital on the continent of Europe is there daily and nightly such shameless display of prostitution as in London.

The history of the church trials where girls and boys testified that they were ravished by spirits called Incubes and Succubes, the former being male, the latter female, has a bearing in regard to the age of puberty, as many were tried under ten years of age. Many nuns as well as married women confessed to having been visited by Incubes for long periods of time, and neither fasting nor prayer nor spiritual consolation could rid them of these visits. The record states that there were more girls than boys visited in this way. Lady Frances Howard, daughter of the Earl of Suffolk, obtained a divorce from her husband, Earl of Essex, to whom she was betrothed at thirteen years of age, because he was deprived of his virile power by Succubes.

Phantom pregnancy is one of the very mysterious manifestations of ovarian disease. Smellie mentions a girl in a workhouse, twelve years of age, supposed by the medical examiners to be in her eighth month of pregnancy, but all the indications proved fallacious. Doubtless you are familiar with the case of Johanna Southcott, the aged virgin prophetess, who, at sixty-four years of age, proclaimed herself pregnant by supernatural means. Dr. Richard Reese and several other physicians were deceived by her assertions and condition. Reading of Johanna Southcott reminds me vividly of a patient I saw in 1880, who styled herself the veiled lady of the sun. She imagined herself pregnant by spirit power. Many New York doctors saw her. She was sent to the insane asylum, where she remained a year or more.

Tait quotes Simpson and Harvey to prove that the analogue of this condition, phantom pregnancy, has been observed in cows and bitches, and asserts that he has seen a similar affection in mares. He says: "A peculiar nervous machinery is

put in action the moment a fertilized ovum becomes attached to the uterus or tubal mucous surface, and that machinery sometimes gets a false start."

Although the menopause occurs usually at from forty-two to forty-six, cases are numerous where the menses continue to fifty-five, and even to sixty-five in rare instances. A statement appeared in one of the journals that a woman at Batavia, N. Y., gave birth to a healthy male child at sixty-four years of age. I attended a patient in confinement in 1874 at fifty-six years of age, and in 1879 I attended an old maid forty-three years of age with her first baby. She assigned the paternity of her boy to a young lawyer of twenty-seven years, who was acting as tutor in a school where she was employed. She said she thought she had passed the change of life, and took no precaution to prevent pregnancy. An old nurse told me Nov. 7th, 1886, that she nursed the wife of a doctor, whose mother was sixty-six years of age when the wife of the doctor was born. Madame de Stael menstruated till the age of sixty. Richeraud mentions a case at seventy. One table of statistics gives five who menstruated to sixty-nine.

Statistics taken at Manchester Lying-in Hospital: out of 450 cases, 10 menstruated at 11 years of age, 19 at 12, 53 at 13, 85 at 14, 97 at 15, 76 at 16, 57 at 17, 26 at 18, 23 at 19, and 4 at 20.

Statistics taken at Paris in 1872: there were 5,558 prostitutes, ranging in age from 12 to 63 years; 34 were inscribed before the age of 14.

Tait states that in Scotland the average age at which girls commence abandoned lives is from 15 to 20.

Statistics taken in this city in 1858 embraced 2,000 prostitutes, ranging in age from 14 to 77.

The Philadelphia *Medical and Surgical Reporter* reports a case of amaurosis through suppression of menstruation in a girl of twenty-one. She suppressed menstruation by immersing her feet in cold water. This occurred on the 30th of July. Soon afterwards she felt a peculiar sensation of pressure in both orbits. On the 5th of August, she had complete double amaurosis. The following month, notwithstanding the use of emmenagogues, the menses did not appear, and skilful treatment but partially relieved her eyes; seven weeks after menstruation returned, and with it disappeared all visual trouble.

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