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## Amenorrhoea

The menstrual flux being a constant object of attention to the female sex, has thus acquired a consequence which demands the notice of the Medical Practitioner, and as its suppression and overflow are continually assigned as the causes of disease, it is necessary that care should be taken. Least a power greater than it really possesses be imputed to it. Some Pathologists have been so impressed with this idea that they excluded the influence of the uterine system from their theories on the origin of disease. However the importance of the Catamenia

in preserving the health of the female is undeniable, and every thing which tends to maintain its regular return, and promote an abundant secretion, is of great moment.

One of the disordered conditions of the periodical discharge is called Amenorrhoea, and under this denomination are included retention and suppression of the menses; these have been termed by Cullen, *Emanisio Menseum*, and *Suppressio Menseum*, by the former, we are to understand that the discharge has not taken place at the period it usually does in others; and by the latter, that after having appeared and continued to flow for some time it ceased without pregnancy.

*Emanisio Menseum*, or retention of the menses comes under medical treatment, when a girl who has acquired the signs of puberty goes past the time at which the secretion generally makes its first appearance in health, and when her constitution becomes disordered, which is evinced by derangement of many functions—more particularly those of digestion and sanguification &c.

The period at which menstruation commences

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depends very much both on climate and the habit of the individual, whilst in sultry regions sexual maturity takes place at eight or ten years of age, in cold climates it is deferred until eighteen or twenty. In this country, girls begin to menstruate about the fourteenth or fifteenth year, but if they be luxuriously educated, it often occurs sooner sometimes at so early an age as ten. If a young woman although nearly twenty have still an infantile form, we may be sure, that the uterus is not fully developed and that ~~no~~ medicines cannot excite the secretion. Puberty may be delayed with another condition of body, as when the health and strength continue unimpaired, the growth proceeds as rapidly as in others and the frame is vigorous, but there are no protuberant Mammae, no sexual propensities, a beard grows on the upper lip, and the general characteristics resemble those of a male; in such a case as this it is probable either that the Ovaries are absent, or from having become diseased their functions are entirely suspended or destroyed. Circumstances are however materially different, if about the age of seven or ten a person who has never menstruated

begins to decline in her general health, and sinks into that state of disease which is denominated Chlorosis by Nosologists

This term merely signifies a greenish colour of the skin, and therefore is applied by some to different affections of either sex; but is generally confined to that form of Amenorrhoea, which is attended by a greenish yellow hue of the skin. But this is not, <sup>the</sup> only characteristic, as the skin may be of a deadly white without a greenish tinge accompanied with excessive debility of the whole frame, by the patient losing her natural liveliness, and forsaking her usual amusements. She becomes restless and irritable, feels incapable of exercising her mind, complains of weariness lassitude and debility.

Her face is pale, her eyes dull, and appear sunk in their orbits, a dark colour of the skin for the most part of a semicircular form is apparent beneath them, her lips and gums lose their vermilion tint, the pulse is small and weak; often, but not always quick, it becomes difficult to keep the extremities in a natural state of heat, particularly

the lower ones; the sleep is disturbed and unrefreshing, the breath fetid, the appetite impaired, the patient loathes food and is very much annoyed with dyspeptic symptoms. She often has a desire for indigestible substances such as chalk, Clay, Magnesia, &c. The bowels are costive, often obstinately so and distended with flatus, the tongue coated, the urine either scanty or copious. When these symptoms continue for some time effusions take place, not only in the extremities, but also into the abdomen, and the eyelids if not the whole face are found swollen in the mornings. Whilst the strength and flesh thus gradually decay, other symptoms arise; such as severe headache, acute pains in the sides, legs and loins, together with palpitations and a slight cough. The least exercise occasions fatigue and accelerated respiration, and not unfrequently a sense of suffocation, which renders it probable that an accumulation of serum has taken place in the cellular tissue of the lungs. In the more advanced cases, the nails are brittle and break off, the hair is dry, falls out, and splits at its extremity, the bowels

formerly constipated become irritable and a continual diarrhoea supervenes.

During the course of the disease, Hysteria occasionally appears, and the Medical attendant sometimes <sup>may</sup> be deceived by supposing the cough, pain of the side, palpitations, and headache; to depend either upon Plethoria, Disease of the heart, or upon an inflammatory state of the Pleura or Brain. It should be remembered that in this Malady as well as in others, pain may be owing to a state the reverse of inflammatory, and that a frequent pulse does not always indicate a necessity for bloodletting.

The disease may continue in the state which we have above described, sometimes becoming aggravated; and if art or nature do not afford relief, the symptoms usually assume a more serious character. Anasarca or Hectic fever supervenes, or the fair sufferer may die of Consumption after having undergone a painful and protracted illness.

+ Chlorosis is sometimes complicated with Hematemesis, swelling of the glands, particularly of the Carotid and Submaxillary, and with chronic cutaneous eruptions. It occasionally

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terminates in Dropsy of the Thoracic and Abdominal cavities; and in its more aggravated forms, mania and Epilepsy occasionally ensue. Dissections of those who have died of Chlorotic Amenorrhoea have shown the soft solids to be flaccid and pale from deficiency of the colouring matter of the blood. The ovaria are frequently found in a scirrhous or dropsical state, the uterus imperfectly developed, the lungs tuberculated, the liver enlarged and pale, the stomach small and contracted, the mesenteric glands increased in size. Effusions of serous fluid are met with in the cavities of the pleura, pericardium, and peritoneum and sometimes in the ventricles of the brain. The blood is generally pale aqueous and deficient in fibrin. Disease of the pancreas, spleen, and kidneys, sometimes appears, with ulceration of the bowels. In some cases an œsanguinous state of the tissues is only to be perceived.

The immediate cause of Chlorosis is not easily discoverable, it seldom arises after the age of twenty three. Some Authors have referred it to obstructed function of the liver, Others, to a deficient and morbid state of the blood, and Hamilton considered it as arising from

torpor of, with an accumulation of feculent matter  
in the bowels. According to Burns and others,  
it depends upon a want of vigour in the system,  
by which not only a new action is prevented  
from being formed, but those actions which  
were formerly performed become impaired; or on  
a want of energy in the uterus, connected with  
general debility of the constitution. In the greater  
number of instances, the predisposing cause of  
this disease appears to consist in <sup>an</sup> imperfect devel-  
opment of the sexual organs, or on their functions  
being deranged; and this seems to be occasioned  
by a defective energy of the nervous system,  
retarding or arresting their development and  
weakening their actions the whole frame being  
deprived of the necessary stimulus which they  
impart. The cause of this deficiency of vital energy  
may frequently be traced to circumstances which  
evidently tend to debilitate the body, as sedentary  
employments, want of exercise, bad food, and a  
vitiated atmosphere, and sometimes to depressing  
passions and affections, such as, long continued  
grief and anxiety, separation from beloved  
friends, and unrequited love &c. Absence of  
the menses often depends on malformation of

the organs of generation, such as total want of the ovaria, imperfectly formed uterus, cohesion of the vagina, and an imperforate state of the hymen and os uteri. In the latter of these cases, there is sometimes a gradual enlargement of the abdomen from the fluid retained in the uterus, and unjust suspicions of pregnancy may be raised.

Chlorosis may generally in its first stage be subdued with little difficulty by removing or counteracting, so much as possible, its predisposing causes; by invigorating the system, particularly the stomach and bowels, which possess an extensive influence over the other organs which are supplied by branches from the sympathetic nerve. And when we have succeeded by this method in strengthening the constitution, we may more directly excite the torpid or imperfect actions or secretion of the uterus.

If the uterus be considered as a secreting organ, it is easy to conceive that the administration of Mercurials in obstructed or suppressed menstruation is likely to prove beneficial, as they produce almost a specific change upon the whole glandular system: the medical treatment may therefore be commenced by giving a small quantity of the protochloride

with a few grains of ginger at bed time, and the secretions will be more fully promoted by a dose of Castor Oil on the following morning. After the bowels have been freely evacuated, pills of Aloes and Myrrh with a grain of the sulphate of Iron in each should be taken daily, in some cases an Laxema may assist this operation. Regular and gentle exercise particularly on horse back, a light nutritious diet, Change of air, (to the sea coast), and bitter and tonic Medicines in various forms should be recommended, in addition to the means before described. In the first instance an infusion of Calimsha or Cascarella may be given, and afterwards one of Gentian combined with the muriated tincture of Iron; the sulphates of Quinine and Iron. Chalybeate Waters &c may be given with advantage. The form of the Medicines may be frequently varied and occasionally suspended from the general rule of all tonics losing their effects by long continuance. Warm clothing, and in the winter season a flannel dress should be worn.

In Amenorrhoea accompanied by Chlorosis, warm bathing is very useful and is proper at an early stage: the Cold bath can seldom be used

as it is generally followed by languor, headache, and shivering's, it is only useful when the action of the heart is increased by it and when a sense of warmth supervenes. Much benefit will be derived from the Cold sea bath if the temperature of the warm be daily by degrees lowered untill the Patient becomes able to bear it. The other object that of stimulating the Uterine vessels may be attained by the semicupium impregnated with Mustard, succeeded by frictions with dry flannels, or a horse hair glove, by the exercises of walking and dancing, and by those remedies which have received the title of Limenagogues of these the following are in most repute at the present day. Electricity, Mercurial preparations, Savine, aloes, Myrrh, Afsafotida, Ergot of Rye, Digitalis, Cantharides, the introduction of a bougie into the Uterus, injections of stimulating fluids into the Vagina, Matrimoney. The direct application of Electricity is only admissable when a torpid state of the Uterus exists, indicated by a pale complexion and a languid state of the circulation. The quantity of the Electrical fluid should be very small when first applied, as the communication of a powerful one may occasion syncope in

nervous persons. its application is undoubtedly beneficial in those species of Amenorrhoea which depend upon torpor of the secreting organ or debility of the system. . . . Of the preparations of Mercury the best suited for this purpose is the protochloride and when used to the extent of exciting moderate salivation it has produced the desired effects after every other remedy had been tried without success. It is generally supposed that sarsine from its activity and from its liability to excite uterine hemorrhagy is taken into the circulation and carried directly to the organ. And there is much caution necessary in its exhibition least it should excite inflammation of the uterus, it should only be used when there is a pale countenance and a feeble action of the heart and arteries, it may be given in the doses of from five to ten grains of the powder or from two to six grains of the oil combined with sugar. The influence which the different Astringent preparations possess upon the Uterine system can only be referred to their actions upon the rectum thereby producing a sympathetic effect upon the uterus somewhat similar to that which is the result of a direct stimulus to it.

From the peculiar power which Digitalis exerts over, and from the effects which it produces upon, the generative organs, it has been administered; and is productive of the greatest benefit in Amenorrhoea. It may be prescribed for two or three successive days previous to the time when a change should occur in doses of from one to three grains combined with calomel and followed by an Aloetic, purgative. Some authors assert that they have employed the Secale Cornutum as an Emmenagogue and that the desired effects arose from its exhibition however it would appear to retard rather than accelerate the discharge as it acts upon the muscular contractility of the Uterus and thereby constricts the vessels and prevents the supply of blood which is necessary to afford the secretion. The tincture of Iodine may be given in doses of from ten to thirty drops twice or thrice each day in a glass of water, and has been frequently found useful in Chlorotic Amenorrhoea especially when complicated with enlargement of the glands and with dropsical effusions.

The administration of Chantharides has been attended with much benefit it should be commenced by giving ten drops of the tincture three

times each day and increasing the dose to forty  
If its occasion irritation of the Bladder or Urethra  
it ought to be discontinued and Camphire and Hyoscyamus  
along with diluents may be recommended.

The introduction of a bougie into the Uterus has been  
tried, when other remedies have failed, but its  
effects are dubious. Stimulating fluids have been  
injected into the vagina, and have succeeded in a  
number of instances; for this purpose ten drops  
of the liquor ammoniac with an ounce of milk may be  
made use of. The extracts of *Rhus Toxicaria* and  
*strychnia*, sometimes prove useful in Amenorrhoea,  
it is not perfectly evident in what way they produce  
their beneficial influence. Some ascribe their effects  
to the power they possess of stimulating the vessels of  
the Uterus, and others to their improving the tone and  
vigour of the system. Before prescribing any of  
these it is necessary to be certain that the suppression  
is not connected with pregnancy, as abortion  
may be produced with inflammation of the Uterus,  
and the foundation of a disease of that Organ be  
laid.

The second variety of Amenorrhoea is  
*Suppressio Mensesum* and in considering this we  
are not to look upon every obstruction of the

flux after it has once taken place as a case of suppression, because the secretion is not always established in its regular course when it first appears, and therefore if an interruption occur during its first months it may be considered as an instance of retention. Suppression is generally acute or chronic; the former is generally produced by some cause acting either immediately before, or during the time of the discharge. This is remedied in the greater number of instances by a gentle diaphoretic, the pediluvia, and by the patient taking a warm drink when going to bed. But if there be symptoms <sup>indicating</sup> general fever such as violent headache, pains in the back and limbs, a quick pulse, flushed countenance, coated tongue, hot and dry skin, &c it will be necessary to administer an emetic, and afterwards an active purgative with a dose of the compound *Speacuanha powder*. If she be of a plethoric habit, the lancet will be advantageously used.

Chronic suppression is of a more serious nature, and may be the result of weakness from loss of blood, of frequent abortions, of Leucorrhoea and of various diseases both of the Uterus its self and of other organs of the body. In cases arising from

these causes there is always a languid state of the circulation with considerable debility, and the symptoms resemble those described in retention, and therefore are to be treated in a similar manner.

Suppression of the Meneses very often occurs in persons with strong and plethoric constitutions, and in such cases there appears to be a torpor of the uterine vessels or a constriction or spasm of their extremities. This condition is frequently produced by an indolent and sedentary life, by indulgence in the luxuries of the table and by too much sleep. The treatment of amenorrhoea in strong and vigorous habits should be commenced by abstracting blood, by low diet, and by saline purgatives, if much vascular excitement be present bleeding from the arm may be necessary, but the application of leeches to the pubic and inguinal regions is generally preferred. Some recommend opening a vein in one of the lower extremities which may be practised, if one can be found conveniently situated. If the secretion do not appear after the plethora has been overcome, some of the Emenagogues formerly mentioned may be prescribed, and these will be found more efficacious if used when the system

makes an effort to produce the discharge, which it generally does at its usual monthly periods.

In the 54<sup>th</sup> volume of the London Medical and Surgical Journal there is an account of three cases of suppression of the Catamenia, being successfully treated by applying Leeches and poultices to the Mammary glands thereby causing irritation of them, and consequently of the Uterus.

If the Patient be of a Phtisical habit and if the symptoms increase or continue obstinate it will be expedient to remove her to a milder Climate. When absence of the Menses depends upon cohesion of the vagina or an imperforate state of the Hymen or Os Uteri it can immediately be detected by an examination, and a surgical operation can easily remedy it.

When the secretion is prevented either by accidental causes or by an indisposition immediately before the expected period a quantity of the blood forces a way for itself in some part of the body, and is frequently discharged from the Lungs, Stomach, Bowels, and Nostrils, and sometimes from the Bladder, Umbilicus, Eyes, Ears and from

Ulcers. In such cases as these Leeches may be applied to the groins and Labia with benefit, and some of the more direct Emmenagogues may be employed.

Large and frequently repeated abstractions of blood either for retention or suppression of the Catamenia ought to be particularly avoided, as many inexperienced Practitioners have irretrievably ruined the constitutions of their Patients by such practices.