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MENSTRUATION.

In a paper by Dr. F. Curtis, of New York, which opened the debate on Menstruation at the late meeting of the New York State Medical Society, the author stated that the influence of menstruation is a possible factor in most of the morbid conditions to which women are subject between the periods of puberty and the menopause. Its importance has been more than ever appreciated since the development of the art of abdominal surgery. The evolution of animal life from the lower to the higher signifies increased complexity of structure and function. The differentiation of the genital organs in individuals of separate sex begins very early in the scale of animal life, and the functions connected with those organs become most marked as we ascend the scale. The phenomena connected with the impulse to reproduction are as clearly defined as any in the entire range of animal activity, and demonstrate the important relation which that impulse bears to physical existence. Changes in behavior and appearance signalize its presence in the highest and the lowest animals. In the higher mammalia there is also a discharge of mucus or mucus and blood from the genital passage. In the apes and monkeys the discharge from the genital passage is periodical, and suggests menstruation. In women there is not only the reproductive impulse and the bloody discharge, but there are recurrences at regular and relatively frequent intervals. There may also be the reproductive impulse

and impregnation without the bloody discharge, almost immediately after the conclusion of a previous pregnancy, and there may even be the continually recurring bloody discharge without the reproductive impulse. There has been much speculation as to the cause for the recurrence of menstruation at monthly intervals. Pouchet, Pflüger and others have propounded theories in explanation. The ovulation theory seems reasonable in many cases, but is not of universal application. A satisfactory explanation is yet to be afforded. Menstruation is one of the evidences of womanhood, but not the only one. A woman who does not menstruate, or who has never menstruated, is physically defective, but the defect is not necessarily irremediable. A woman who has never menstruated should not marry until the cause has been ascertained, and if possible removed.

An analysis of 200 cases in the writer's records, gave the earliest period as ten and the latest as twenty years. The average for the 200 cases was 14.5 years. No function of the body shows a wider range and variety of phenomena than menstruation, none is more frequently disturbed. This is probably due to the complex conditions of civilized life, for the variations are few where civilization is absent. Increase in the blood tension of the pelvic circulation is an almost invariable accompaniment of menstruation. The vessels of the endometrium offer the least resistance, hence the discharge of blood from this source. With the blood is mingled debris from the broken vessels, epithelium from the uterus and vagina, and glandular secretion. These are the products of menstruation. The duration of menstruation is subject to many fluctuations, and has almost as many types as the number of days which it consumes. A complete menstrual period includes, not only the flow, but the *molimina* or accessory phenomena, which may precede the flow by many hours.

In the one-day type the blood is scanty and watery, and there is usually pain in various localities. It occurs in women with imperfectly developed genital organs in those who are anæmic and physically weak.

In the two-days' type the blood may be abundant and of natural appearance the first day, while the second it may be scanty and watery. Pain is usually present as in the one-day type.