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THE BIOLOGICAL BASIS OF MENSTRUATION.<sup>1</sup>

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At the present time there is universal ignorance as regards the causation of menstruation, its meaning as a sexual character, and the method by which it has become established among the higher mammals.

The following views have been advanced to explain the meaning of the process :

1. *Relation to Ovulation.*—For a long time it has been believed that ovulation and menstruation are so closely related that they occur at or about the same time, the former being the cause of the latter.

Of those who hold this view, some think that the blood-discharge results from a general pelvic congestion, supposed to be present during the ripening and escape of the ovum. Thus, Mathews Duncan often compared the menstrual flow to the red flag outside the door of an auction-room, which indicates that something is taking place inside.

Others regard menstruation as a process induced by ovulation, necessary to the preparation and development of the ovum, in case it should be fertilized.

A careful examination of the evidence on which these statements are founded reveals their untrustworthiness. It is, indeed, a wonder that they have so long been believed.

The following facts relating to maturation and escape of the ovum are now definitely ascertained. These processes are usually in operation some time prior to the development of the phenomena of puberty; before menstruation appears; sometimes they occur in childhood and

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<sup>1</sup> Read before the Montreal Medico-Chirurgical Society, Jany. 12th, 1897, and before the New York Academy of Medicine.