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DISCUSSION ON DYSMENORRHOEA.¹

SYMPTOMATOLOGY AND DIAGNOSIS.

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The Function of Menstruation is surely one of the most remarkable in the animal economy. It is the only instance of a physiological shedding of blood. It is confined to the human female and certain monkeys. The discharge comes from the mucous membrane of the uterus and probably also from the fallopian tubes; the body of the uterus alone is concerned with the process, the cervix taking no part therein. Into the question of the relation of ovulation to menstruation it would, I think, be obviously improper to enter in this discussion. The theory that such a relation exists is deemed by many to be untenable, but the clinical evidence that this periodical discharge is in some way related to the maturation of ova is to my mind incontrovertible. We have then to deal with a physiological function. Are physiological functions in health always painless? The answer must be no, and yet perhaps the only functions that are painful are those of the uterus, as for instance the best example of all—parturition. The fact that we are to discuss to-night dysmenorrhœa, or painful difficult menstruation, implies that it is often painful, difficult, disturbing. That it is painful—sometimes an exceedingly painful process—in the entire absence of any other evidence or symptom of disease, subjective or objective is a matter of very frequent observation to us all. That this function is in some women an entirely painless one must be admitted by all. That however it is attended in the vast majority by certain discomforts is evidenced by the ordinary way of speaking of it, “unwell,” or as the

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