

CHAP. VI.

DISEASES OF WOMEN.

WOMEN, in all civilized nations, have the management of domestic affairs, and it is very proper they should, as nature has made them less fit for the more active and laborious employments. This indulgence, however, is generally carried too far; and females, instead of being benefitted by it, are greatly injured, from the want of exercise and free air. To be satisfied of this, one need only compare the fresh and ruddy looks of a milk-maid, with the pale complexion of those females whose whole time is spent within doors. Though nature has made an evident distinction between the male and the female with regard to bodily strength and vigour, yet she certainly never meant, either that the one should be always without, or the other always within doors.

The confinement of females, besides hurting their figure and complexion, relaxes their solids, weakens their minds, and disorders all the functions of the body. Hence proceed obstructions, indigestion, flatulence, abortions, and the whole train of nervous disorders. These not only unfit women for being mothers and nurses, but often render them whimsical and ridiculous. A sound mind depends so much upon a healthy body, that where the latter is wanting, the former is rarely to be found.

I have always observed, that women who were chiefly employed without doors, in the different branches of husbandry, gardening, and the like, were almost as hardy as their husbands, and that their children were likewise strong and healthy. But as the bad effects of confinement and inactivity upon both sexes have been already shown, we shall proceed to point out those circumstances in the structure and design of females, which subject them to peculiar diseases, the chief of which are, their *monthly evacuations*, *pregnancy*, and *child-bearing*. These, indeed, cannot properly be called diseases; but, from the delicacy of the sex, and their being often improperly managed in such situations, they become the source of numerous calamities.

THE MENSTRUAL DISCHARGE. (*Catamenia*.)

FEMALES generally begin to menstruate about the age of fifteen, and leave it off about fifty, which renders these two periods the most critical of their lives. About the first appearance of this discharge, the constitution undergoes a very considerable change, generally indeed for the better, though sometimes for the worse. The greatest care is now necessary, as the future health and happiness of the female depend in a great measure upon her conduct at this period.*

* It is the duty of mothers, and those who are intrusted with the education of girls, to instruct them early in the conduct and management of themselves at this critical period of their lives. False modesty, inattention, and ignorance of what is beneficial or hurtful at this time, are the sources of many diseases and misfortunes in life, which a few sensible lessons from an experienced matron might have prevented. Nor is care less necessary in the subsequent return of this discharge. Taking improper food, violent affections of the mind, or catching cold at this period, is often sufficient to ruin the health, or to render the female ever after incapable of procreation.

If a girl about this time of life be confined to the house, kept constantly sitting, and neither allowed to romp about, nor employed in any active business, which gives exercise to the whole body, she becomes weak, relaxed, and puny; her blood not being duly prepared, she looks pale and wan; her health, spirits, and vigour decline, and she sinks into a valetudinarian for life. Such is the state of numbers of those unhappy females, who, either from too much indulgence, or their own narrow circumstances, are at this critical period, denied the benefit of exercise and free air.

A lazy, indolent disposition proves likewise very hurtful to girls at this period. One seldom meets with complaints from obstructions amongst the more active and industrious part of the sex; whereas the indolent and lazy are seldom free from them. These are in a manner eaten up by the *chlorosis*, or green-sickness, and other diseases of this nature. We would, therefore, recommend it to all who wish to escape these calamities, to avoid indolence and inactivity as their greatest enemies, and to be as much abroad in the open air as possible.

Another thing which proves very hurtful to girls about this period of life, is unwholesome food. Fond of all manner of trash, they often indulge in it, till their whole humours are quite vitiated. Hence ensue indigestions, want of appetite, and a numerous train of evils. If the fluids be not duly prepared, it is utterly impossible that the secretions should go properly on. Accordingly we find that such girls as lead an indolent life, and eat great quantities of trash, are not only subject to obstructions of the *menses*, but likewise to glandular obstructions; as the *scrofula*, or king's evil, &c.

A dull disposition is also very hurtful to girls at this period. It is a rare thing to see a sprightly girl who does not enjoy good health, while the grave, moping, melancholy creature proves the very prey of vapours and hysterics. Youth is the season for mirth and cheerfulness; let it therefore be indulged; it is an absolute duty. To lay in a stock of health in time of youth, is as necessary a piece of prudence, as to make provision against the decays of old age. While, therefore, wise nature prompts the happy youth to join in sprightly amusements, let not the severe dictates of hoary age forbid the useful impulse, nor damp with serious gloom the season destined to mirth and innocent festivity.

Another thing very hurtful to females about this period of life, is strait clothes. They are fond of a fine shape, and foolishly imagine that this can be acquired by lacing themselves tight. Hence, by squeezing the stomach and bowels, they hurt the digestion, and occasion many incurable maladies. This error is not indeed so common as it has been, but, as fashions change, it may come about again; we therefore think it not improper to mention it. I know many females who, to this day, feel the dreadful effects of that wretched custom which prevailed some years ago, of squeezing every girl into as small a size in the middle as possible. Human invention could not possibly have devised a practice more destructive to health.

After a female has arrived at that period of life when the *menses* usually begin to flow, and they do not appear, but, on the contrary, her health and spirits begin to decline, we would advise, instead of

shutting the poor girl up in the house, and dosing her with steel, asafoetida, and other nauseous drugs, to place her in a situation where she can enjoy the benefit of free air and agreeable company. There let her eat wholesome food, take sufficient exercise, and amuse herself in the most agreeable manner; and we have little reason to fear, but nature, thus assisted, will do her proper work. Indeed she seldom fails, unless where the fault is on our side.

This discharge in the beginning is seldom so instantaneous as to surprise females unawares. It is generally preceded by symptoms which foretell its approach; as a sense of heat, weight, and dull pain in the loins; distention and hardness of the breasts; headache, loss of appetite, lassitude, paleness of the countenance, and sometimes a slight degree of fever. When these symptoms appear about the age at which the menstrual flux usually begins, every thing should be carefully avoided which may obstruct that necessary and salutary evacuation, and all means used to promote it; as sitting frequently over the steams of warm water, drinking warm diluting liquors, &c.

After the *menses* have once begun to flow, the greatest care should be taken to avoid every thing that may tend to obstruct them. Females ought to be exceedingly cautious of what they eat or drink at the time they are out of order. Every thing that is cold, or apt to sour on the stomach, ought to be avoided; as fruit, butter-milk, and such like. Fish, and all kinds of food that are hard of digestion, are also to be avoided. As it is impossible to mention every thing that may disagree with individuals at this time, we would recommend it to every female to be very attentive to what disagrees with herself, and carefully to avoid it.

Cold is extremely hurtful at this particular period. More of the sex date their diseases from colds caught while they are out of order, than from all other causes. This ought surely to put them upon their guard, and to make them very circumspect in their conduct at such times. A degree of cold that will not in the least hurt them at another time, will at this period be sufficient entirely to ruin their health and constitution.

The greatest attention ought likewise to be paid to the mind, which should be kept as easy and cheerful as possible. Every part of the animal economy is influenced by the passions, but none more so than this. Anger, fear, grief, and other affections of the mind, often occasion obstructions of the menstrual flux, which prove absolutely incurable.

As far as my observation goes, there are no women in the world so inattentive to this discharge as the English; and they suffer accordingly, as a very great number of them are obstructed, and many prove barren in consequence.

From whatever cause this flux is obstructed, except in the state of pregnancy, proper means should be used to restore it. For this purpose we would recommend sufficient exercise in a dry, open, and rather cool air; wholesome diet, and, if the body be weak and languid, generous liquors; also cheerful company and all manner of amusements. If these fail, recourse must be had to medicine.

When obstructions proceed from a weak relaxed state of the solids, such medicines as tend to promote digestion, to brace the

solids, and assist the body in preparing good blood, ought to be used. For this purpose, I have of late made use of pills composed of prepared steel, powdered myrrh,* and the best aloes, equal parts. These must be formed into pills of the common size, and two or three of them given every night at bed-time. The principal medicines, however, are iron, and the Peruvian bark, with other bitters and astringents. Filings of iron may be infused in wine or ale, two or three ounces to an English quart, and after it has stood for two or three weeks, it may be filtered, and about half a wine-glass of it taken twice a-day; or prepared steel may be taken in the dose of half a drachm, mixed with a little honey or treacle, three or four times a-day. The bark and other bitters may either be taken in substance or infusion, as is most agreeable to the patient.

Previous, however, to the use of these medicines, it may be advisable to give a gentle emetic, for the purpose of cleansing the stomach, and freeing it from acidities and inactive fluids.

When obstructions proceed from a viscid state of the blood, or for women of a gross or full habit, evacuations, and such medicines as attenuate the humours, are necessary. The patient in this case ought to be bled, to bathe her feet frequently in warm water, to take now and then a cooling purge, and to live upon a spare thin diet. Her drink should be whey, water, or small beer, and she ought to take sufficient exercise. A teaspoonful of the tincture of black hellebore may also be taken twice a-day in a cup of warm water.

When obstructions proceed from affections of the mind, as grief, fear, anger, &c. every method should be taken to amuse and divert the patient. And that she may the more readily forget the cause of her affliction, she ought, if possible, to be removed from the place where it happened. A change of place, by presenting the mind with a variety of new objects, has often a very happy influence in relieving it from the deepest distress. A soothing, kind, and affable behaviour to females in this situation is also of the last importance.

An obstruction of the *menses* is often the effect of other maladies. When this is the case, instead of giving medicines to force that discharge, which might be dangerous, we ought by all means to endeavour to restore the patient's health and strength. When that is effected, the other will return of course.

IMMODERATE FLOW OF THE MENSES.

The flow of the *menses* is to be considered as immoderate, when it either returns more frequently than what is natural, continues longer than ordinary, or is more abundant than is usual with the

* Take Myrrh,	$\frac{1}{2}$ drachm.	two table-spoonsful of the following
Subcarbonate of Soda,	15 grains.	mixture:
Sulphate of Iron,	1 scruple.	Take Compound Infusion of Gentian,
Extract of Bark,	1 scruple.	6 ounces.
Syrup of Ginger, enough to form the		Tincture of Bark,
mass; to be divided in 24 pills, two of		— of Cardamoms, of each,
which are to be taken twice or three		$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce.
times a-day; washing them down with		Make a mixture.

same person than at other times; usually accompanied with pains in the back and belly, somewhat like those of childbirth.

But the menstrual discharge may be too great as well as too small. When this happens, the patient becomes weak, the colour pale, the appetite and digestion are bad, to which œdematous swellings of the feet, dropsies, and consumptions often ensue. This frequently happens to women about the age of forty-five or fifty, and is very difficult to cure. It may proceed from a sedentary life; a full diet, consisting chiefly of salted, high seasoned, or acrid food; the use of spirituous liquors; excessive fatigue; relaxation; a dissolved state of the blood; violent passions of the mind, &c.

The treatment of this disease must be varied according to its cause. When it is occasioned by any error in the patient's regimen, an opposite course to that which induced the disorder must be pursued, and such medicines taken as have a tendency to restrain the flow, and counteract the morbid affections of the system whence it proceeds.

To restrain the flux, the patient should be kept quiet and easy both in body and mind. If it be very violent, she ought to lie in bed with her head low; to live upon a cool and slender diet, as veal or chicken broths with bread; and to drink decoctions of nettle-roots, or the greater comfrey, cooling aperients,* and refrigerants, as small and frequent doses of nitre;† cool acidulated liquors, as lemonade; light covering, and lying on a mattress instead of a bed. If these be not sufficient to stop the flux, stronger astrin-gents‡ may be used, as Japan earth, alum, elixir of vitriol, the Peruvian bark, &c.: e.g. two drachms of alum and one of Japa earth may be pounded together, and divided into eight or nine doses, one of which may be taken three times a-day. Persons whose stomachs cannot bear the alum, may take two table-spoonsful of the tincture of roses three or four times a-day, to each dose of which ten drops of laudanum may be added. If these should fail, half a drachm of the Peruvian bark, in powder, with ten drops of the elixir of vitriol, may be taken, in a glass of red wine, four times a-day, or any of the forms prescribed below.

FLUOR ALBUS.

THE uterine discharge may offend in quality as well as in quantity. What is usually called the *fluor albus*, or whites, is a very common disease, and proves extremely hurtful to delicate women. This discharge, however, is not always white, but sometimes pale yellow, green, or of a blackish colour: sometimes it is sharp and

* Take Epsom Salts,	2 ounces.	Make a draught, to be repeated every	
Warm Water,	6 ounces.	third hour.	
Compound Tincture of Senna,	$\frac{1}{2}$ ounce.	† Take Gum Kino,	8 grains
Syrup of Roses,	2 drachms.	Alum, in Powder,	12 grains.
Mix; and take two table-spoonsful for a		Confection of Roses, enough.	
dose.		Make a bolus, to be taken every third or	
		fourth hour.	
† Take Infusion of Roses,	1½ ounce.	or	
Nitre,	10 grains.	Take Purified Alum,	10 grains.
Occasionally adding, if necessary,		Extract of Bark,	12 grains.
Tincture of Opium,	15 drops.	Confection of Roses, enough.	
		Make a bolus to be taken as above.	

corrosive, sometimes foul and fœtid, &c. It is attended with a pale complexion, pain in the back, loss of appetite, swelling of the feet, and other signs of debility. It generally proceeds from a relaxed state of the body, arising from indolence, the excessive use of tea, coffee, or other weak and watery diet, frequent childbearing, &c.

To remove this disease, the patient must take as much exercise as she can bear without fatigue. Her food should be solid and nourishing, but of easy digestion; and her drink rather generous, as red port or claret, mixed with Pyrmont, Bristol, or lime-water. Tea and coffee are to be avoided. I have often known strong broths have an exceeding good effect, and sometimes a milk diet alone will perform a cure. The patient ought not to lie too long in bed.

Independent of this regimen, the proper indications of cure to be observed appear to be, to increase the action of the absorbents of the uterus and vagina, by restoring the tone of the system; to correct the acrimony of the discharge; diminish its quantity; to alleviate other urgent and distressing symptoms; and to strengthen the system, when the disease is complicated with general debility and relaxation. With this view, the first of these intentions is to be effected by astringents, administered by the mouth; and likewise thrown up into the vagina and uterus in the form of injections.* Alum, sulphate of zinc (white vitriol,) gum kino, and catechu, are the astringents most employed as internal remedies; and these may be given either separately or combined with some tonic, as the bark, bitters, chalybeates, and the sulphuric acid as advised below,† with partial cold bathing, or spunging the loins and thighs with cold water.

In addition to astringents, it has been usual to employ in fluor albus such stimulating medicines as most commonly determine to the urinary passages, which, from their vicinity to the uterus, have often been found to afford considerable relief. On this occasion, turpentine and other balsams have been used.‡ Gentle emetics are also supposed to be of singular benefit in this complaint. When there are excoriations externally or internally, the solution of the acetate of lead, sufficiently diluted with water, may be employed as a wash.

* Take Decoction of Oak Bark, 1 pint.
Alum, 1 drachm.
Make an injection.

or

Take Sulphate of Zinc, 1 drachm.
Super Acetate of Lead, 10 grains.
Distilled Water, 1 pint.
Make an injection.

or

Take of Bruised Oak Gall, ½ ounce.
Hot Water, 2 pints.
Make an injection.

or

Take Strong Infusion of Green Tea,
Make an injection.

† Take Powdered Alum, 2 drachms.
Nutmeg, ½ drachm.
Catechu, 1 drachm.
Peruvian Bark, ½ oz.

Syrup of Ginger, a sufficiency to form an electuary, of which the bulk of a small walnut may be taken three times a-day.

‡ Take Balsam of Copaiba, or Canada Turpentine, 2 drachms.
The Yolk of an Egg.

Let them be well mixed together in a marble mortar, and gradually add, Water, 7 ounces.
Clarified Honey, ½ ounce.
Tincture of Spanish Fly, 1 drm.
Mix, and take two dessert-spoonsful thrice a-day.

DIFFICULT MENSTRUATION. (*Dysmenorrhœa.*)

BESIDES the other deviations from the usual course of nature, al-
luded to under this head, a third sometimes occurs, wherein men-
struation, although not entirely suppressed, is nevertheless some-
what difficult, and accompanied with severe pains in the back,
loins, and bottom of the belly. This disease is supposed to be ow-
ing to a weak action of the vessels of the uterus, or spasm of its
extreme vessels; and is to be removed by chalybeates, warm bath-
ing, both topical and general, with the use of opiates, which should
be employed as soon as the symptoms that denote its approach are
apparent. The extract of stramonium, in half grain doses, will
often prove serviceable when other anodynes fail.

CESSATION OF THE MENSES. (*Commonly called the "Turn of Life."*)

THAT period of life at which the *menses* cease to flow is likewise
very critical to the sex. The stoppage of any customary evacua-
tion, however small, is sufficient to disorder the whole frame, and
often to destroy life itself. Hence it comes to pass, that so many
women either fall into chronic disorders, or die about this time.
Such of them, however, as survive it, without contracting any
chronic disease, often become more healthy and hardy than they
were before, and enjoy strength and vigour to a very great age.

If the *menses* cease all of a sudden, which is seldom the case, in
women of a full habit, they ought to abate somewhat of their usu-
al quantity of food, especially of the more nourishing kind, as
flesh, eggs, &c. They ought likewise to take sufficient exercise,
and to keep the body open. This may be done by taking, once or
twice a week, a little rhubarb, or an infusion of *hiera picra* in wine
or brandy.

Should any scirrhus or cancerous affection of the uterus take
place on a stoppage of the menstrual flux, as sometimes happens,
all that can be done in such cases is to have recourse to pallia-
tives, such as opium, henbane, and hemlock, in the manner point-
ed out in the diseases wherein these medicines are indicated.

It often happens that women of a gross habit, at this period of
life, have ulcerous sores break out about their ankles, or in other
parts of the body. Such ulcers ought to be considered as critical,
and should either be suffered to continue open or have artificial
drains substituted in their stead. Women who will have such
sores dried up are often soon after carried off by acute diseases, or
fall into those of a chronic nature.

CHAP. VII.
DISEASES OF PREGNANCY.

THOUGH pregnancy is not a disease, yet it is a state often at-
tended with a variety of complaints which merit attention, and
which sometimes require the assistance of medicine. Some wo-
men, indeed, are more healthy during their pregnancy than at any