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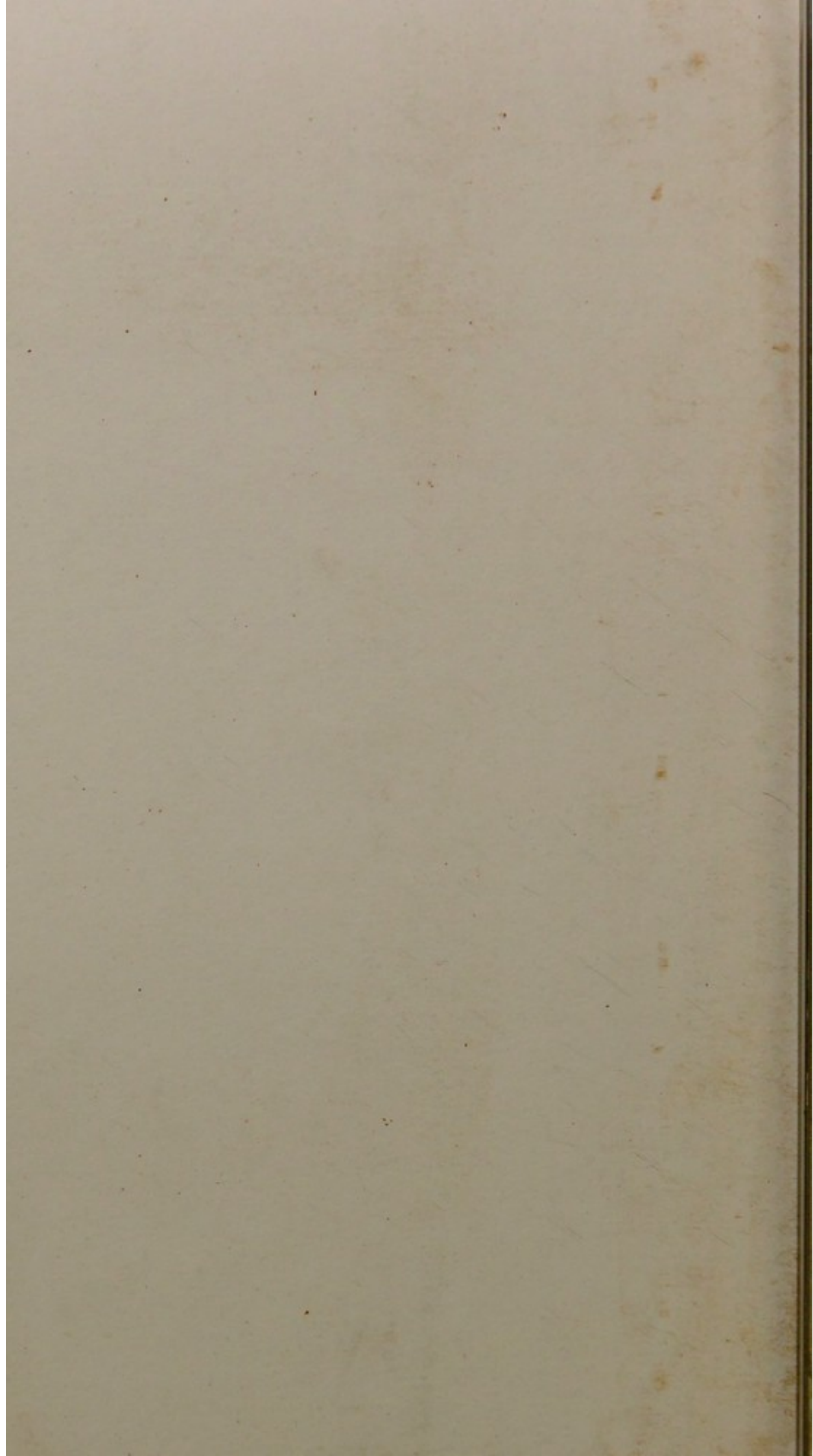
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ON

SOME OF THE CAUSES OF

# STERILITY

REMEDIABLE BY MECHANICAL TREATMENT;

BY

G. T. GREAM, ESQ.,

SURGEON-ACCOUCHEUR TO THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S

LYING-IN HOSPITAL,

&c. &c. &c.

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## PART I.

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MDCCCXLIX.



# STERILITY.

Mr GREAM made a violent attack on the speculum, an instrument, the use of which he denounced as 'un-English, *indelicate*, and unnecessary.'

*From Report of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society  
in Lancet, 1848, vol. I. p. 499.*



# STERILITY.

STERILITY in the married female is found to depend upon constitutional, as well as upon local causes; but the states of the general system occurring after marriage, which may give rise to it, are those of plethora, and the contrary state of anæmia. The treatment proper for the one and the other of these conditions, by restoring the health, will generally, at the same time, render the uterine system fit for conception.

Of sterility in the married female. After marriage it may depend upon, &c. The proper treatment is restoring health.

But it is the management of the local and mechanical impediments to conception to which I desire more particularly to call attention; those which are to be found at the orifice of the vagina, and that which exists at the mouth of the uterus.

Of the local impediment.

It not unfrequently happens that virginity is prolonged after marriage, owing to over-excitement in the husband in consequence of his age, or other circumstances. By advice judiciously given, the former difficulty is always very readily overcome; but where there is incomplete physical power in the husband, it often becomes necessary to adopt a plan of treatment towards the wife.

Of virginity after marriage and the over-excitement of the husband.

Of overcoming the over-excitement. Of the treatment towards the wife.

I was called to see a lady, whom I found lying insensible on a sofa. I was told that she had frequently fainted, and that she was usually very hysterical; but that her friends had become alarmed in this instance by her prolonged insensibility. I took means to restore her, and when I called to see her on the following day, I learnt that she had been married four months; that the first menstrual period after her marriage had been passed over without the appearance of discharge; that she had been more or less nauseated upon taking food; that she had become thin, and that she was thought by herself and her friends to be pregnant, and it was supposed that this was confirmed by the appearance of several slight and sudden discharges of blood from the uterus, which were attributed to threatened abortion; by the enlargement of her abdomen, (evidently from flatulence,) and a sense of fulness within the pelvis, and of tenderness in the groins and in the mammæ.

The case of an insensible lady who was then, &c.

The history of the case caused me at once to make further inquiries of the husband, and he fairly told me, that although he was led into the belief that his wife might be pregnant, owing to the assertions of her friends, yet that now, after I had expressed a doubt about the matter, he felt sure that he had not been possessed of physical power enough, at the time of connexion, to complete sexual intercourse. Upon examination of the wife, I found an

Of the nature of confession of a husband.

Of my examination of a wife.



unbroken hymen, but there was no great rigidity of the vaginal orifice, and it was evident that her health was impaired owing to the frequent attempts at, and non-completion of connexion.

Of frequent attempts at and none completion of &c.  
Not at all singular.

And this is not at all a singular state of things. I have known every symptom of pregnancy to supervene upon marriage, even to the suppression of the menstrual discharge, and the presence of moisture in the breasts; and in some such cases I have found an unbroken hymen, and the absence of conception.

Of the bougie, (not the speculum,) see motto.

On the day following the examination of this patient, I introduced into the vagina a large-sized metallic rectum bougie, causing a good deal of pain, and some loss of blood, and on the two following days a still larger one. A few days afterwards the husband called on me, and said that the treatment had been quite successful. I did not see this patient again until some weeks had elapsed. I then found her stout and healthy, and having all the genuine symptoms of pregnancy. A little more than forty weeks from the introduction of the bougies, she gave birth to a child. I learnt afterwards that the impediment to complete intercourse having been removed, no more want of power had been felt by the husband, which was owing, no doubt, to the warmth and lubrication of the vagina.

Of husband's comforts,—warmth,—lubrication, &c.

Of the effects of the husband's inability.

When the husband is advanced in years, and is newly married to a young wife, pregnancy may be deferred, owing to the absence of the physical process in him necessary for penetration. We have evidence that neither is the hymen, when present, a proof of non-impregnation, nor that physical power in the man is absolutely necessary in order that pregnancy may ensue, in the fact that the hymen has not unfrequently been found entire at the time of labour; and in two instances which I could record, this membrane was perfect up to the period of delivery, in the wives of persons very much older than themselves, and who, from feebleness, were unable to use the force necessary for penetration, although they possessed the power of impregnation.

Of the hymen I have found—? force required to rupture.

Of a young wife's offspring being that of an aged husband?

The presence of the hymen, under these circumstances, considered in a medico-legal view, would be strong evidence in favour of legitimacy, if the parentage of the child was doubted—that child having been the offspring of the young wife of an aged husband.

Of "my wife's mother's" complaint—important interview with her daughter.

Husband too feeble.

Suggestion—hot water—unctuous application—'anti-friction,' &c.

I was consulted by the mother of a young lady who had married a husband very much her senior, on account of some suspicions which she entertained, that the impaired health of her daughter was owing to imperfect sexual connexion. I desired her to make some necessary inquiries, and it became manifest that the physical powers of the husband had been too feeble to allow of his having effectual intercourse with his wife. I suggested that the wife should sit over the steam of hot water, that she should apply an unctuous application externally to herself, and



that her mother should explain to her that the contrary to resistance should be offered to connexion. Immediately after these recommendations had been carried into effect, signs of pregnancy manifested themselves, which have been confirmed by subsequent events. The patient's health is restored, and as she is progressing most favourably in her pregnancy, there is but little doubt of her giving birth hereafter to a strong and healthy child.

A mother's advice—a wife's duty—non-resistance.

The effect.

I have selected this case for publication, in order to show how simple are the steps necessary very often, in such cases, for the relief of bodily suffering and mental anxiety; and yet, without advice, these precautions would probably never have been taken. I had proposed to dilate the vagina of this patient had not the means I recommended been found to succeed.

Of the simplicity in some cases!!!

My proposition—to dilate.

It will sometimes happen, that owing to excessive rigidity at the orifice of the vagina, there is an impediment to impregnation, although in the man there is no unhealthy condition. I have known virginity to exist after marriage for periods varying from weeks to months, and even years; and I have been consulted by men who have honestly told me that they have frequently had connexion with women before marriage, and had found no impediment to its perfect completion, but that, although they had been married a long time, they felt certain that something was wrong, but they could not say what it was. In such cases I have found in the wife an unbroken hymen, or so complete a state of contraction and rigidity of the vagina as to prevent the possibility of its dilatation by the ordinary and natural means.

Of vaginal rigidity.

Of post nuptial virginity! ?—  
—of youthful errors—confessions of men!

In the not uncommon cases of unbroken hymen, without any great rigidity, the simple introduction of moderate-sized bougies will in almost all cases be followed by conception.

Of dilatation by the bougie!

The following case is interesting as affording an example of a very prolonged virginity after marriage, and of the great benefit that may result in such cases, both morally and bodily, from medical treatment.

A gentleman called upon me to tell me of what, he said, was a most extraordinary case, and to consult me with regard to it. He said that he had been married for more than ten years, but that he never had yet had proper intercourse with his wife, although there was no want of power either physical or as regarded secretion. He stated, that at first his wife's resistance, through fear, and the excessive pain she appeared to suffer if a near approach was made to her, had deterred him from using force to any extent; that his emissions had always occurred externally; and that from having become habituated to this mode, and his wife being perfectly apathetic concerning it, as well as having no strong feeling of attachment for her, he had felt no wish to take steps to remedy the local evils that existed; but that she had become desirous of bearing a child, and

A case—more confessions!

"At first his wife"—fear—  
pain—force.

Of emissions—  
modes of ditto,  
force of habit.

The wife's apathy overcome,  
perseverance.



that on her account, and not his own, he had been induced to consult me.

The consulta-  
tion—corrobo-  
rative testi-  
mony.

The examina-  
tion—firm  
pressure to  
introduce, &c

Elastic bougie.

The "tent."

Great improve-  
ment, re-estab-  
lishment of  
domestic  
peace.

Comfort to all.

Incapacity of  
parties immu-  
terial!!!

I appointed to see the wife, and from her I obtained a confirmation of her husband's history. She told me she had married very young; that she had not been made aware previously of what she was to undergo; that she resisted through fear, and that until within the last year she had never experienced the slightest sexual feeling, but that now she felt differently; that she was anxious to become a mother; but her great desire was to do away with the estrangement that she believed the existing state of circumstances caused between herself and her husband. Upon examination, I found the orifice of the vagina so rigid, that it required very firm pressure to introduce my finger, and its introduction seemed to cause excessive suffering. It thus became evident that no natural means could have caused penetration.

On the following day I introduced an elastic bougie, a little larger than my finger, and for four days afterwards I introduced bougies of gradually increased size, the last that was employed being two inches in diameter. Their introduction caused extreme suffering, and some quantity of blood was lost. I then desired that for some nights a large sponge tent should be introduced, and kept within the vagina, and removed in the morning, and five days afterwards I was able to introduce the largest metallic bougie with comparative ease, and with no pain whatever. I now for the first time learned that the husband was obliged to be absent from home, and as the patient herself was going into the country, I recommended the continuance of the sponge tent during each night until the husband's return.

I have since received a letter from this gentleman, informing me that there is no longer any difficulty; that in all particulars a great improvement has been made, and I have but little doubt I shall ultimately learn that pregnancy has supervened upon this altered condition; and I am led to think this because the state of the uterus was particularly healthy, and seemed perfectly fitted for conception. Here, then, is an instance in which domestic peace has been re-established, and supposed physical incapacity effectually and altogether removed.

I have selected these cases from my note-book as being indicative of the effect of treatment to a marked degree.

There are others whose general character is the same, but occurring under varied circumstances, and I have known a few instances in which actual incapacity on the man's part has rendered treatment of no avail; but these are only rare cases, and I am led to believe that there are but very few, whether the incapacity depends upon the woman, or whether upon the man, which may not, by proper treatment, be eventually cured.

(To be continued.)



One on her account, and not a few, he had been induced

to commit the

I applied to see the wife, and from her I learned a

circumstance of her husband's history. She said that she

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cases in which it was now constantly employed in Great Britain and throughout the Continent. Dr Simpson commented on the immense quantity of chloroform already made and sold here and elsewhere, and on the consequent vast numbers of persons that must have been already safely placed under its influence; and he stated that perhaps the use of as many thousand common doses of any of our common medicines, such as opium, antimony, senna, &c., by as many thousand different persons and constitutions, would probably scarcely have been accompanied with equal safety and equal impunity in the results. He cited several cases in which (before the introduction of ether and chloroform) surgical patients had died on the operating table ere the operation was begun, during it, or immediately after it was finished; and when the operation was by no means severe. Every such case happening for years to come will, of course, be eagerly ascribed to chloroform, though such things not unfrequently happened long before chloroform was ever known. And supposing even it did prove fatal, when indiscreetly managed, in one rare case in a hundred thousand, it would be no reason to argue against its utility, any more than there would be reason in arguing against the utility of coaches and railways, on the ground that occasionally, from carelessness, an accident or death occurred among the passengers. He concluded by stating that he had the satisfaction of believing, that, by saving much human suffering and agony, chloroform had already saved much human life. Such a case as the present was well calculated to teach a salutary degree of caution; but it could and would do no ultimate injury to the general adoption and spread of the practice of Anæsthesia.





