AN INAGURAL DISSERTATION,
ON
Euthanasia
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Euthanasia

In attempting to write an essay upon this subject, I shall confine myself principally to the articulo mortis; but will notice, a few of the measures to be employed with a view to the euthanasia. The term is of course used in its common acceptance, for it might be applied to man in his last moments, respecting his consciousness, of receiving future rewards or punishments. It is true that the Physician has to do with natural death, but it comes within his province to heal moral diseases, as well as bodily ailments. It will be necessary in the first place to take a succinct view of the dif
different-modes of dying, for the
most-desultory observer, in the cham-
ber of affliction, is aware of the fact
that although all men must
die, yet that all do not die a
like. And a knowledge of this fact
does not concern the curious only
but often gives a clear to the last
benefit—that the Physician can
hope to be to his patient—that
of affording him an easy death.
It is deemed unnecessary to attempt
to enumerate the conditions that are
essential to life. Nor is it to be un-
derstood, that all the processes of
dissolution, to be spoken of, have
come particularly under the notice
of the writer. The cessation of the
Circulation of the blood is incompatible with the continuation of life. When therefore the blood ceases to circulate, life can not be said longer to remain; and the different modes of dying depend upon the various ways in which this process is arrested. There are three vital organs—The heart, the lungs, and the brain—which contribute mainly to the circulation of the blood. The functions of these organs are said to be vital, and being mutually dependent, the one upon the other, if one fail, the other two must necessarily fail also. And as the pathological condition may occur primarily in either one of these
organ it is here that the great variations in the phenomena of dying originate. It is not unfrequently the case in death, as a consequence of disease, it being so complicated, and so many parts being affected, that it may be impossible to ascertain the precise mode in which it occurs. But in the majority of cases some predominant derangement may be ascertained to exist—in some part—and the tendency to this, or that mode of dying will be thus manifested. Death beginning at the heart—there are two ways in which death may take place at the heart—by anaemia and by asthenia—both being comprehended by the term syncopa.
Death by anæmia is caused by a deficiency of the blood sent to the heart. It is this mode of death that succeeds from violent hemorrhage which may take place, after childbirth, the bursting of an anæurism, wounds of large blood-vessels &c.

There are certain symptoms that accompany this mode of death, such as paleness, imperfect vision, weak and irregular pulse, and insensibility. Death by asthenia is the consequence of a defect in the contractile power of the heart. This loss of power in the heart is induced through the medium of the nervous system, especially in cases of sudden death by asthenia.
Instances of this are found in intense grief, terror, fatal concussion, lightning and electricity, when fatal, and some forms of apoplexy. Death by ashenia, not occurring so suddenly is different, such as peritonitis and cholera. In death from these two diseases, and all that destroy life in the same manner, it is remarkable, that notwithstanding the great muscular debility, and the derangement in the vascular system, yet the senses and even the intellect, often remain clear to the last. There is a mode of dying that may be said to be intermediate between these two, (anaemia and ashenia) that is
The process of dissolution is brought on in both ways, at the same time, and this variety is therefore said to be mixed. Instances of this are seen in death from inanition, and consumption, by which latter, is not only meant, phthisis pulmonalis, but lingering and wasting diseases generally. Death beginning at the lungs—asperia. In order that the proper balance of the circulation may be sustained, it is necessary that the blood should be deeply oxygenated in the lungs; and if this be not the case, it becomes stagnant in the capillaries of the lungs, producing suffocation. This non-arterialization
The blood may be caused in various ways, a few only of which will be mentioned. Authors have named smothering, drowning, choking, by hydrogen gas, and other gases containing no oxygen, and other causes might be mentioned, which produce the same result, by obliterating the air passages, such as pseudo membranous formed in the trachea, or bronchial tubes; or it may be caused by disease of the lung itself, as pneumonia. 

Death in this way is of frequent occurrence, and when it takes place suddenly, the agony is very great, but of short duration, as vertigo and loss of consciousness soon supervene.
Death beginning at the head—coma.

This mode of dying is somewhat similar to that of asphyxia; the main difference being, that in the former, sensibility is first lost, by which means the respiratory organs are brought to rest, and of course the chemical functions of the being are also arrested. In the latter the sensibility is arrested by the circulation of venous blood through the arteries. Death by coma is the form that generally terminates fatal cases of apoplexy, and hydrocephalus; but as the shock to the nervous system is occasionally so great, that death is produced...
immediately, in which case it takes place by ashenia. In almost all diseases of the brain that terminate fatally, the mode of death is that of coma.

But this subject need not be pursued further. With regard to the frequency of occurrence of either of these modes of death I can say nothing. There are some affections in which they are all said to occur, as in fevers. It is also said, that one particular tendency to death, may be present—dealing with the prevalence of a disease, whether it be epidemic or not. And although it may not be essentially necessary...
in a practical point of view
to know which mode of dying
takes place oftenest; in any
given number of cases, yet
it is necessary that the Prac-
titioners should be acquainted
with them all; that he may
obviate the tendency to either
as long as possible.
But failing in this respect
which must needs be the case,
for "it is appointed unto men
to die," he is at least the
better prepared in most in-
stances to alleviate the agony
and affords an easy exit.
Death is said to be natural when
it takes place as a consequen
of disease. And although the chief object of medicine is the prevention of disease, yet it is constantly employed as an important, and indispensable auxiliary, when the recuperative powers of nature are unable to throw off the diseased action by which means alone health can be restored. Called into requisition for this purpose its triumphs have been truly great, surpassing, indeed, the most sanguine expectations, even of its most devoted advocates. There are sound affections however the opprobria medicorum that have not, as yet, been
successfully combated; but after having taken fast-hold upon the vitals, there is but one alternative left—the unfortunate subject—That of preparing to meet his fast-approaching dissolution.

It is under these trying circumstances, that the benefactor has an opportunity afforded them of “striving to merit—and of occasionally receiving the blessings of Him ready to perish.”

It is unnecessary to enter into a detailed account of the measures to be called into requisition in such cases; for precision is deemed inadmissible. Nor has
opportunity been afforded and of observing any the availability of any particular mode of procedure. There is a class of medicines called cerebral stimulants whose physiological action is upon the brain; though exerting an influence upon the circulatory and nervous systems generally. Their first effect is that expressed by their name (stimulant), but the subsequent depression is equal to the primary excitement. And this depression may be so great as to destroy life, death being caused by the superposition of asphyxia. The operation then, if this class of medicines
upon the system, consists of
three stages—stimulation, nar-
cotism and depression. Why
it is that this is the case, I can
not pretend to say. It has been
attributed to an imaginary dif-
ference, respecting their mode
of operation; thus their primary
or stimulant-effect has been
attributed to their actions upon
the nervous system, whilst the
other effects are supposed to be
owing to their actions through the
medium of absorption. But
these things do not immediately
concern the practitioner, for
experience has fully and satis-
factorily demonstrated that.
These agents are able to relieve to a great extent the sufferings of humanity, whether physical or mental. And with the judicious employment of one or more of articles, "præ parata," the agony of death may be greatly mitigated; which should entitle the benefactor to the parting blessing of the patient. And although it may be humiliating to reflect—that those opprobrious medicines—such as Cancer, Hydrocephalus, &c., &c.—afflict medicine, notwithstanding its present advanced position, yet, this reflection is more than counteracted...
When it is remembered that it has annihilated some of the most direful diseases that human nature is heir to— that it relieves a great deal of the sufferings, both of life and death—and that he, who faithfully discharges all the duties incumbent— sent—on him, as a practitioner—er of medicine, is conscious of having laid up for himself—benefactions in heaven against—the day of Judgment.