



AN

INAUGURAL DISSERTATION,

ON

Epilepsy



SUBMITTED TO THE

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FOR THE DEGREE OF

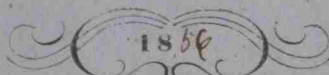
DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

BY

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OF

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If diseases are ranked according to the severity and disastrous consequences, which they produce on the human family; there is none, in the whole catalogue, extensive as it is, that claims precedence to Epilepsy;

This we understand to be a disease of the nervous system, which is the most delicate and highly organized of any in the animal economy; fulfilling the most important functions that humanity is privileged to exercise; hence a disease having its seat in such tender organs should demand from the medical world, the most profound and thorough investigation. And although distinguished physicians have pronounced this disease when, even, unaccompanied with deformity of the cranium or imbecility of the mind

incurable; yet, we think it is the duty of every physician, who may be called to treat such cases, to hold back such a prognosis until he shall have exhausted every effort, to correct in the patient; each function disorganized, and shall have wasted the whole amount, of the expirid

Each year the industry of the naturalist, the ingenuity of the chemist or the mechanist, discovers new agents or more refined expedients, for the purpose of abating the discomforts arising from infirmities and pains - in short the multiplied improvements and discoveries, which are being made in medicine, and all its collateral branches, added to the improved mode of studying diseases; - with the privilege of post-mortem

examinations, together with what
 is already known of this fearful
 disease; may we not hope;
 that physicians will soon acquire
 such knowledge of the various cau-
 ses of this disease, and still in
 treatment, if not permanently
 to cure it, greatly to alleviate the
 unfortunate sufferers whom it
 has seized as its victims,
 and not only of this disease may
 that hope be cherished, but of all those
 which have been termed "opprobria me-
 dicinae,"

Epilepsy, whether considered in its im-
 mediate phenomena or in its remote
 consequences, has in all times and
 countries been considered one of
 the most distressing and deplora-
 ble of all human maladies,
 its tendency to impair the understanding

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To produce habitude and even total abolition of the rational power, lead often to a condition infinitely more lamentable than death itself.

This disease has in the history of medicine received various appellations according to the different authors who have described it, though the one or the other the more appropriate. Epilepsy, the name which seems preferable at this time is derived from the Greek word *ἐπιληψία*, signifying a seizing, an abrupt invasion, this disease may be either idiopathic or symptomatic, characterized by convulsions returning at uncertain intervals accompanied with the loss of sensation and a convulsive motion of the vessels, its attacks may be sudden or preceded by premonitions.

various symptoms - such as a
 confused and wandering state of
 the mind, vertigo, ringing in the
 ears, unobscured vision, pain in the head,
 suffering and anxiety in the pectoral
 dial region, spasmodic twitches of the
 muscles, a warm glow, which proceeds
 from the extremities towards the head
 called "aura epileptica," the countenance
 exhibits feelings of fear and alarm
 and these symptoms "denote them-
 selves more truly," in the appo-
 ach of the paroxysm.

This disease has also received the
 name of "falling sickness," from
 the fact that the patient falls
 if in an erect posture when
 the paroxysm comes on
 symptom of the paroxysm

The first thing that we
 notice is the presencing and tremble

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cry, which the patient, generally, though
not always; utter, and if in an erect
position he falls suddenly, senseless
and convulsed, he strains and struggles
violently, the countenance is frightful-
ly distorted of a livid, and some times
almost black hue, occasionally pale
The veins of the head and neck tur-
gid, the heart palpitating violently,
breathing is oppressed and laborious,
a choking sound is heard in
the windpipe, he seems to be strang-
ling, he foams at the mouth, a
frothy saliva, which is more free
towards the termination of the paro-
xism, a constant grinding of the
teeth, a quivering of the flesh in the
neighborhood of the muscular con-
traction, in short the patient seems
to be suffering all the agonies
of death. But presently, and by degrees

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These alarming phenomena diminish,
and at length cease, the patient is then
left in an exhausted condition, and
as the convulsions depart a stupor
or deep-sleep comes on, after which the
patient wakes, apparently well, with
the exception of a mental torpor
or confusion which often contin-
ues for many hours, the count-
enance exhibiting a fatuous cast
The duration of these paroxysms vary
from a few minutes to many
hours, sometimes following each
other in quick succession, to as many
as five or six

It has been remarked that one side
is frequently, more powerfully
convulsed than the other, sometime
the convulsions commence in
the extremity on one side and
proceed towards the head, the head

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contracts and twits — To one side
and it not infrequently happens
that the urine and feces — are expelled
during the violence of the spasms,
and even dislocation is effected by the
contractions of the muscles, — such joi-
nts are generally the jaws and shou-
lders, the tongue is sometimes caught
between the teeth, and violently bit,
which causes the bloody foam above
observed, and so powerful are these
spasmodic convulsions that the
teeth are fractured,

The above mentioned symptoms are
applicable to one form the most
common and severe, There
are other Clapif in which the
symptoms are much milder
and when many are not present
or noticeable, so mild have been
the attacks that the patient, himself,

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exhibits a consciousness of it, by an attempt to conceal it. Some authors make a distinction in the two Clap's, by name; they call the milder form "Petit mal," and the severer "Grand mal," Some think these are different diseases; while others affirm they are the same, but between the two extremes they make various gradations consequently a correct definition of the disease is very difficult, and these grounds we account for the variety of definitions, it received both by ancient and modern writers The anatomic phenomena which morbid anatomists have made are very few, yet it has been noticed by some pathologists, that that portion of the brain known by the name of "Cerebellum," is much more frequently found diseased than the one known as

exhibits a

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the "cerebrum," they also discovered that
those small soft glands known as
"Pineal," glands are often found in a
morbid state, tumors and other
structural derangement are some-
times found in the substance of
the brain, and at times deposits of
matter have been discovered
between the different lobes of the
"Cerebellum," with slight destruction
of the substance of the brain itself.
And in many instances not
the slightest trace of organic dis-
order has been discovered, either in the
brain or spinal marrow. Such
are the morbid appearances that
have been found in the dissection
of the brains of "Epileptics."

Predisposing Causes

These are sometimes
constitutional, and some authors say

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even hereditary. The attacks are mostly
about the age of "puberty."

Exciting Causes
Of these there are two
classes, first; those which act direct-
ly on the brain and under such
conditions, we call the disease "idio-
pathic." While then are others which
act on remote parts affecting the
brain sympathetically. This constitute
the "sympathetic form."

Among the causes which have
been found to act directly on
the brain are 1st Malformation of
the skull, Depressed bones, "Exostosis,"
from the internal table of the crani-
um, Organic derangement, vascular
congestion and effusion upon the
brain, disease of the cranial bones
and of the vertebrae, Tumors of the
head and spine, Depressions of the internal

table, from external injuries, Ossific
 Deposition in the brain or its Tunics,
 Obstruction of its arteries, Metastasis
 of "gout," or rheumatism to the "encephalon,"
 which are some of the direct causes
 which may act on the organization
 and cause these spasms. Next, of
 the symptomatic type the causes are
 equally as numerous, as in the
 former case. Among the most
 common are intestinal irritation,
 constipation, in females, suppression of the
 catamenia, sudden drying up of ulcers,
 issues, cutaneous diseases, various poi-
 sons, habitual intemperance, urinary
 calculi, terror, anger, grief, and often
 the sight of person affected with this
 disease.

Diagnosis

This disease is very often
 complicated with "hysteria," but there

are certain symptoms which enable us
 to distinguish with certainty this disease
 from hysteria, and there is no foaming at
 the mouth, nor is the countenance
 so livid and distorted as in epilepsy.
 The hysterical paroxysm, does not terminate
 etc in heavy sleep, as does the epileptic.
 In "hysteria there are what is called
 "Globus Hystericus," involuntary laughing
 or weeping.

Prognosis

This disease seldom takes
 life during the Paroxysm. The Idi-
 opathic form is most sure to lead
 to insanity. The Sympathetic is fre-
 quently cured, particularly in young
 persons, and ~~the more~~ progressively the
 more frequently the occurrence
 of these Paroxysms the more difficult
 is the disease to cure. Prognosis depends
 much upon the exciting cause

It is said cases produced by falls are hardly ever curable, From childhood to Puberty is the most favourable period It is more unfavourable when the precursory symptoms consist of some affection in the head, than when they are felt in other parts; particularly in the extremities, Protracted sleep and stupor are unfavourable indications

Treatment

The causes of this disease are so various that there is no exclusive course of treatment applicable to it, hence before prescription, it is necessary that we enquire after its original exciting cause; consider the state of all the functions or organizations, which can have any bearing upon the disease, its duration, the time and manner of its first attacks, The constitutional habits, age concomitant diseases, pursuits

Temper, mode of living, all these should be considered well, for it is ^{on} them a rational treatment can ^{be} founded. The treatment of this disease divides itself into two divisions, viz: "Palliative and Curative." The former is applicable to the paroxysm, the latter to the interval between. In the first attack of epilepsy, the patient being ignorant of the premonitory symptoms of the disease, knows ^{not} what precaution to use, or what to do to avoid the attack, consequently the first division viz: the palliative, is commenced, while the patient is in the paroxysm and at this time but little treatment is demanded or can be given. When the paroxysm comes on the patient should be placed in a recumbent position, with the head somewhat elevated, all the tight parts

of the chief, should be loosened, espe-
 cially, around the neck and chest,
 and also each portion that compresses
 the blood-vessels. The patient should
 have access to fresh and pure air,
 a soft piece of wood or some other
 substance should be placed between the
 teeth, to prevent injury to the tongue,
 and convulsive movements restrain-
 ed so far, as to guard the patient
 from injury. Sometimes when
 the patient is of full habit, ble-
 eding is often highly recommended
 to relieve the preternatural determi-
 nation to the head, cold appli-
 cation to the head, "Sinapisms," to
 the extremities have been thought to be
 beneficial, No treatment has yet
 been found that will materially
 mitigate or shorten the paroxysm.
 Repetition of depletary measures have

been thought, ~~to be~~ very ingenious
 by deteriorating the general health.
 If congestion of the brain is so
 great, as to threaten apoplexy, blood-
 letting, cold application to the head,
 "rubefacients," and warm baths to
 the extremities, are all of the hig-
 hest importance, various "emetics,"
 and emetics have been used with
 great effect. In cases of suspended
 respiration, the electro-magnetic
 current and artificial respiration
 should be had recourse to. After the
 patient has had several of these parox-
 ysms, he can tell from the previous
 toxy symptoms that he is soon to
 be in like manner affected, and phre-
 sicians have recommended a treatm-
 ent, to prevent the paroxysm, such
 a treatment consists of drinks of
 cold water, or brisk cathartics or

emetics, a ligature or tourniquet around the limb from which the "aura," seems to come, the treatment has proved very effective in warding off paroxysm in such cases as are thought to continue from habit after the exciting cause has been removed.

The radical cure of this disease is to be attempted during the interval between the paroxysms, and when the exciting cause can be ascertained, and is of a nature capable of being removed, the exciting cause should be removed immediately, as the first and most important step towards the cure. The causes which excite epileptic paroxysms, are so multiplied that we will not undertake to mention them here, but will lay down as an invariable rule, and seek the exciting ^{cause}

if possible, remove all sources of irritation
 to the brain or spinal marrow.
 The "Therapeutical" agents are as various as
 the exciting causes, and must there-
 fore be used accordingly. If the irritation
 is brought about by worms in the in-
 testinal canal as is often the case
 with children, "Anthelminetics" will
 be indicated. When from suppressed pec-
 cation "Diaphoretics" should be employ-
 ed. When from the drying up of old ulcers
 vesicatories, pustulating applications, warm
 baths, friction &c. When from Menstrual
 irregularities means must be employed
 to abate the morbid determination to the uter-
 ine system. When from external injuries a sur-
 gical operation is perhaps the only means of effe-
 ctive relief. After the removal of the exciting ca-
 use, we should enquire into the condition of every
 function within the organism, ascertain every dis-
 cernment and correct it. If the blood vessels are

the full and the blood too rich, give saline cathartics,
 vegetable diets, with proper exercise. If 'anemic',
 correct the abnormal condition of the blood, and
 in short see that every function performs
 its duty. In conclusion no one course of
 treatment, is considered as reliable, because of
 the variety of cases which produce it, but
 each must be treated with reference to
 its cause, and therefore we forbear men-
 tioning the long list of remedies which
 have proved of great avail in the treat-
 ment of this disease. In view of the rapid
 advancements in medical science, we may fondly cherish
 the hope that the day will soon dawn, when this "bell dis-
 ease", which so alarmed and terrified alike the "giant
 conscript fathers", and the "base plebeian of Rome, dispe-
 ring, ~~defying~~ their political assemblage, ominous of the dread
 renegeance of some offended God, and within whose ~~convulsing~~
 grasp the mighty Caesar shook & weakened, while the
 Roman eagle with every other victorious and continued
 blow after blow upon his frame until beneath

Bautas. Made he used at the base of
Pompeys Statue. like Caesar. like Rome
and Roman Eagles be numbered among the
thing that were.