

AN

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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 acceptation, 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, yet 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 chamber of affliction, is aware of the fact - "that although all men must die, yet that all do not die alike. And a knowledge of this fact does not concern the curious only; but often gives a clue, 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 understood, that all the processes of dissolution, to be spoken of, have come particularly under the notice of the writer. The cessation of the

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Circulation of the blood is incompat-
-ible 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 proc-
-ess is arrested. There are three vi-
-tal 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 nec-
-essarily fail also. And as the pa-
-thological condition may occur,
primarily in either one of these

organs 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 syncope.

Death by anaemia is caused by a deficiency of the blood sent to the heart. It is this mode of death that supervenes from violent-hemorrhage which may take place, after child-birth; the bursting of an aneurism, 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.

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Instances of this are found in intense grief, terror, fatal concussion, lightning and electricity, when fatal, and some forms of apoplexy.

Death by asthenia, 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 those two, (anaemia and asthenia) that is

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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—*asphyxia*— In order that the proper balance of the circulation may be sustained, it is necessary that the blood should be duly 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

of the blood may be caused in various ways, a few only of which will be mentioned. Authors have named smothering, drowning, choking, by drogen 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 membranes formed in the trachea, or bronchial tubes; or it may be caused by disease of the lungs themselves as pneumonia &c. 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.

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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 respir-
atory organs are brought to rest
and of course the chemical func-
tions of the lungs are also arrested.
In the latter the sensibility is ar-
rested by the circulation of venous
blood through the arteries. Death
by coma is the form that generally
terminates fatal cases of apoplex-
y, and hydrocephalus; but-as be-
fore stated the shock to the ner-
vous system is occasionally so
great, that death is produced

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immediately, in which case it
takes place by asthenia. In al-
most 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 partic-
ular tendency to death, may
be present during the prevalence
of a disease, whether it be epidem-
ic, or not. And although it may
not be essentially necessary

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in a practical point-of view
to know which mode of dying
takes place of tenest, in any
given number of cases, yet
it is necessary that the Practi-
-tioner 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
once to die," he is at least the
better prepared in most in-
-stances to alleviate the agony
and afford an easy exit.
Death is said to be natural when
it takes place as a consequence

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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 some affections however - even - 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 un-fortunate subject - that of preparing to meet his fast-approxi-mating dissolution.

It is under these trying circumstances, that the benefactor has an opportunity afforded him 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,

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opportunity been afforded me
of observing ~~any~~ the availability
of any particular mode of pro-
cedure. There is a class of med-
icines 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 superven-
tion of asphyxia. The operation
then, of this class of medicines

upon the system, consists of
 three stages - stimulation, nar-
 -coticism 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 action upon
 the nervous system, whilst the
 other effects are supposed to be
 owing to their action through the
 medium of absorption. But
 these things do not immediately
 concern the Practitioner, for
 experience has fully and satis-
 -factorily demonstrated that,

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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, "pro re nata", the agony
of death may be greatly miti-
gated; which should entitle the
benefactor to the parting bless-
-ing of his patient. And
although it may be humilia-
ting to reflect that those
opprobria medicorum - such
as, cancer, hydrocephalus &c do
baffle medicine, notwith-
standing its present advan-
ced position, yet - This reflec-
tion is more than counteracted

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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 dis-
charges all the duties incum-
- bent on him, as a Practition-
- er of medicine, is conscious
of having laid up for him-
- self, "merit in heaven
against the day of Judgment."