

BY A WELL-KNOWN MEDICAL AUTHOR.

CONTENTS:—The Rationale—Exciting Causes—Predisposing Causes—Special Causes—Theory of Congestion—Mental Effect—Practical Considerations—Diet—Sleep—Treatment.

EXCITING CAUSES.

The exciting causes of apoplexy, and indeed, of all diseases, are such accidents, incidents, casualties, etc., as suddenly disturb the circulation so as to induce the proximate cause or condition, which, as I have already explained, is congestion of blood in the brain. When the predisposition to apoplexy is strong, very trivial exciting causes may induce the paroxysm. Over-exertion, great fatigue, an indigestible meal, a surfeit, a late supper, an ordinary meal taken when the mind is wearied, worried, anxious, or depressed, or when the body is overheated or exhausted; severe mental effort immediately after eating; a mental shock; an extraordinary day's work, or an hour's night work when the mind should be asleep, are among the exciting causes of apoplexy. Many other unphysiological circumstances, which will readily occur to the reader, have been among the disturbing influences which have induced the disease, but they all bring about the disease by inducing its essential condition or proximate cause—congestion of the brain. Unless, however, the predisposition to the disease exist, none of these circumstances can occasion it, for the particular form of disease never depends on the exciting cause, but always on the nature of the predisposition. It is the predisposing cause which determines the character and form of the resulting disease. All those disturbing influences and agents, usually termed exciting causes, can do so to occasion disease of some kind. Its form, character, nature, seat, etc., are determined by the predispositions. Exciting causes only serve to develop the disease at a given time. A dozen persons may be equally exposed to sudden alternations of temperature, and each "catch" an equally severe cold. But each may have a different disease from all of the others. Why? Not because of the exciting causes, the vicissitudes of temperature, and the "cold" were different in each case, but because each person was in a different physiological, or rather pathological, condition. The plethoric person might have apoplexy; the person with very foul blood, typhus fever; the one with a very torpid liver, paralysis; the one with constipated bowels, dysentery; the one with a large amount of earthy and saline matters in the blood, gout, or rheumatism; the one who had taken a hearty meal of ham and eggs, fresh fermented bread, pickles, and hot coffee just before exposure to extreme cold, cholera morbus; and one who had previously "cured" a cutaneous eruption by the application of a beautifying lotion, "pain-killer," "all-healing ointment," or other repellent medication, would have a "revulsion" to the lungs, producing pneumonia, etc.

PREDISPOSING CAUSES.

The predisposing causes of apoplexy, and of all sudden deaths except those which are occasioned by mental shocks or mechanical injuries, are unphysiological habits. Indeed, as already stated, these are causes of all the maladies that afflict the human race. All causes of disease, aside from mechanical injuries, are reducible to two classes—poisons, introduced from without, and retained acetic matters. Whatever is taken into the system, other than air, water, and food, is poison and a cause of disease. And all excrementitious matters—the debris of the disintegrated tissues—when not properly expelled from the system, become causes of disease. In the language of Hippocrates, they are "poisons ingenerated." The abuse or misuse of air, water, and food is also a cause of disease, as well as the use of things, intrinsically abnormal. We may lay it down, therefore, as an incontrovertible postulate, that all causes of disease consist in the use of things abnormal, and the abuse of things normal.

Now, if the body is duly supplied with proper food, pure water, and fresh air, and placed in proper relations to temperature, light, exercise, rest, sleep, clothing, etc., the balance between supply and waste will be maintained and no disease can exist. But if anyone or more of the depurating organs—the liver, lungs, skin, kidneys, and bowels—become obstructed, this balance is destroyed, effete matters accumulate; poisons "ingenerate"; the blood is impoverished, becomes viscous, and is circulated with difficulty; the capillary vessels (in which all of the functions of secretion and excretion are performed) become overloaded and their diameters distended beyond the limit of normal functional action; the blood globules become more or less disorganized; all of which conditions tend to inflammations, hemorrhages, fevers, diarrhoea, cholera, diabetes, etc., according to the seat of the chief destruction and the degree of engorgement, these being the result of the sum total of the patient's habits of living. If the brain is the seat of the principal obstruction, some form of brain disease will result—delirium, coma, or apoplexy perhaps. If the brain congestion be slow and gradual, the patient may have paralysis; but if it be rapid and extreme, he will be sure to have apoplexy; and if the blood-vessels of the brain are stretched beyond a certain degree, he will be sure to die.

(To be continued.)

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