

CHAP. V.

MELANCHOLIA, LYPEMANIA OF ESQUIROL.

ESQUIROL, finding fault with the application of the word Melancholia, that among some authors comprised every partial, chronic, and non-febrile disorder of the mind, adopted for them the term Monomania, and joined with Dr. Rush in dividing Melancholia into two species;—the one he calls Amenomania, where the predominant delusion is of an agreeable kind; the other, Lypemania (λύπη), where the general symptoms are those of depression, and the mental state is one of grief or distress. Since the appearances which are observed in melancholia, or lypemania, are well marked, and some of them may be feigned with ease, we shall describe in order the characteristics belonging to it.

The onset of Melancholia is not sudden, and the temperaments in which it should be expected to occur are limited. The circumstances

of life which predispose towards it, or may be to it for exciting cause, are *not* found with those who are likely to simulate it. Neither a sudden shock nor apprehension are apt to induce it. Indolence, operating on a bilious temperament, sedentary and solitary life, imagination uncontrolled by reason, or by the cheerful discharge of social duties, much sensibility, labour of mind rather than labour of body, dissipation or excitement acting upon a frame too weak to sustain the one or the other, may be expected to precede it.

The mental faculties, apart from the special delusion, and excepting the special moral principle that is distorted, are unaltered. Esquirol says, even “toutes leur déductions sont conformes à la plus sévère logique.”* In some instances the previous character is retained, and the delusion or excess of passion has arisen *directly* out of bygone habits of thoughts; in others, inversely.† Thus, “he that has been froward, will be froward still,” or “he that has been unclean, will be unclean still;” or, inversely, he that has been brave, is now a coward;

* Esquirol, Malad. Mental, vol. i. p. 422.

† Beautifully described by Esquirol, *ib.*

or industrious, a hater of employment; and both are wretched, generally quarrelsome, and always querulous. This is specially worthy of notice, that where the *attention* of the unfortunate man cannot be gained, the cause is to be found not in the loss of that quality, but in its pre-occupation. The power of attention is actively engaged; but not for man, nor for truth, but in imaginary ills, apprehended dangers, self-created sufferings: and, perchance, of this he is himself cognizant. Some sudden wrench may unbend the faculties now morbidly clenched round a fictitious object; and then one has been heard to cry out in agony, in the words of St. Paul, when mourning over the complex law of man's fallen state, Οὐ γὰρ, ὃ θέλω, ποιῶ ἀγαθόν· ἀλλ' ὃ οὐ θέλω κακόν, τοῦτο πράσσω ταλαιπώρος ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος· τίς με ῥύσεται ἐκ τοῦ σώματος τοῦ θανάτου τούτου.*

So also with a powerless will, their understandings yet not much darkened, do some believe themselves (when recalled from their self-created world), under the stern compulsion of a strange existence, that at one age of the

* Romans vii. 19 and 24. A touching case in Esquirol, Mal. Ment. vol. i. p. 421.

world wrought good and evil with a superhuman power. They believe themselves guilty of crimes they never committed, and suffering the just punishment, and pursued by the torments which such crimes would have deserved.

In the impressions wrought upon particular faculties or passions, it is observed, that fear of aggression most usually occupies the melancholic; ordinary objects are to them a source of vexation; impending evils that might have been a cause of alarm to them when in health, alarm them now; the police, the anger of the elements, or mystic art, or the greater forces of nature, electricity, and the like, are about to destroy them.

The malevolent passions are generally inactive unless roused against those who are, or who are thought to be, the cause of their sorrows: the benevolent affections are frequently in extravagant excess, begetting suspicion, jealousy, and sorrow; sorrow that they have injured parents they never wronged; jealousy of the lost affections of him who is still their own; suspicion that they are objects of hatred, where, indeed, the love they mourn for has never fled.

Nor do the melancholic patients rest passive

under their sufferings; not resting hopes in religion, their minds being disordered, suicide is frequently their chief aim, and death their only desire.

As with the maniac, so with the melancholic, sleep is impaired: sad dreams oppress, and nightmare awakes him; he rises in the morning haggard, dreads the day that is before him; and yet more the night that is to follow. But this state is not universal.

The senses, as will have been gathered, are generally unimpaired; nay, often acute. Both hallucinations and illusions may, and frequently do, attend Melancholy, but these are rather of complication than of necessity. Sight and hearing are active, and the other senses present nothing distinctive of this class of mental disorder.

It is common that food should be wholly refused, whether from loss of appetite, from dread of poison, or from hope of starvation. The foecal excretion is scanty, and the bowels confined, while the urine is generally copious, and of the hysterical character, though sometimes loaded with lithates, and febrile. Menstruation is probably suppressed, or irregular;

and at the proper period of uterine action the disorder increases.

The pulse is feeble, for the circulation is languid and tardy: the skin, generally dry, is sometimes parched, and rough; for the exhalants perform their function in an abnormal manner, perspiration being suppressed, partial, or scanty.

Finally, the bodily motions of such an one, unlike the active attention of his mind, are languid. The expression of the countenance, though still, is not vacant; the general carriage of the body, though it betoken little action, though no word is ever spoken, is far removed from the lifeless laxity of the imbecile frame:—

——— “ Like a ghost,
Day after day, year after year, he sits
Gazing on vacancy, and now, anon,
Starting, as from some wild and uncouth dream.”

Though the mind is depressed, and sorely troubled, it yet lives; though it never gives utterance, there is yet hope: “*occupat artus.*”