

# PAIN AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN DIAGNOSIS.

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Pain, according to the dictionary, is defined, as an uneasy bodily sensation varying in degree from slight uneasiness to extreme torture. This definition fulfils the scientific conception of the term, and allows its application to any sensation which is disagreeable, or, at least, arouses in us a desire to escape from it. Any of the symptoms indicative of disordered conditions in our viscera, such, for example, as dyspnœa and nausea or vomiting, in themselves alarming and the cause of actual bodily discomfort, might be included in a broad sense under Pain; but in considering the derivation of the word, it is seen that punishment is the main idea, which originally consisted in arousing in some one an acute bodily sensation; so when we talk of pain we usually regard it as a quality of sensation which we express by the phrase "It hurts."

Within the limits of this paper, I hope to regard it as a nerve sensation, which calls our attention to some region of the body more or less definitely, and compels in us a desire to rid ourselves of it, and to see what information it can afford us in abnormal states of the human organism.

In order to investigate such a disturbance in a purely scientific manner, an exact knowledge as to its cause and nature would be desirable; but with our limited knowledge it may be broadly described as a sensory disturbance, and the physiology and pathology of the condition is rather foreign to the subject under consideration.

Musser divides pain into "peripheral," due to some disturbance affecting the nerves or nerve roots; "central," when the lesions are on the brain; and "general," which includes that pain depending on toxic conditions of the blood or disturbances of the nervous system on a whole, the disturbance showing itself as pain in regions of least resistance. While this no doubt represents a natural division of the subject, its value in diagnosis is questionable, as the nature of the disease frequently requires to be ascertained before it is possible to classify the pain.

Any classification of pain as to its quality is unsatisfactory, and the association of certain kinds of pain with definite states of disease, while possible in some cases, is not of general application. Description in as simple language as possible, and the adjectives boring, stabbing and aching, are sufficiently expressive of the patient's sufferings.

The *mode of onset* has to be considered, and in general the sudden or