

A Fatal Disorder

by Ambrose Bierce

A Dying Man who had been shot was requested by officers of the law to make a statement, and be quick about it.

"You were assaulted without provocation, of course," said the District Attorney, preparing to set down the answer.

"No," replied the Dying Man, "I was the aggressor."

"Yes, I understand," said the District Attorney; "you committed the aggression--you were compelled to, as it were. You did it in self-defence."

"I don't think he would have hurt me if I had let him alone," said the other. "No, I fancy he was a man of peace, and would not have hurt a fly. I brought such a pressure to bear on him that he naturally had to yield--he couldn't hold out. If he had refused to shoot me I don't see how I could decently have continued his acquaintance."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the District Attorney, throwing down his note- book and pencil; "this is all quite irregular. I can't make use of such an ante-mortem statement as that."

"I never before knew a man to tell the truth," said the Chief of Police, "when dying of violence."

"Violence nothing!" the Police Surgeon said, pulling out and inspecting the man's tongue--"it is the truth that is killing him."