

engaged in such a very important department of practice. Anything that depends upon me shall always be readily and cheerfully done in compliance with their wishes, as long as I have the honour to hold the office I now fill (applause).

The Meeting was then adjourned to the 26th of March.

*The Efficacy of Bran Bread in relieving Despondency in Melancholia, and allaying Mental Irritability, dependent on an irregular and constipated State of the Bowels.*

(Anonymous.)

The title of this article will probably on the first impression provoke a smile; and that so simple and seemingly inert a substance as bran should exert so much influence, does appear extraordinary. But it is necessary to reflect before arriving at any conclusion, that it is by these simple means—working gradually, but continuously—that nature effects in time such unlooked for ends. Watch the continued effects of water, drop by drop, on hard stone, or the growth of stalactites and stalacmites in caverns, both of which operations are imperceptible, but still the effect most marked, if visited at distant periods.

In like manner does this simple substance “bran,” when persisted in from week to week, exercise a most decided and beneficial influence over the bodies and minds of persons afflicted with chronic disorders, especially do I allude to those of the digestive organs, with the whole train of melancholy symptoms, of those unfortunates on whose welfare I am now engaged.

We read in Dr. Paris’s *Pharmacologia*, vol. 1, page 166:—“The addition of bran to our bread, constituting what is known by the name of ‘brown bread,’ induces laxative effects, merely from the mechanical friction of the rough particles, or scales of the bran, upon the inner coats of the intestine; for the wheat without the bran in bread is not particularly laxative.”

Now, although I was aware of this passage, and had tried the effects of bread made from brown meal, I had never thought of using it on a large scale, or adopting it as a system, until a neighbouring practitioner suggested it as a

remedy for insane patients in cases of habitual costiveness. This led me to reflect on his remarks, and to try the brown meal in a few cases, but without any decided advantage at first, excepting in mild cases of constipation, where these desired effects were produced; but I thought in irritable stomachs, this meal fermented and caused too great distention from flatulency.

I was induced to try this in other forms, and at last hit upon a plan, which I can now, with confidence, recommend to Medical Superintendents of establishments for the insane. It is a remedy perfectly controllable, but requires, occasionally, medical supervision. I have found that bran (merely from its mechanical irritation), possesses properties most invaluable in all chronic cases, depending on an impaired state of the digestive organs, whether connected with stomach, liver, bowels, or all these organs.

My experience dates from July last, at which period I commenced my experiments on persons afflicted with the above disorders, with the view of afterwards introducing it as a remedial agent into a large private establishment for insane and nervous patients. I not only tested the effects myself in various cases, but induced medical friends to do the same, the result of which has been, that they, together with myself, have formed a high opinion of its virtues; a decided action having been produced in old standing cases of liver, in promoting a fresh and healthy secretion of bile, and causing a regular, copious, natural, and sufficiently solid evacuation, in the place of motions dark and scanty, and often knobby, and that it exercises a gradual, continuous, and healthy action throughout the whole course of the alimentary canal.

For the last three months it has been used in an establishment for patients mentally afflicted, and with decidedly marked beneficial results. There was no difficulty in persuading the patients to adopt it, a few tried it and liked it, and expressed themselves, in a few days, as feeling lighter, more comfortable, less irritable and despondent; it certainly caused the countenance to appear more cheerful, and increased the appetite. It has now become the fashion to eat it, with both patients and attendants; it is generally approved of, and the regular and healthy relief afforded to the bowels, tranquillizes the minds of irritable and melancholic patients, and, without obliging the patient to take medicine, or have recourse to the enema; it improves the tone of the pulse and general health.

I had almost forgotten to state of what ingredients this bread is composed. To make nutritive, palatable, household bread for general purposes, requires three parts of the finest wheat flour, and one part fresh whole bran, with good fresh yeast and a little salt; but in very obstinate cases of constipation, where the patient has always been in the habit of taking medicine, or where an enema has invariably been administered to unload the bowels, two parts of fine wheat flour, and one part of fresh whole bran, will only just cause a sufficient daily evacuation. This mechanical irritant can be regulated to any quantity to suit the patient; if the stomach be delicate and irritable it must be commenced in small quantities at first, gradually increased as the stomach gets accustomed to it. Some cases are so inveterate that a Marshall Hall's pill, composed of the watery solution of *Barbadoes* aloes, taken before dinner, may be necessary. This invariably produces a most copious and firm evacuation.

I am not advising this in the place of cathartics, required for correcting depraved secretions, particularly in recent and acute cases, where the evacuations frequently are of a very unhealthy and offensive character, but I wish to bring to the notice of Superintendents of Asylums a safe and efficient remedy in cases as above described, and where patients are often liable to protracted constipation, often causing the greatest alarm to those to whose care they may have been entrusted.

I have made a hasty sketch of the effects of brown bread, as far as my experience goes. If time permitted I would enter more fully into some cases of dyspepsia, and chronic liver complaints, connected with neuralgic affections of the head and face, which have yielded to an improved state of bodily health, brought about by the aid alone of this bread, in promoting a natural, healthy, and copious evacuation daily from the bowels. One case I may mention, that of a gentleman, which had been of eighteen years' standing, where the bowels had not acted for ten years except by medicine and enemata. This patient states that he now feels perfectly restored; his appearance, which was gloomy and anxious, has become cheerful, with an expression of contentment: he has increased seven pounds in weight. This inveterate case, like many habitual mental imperfections, requires still to be fought inch by inch; for, although the patient has been well some months, the disease would again conquer, unless the remedy, in its strongest form, as

advised above, were persisted in, and the meals composed, in a great measure, of this bread.

I now leave this remedy to be tested by others, and trust they will reap similar results. The rationale may be discussed on a future occasion.

As I am writing for the public good, I may be excused giving my name excepting to the editor of this journal.

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*On Residences for the Insane.* By JOHN CONOLLY, M.D.

(From the Transactions of the Association for the Promotion of Social Science.)

It seems to have been long, before the assistance afforded in other forms of human infirmity was extended to persons bereft of reason. Their actions and appearance being usually repulsive or alarming, they were avoided, and suffered to wander about uncared for until this freedom became inconvenient or dangerous, and were then tied up, and beaten and starved, kept out of sight, and forgotten. Remnants of this system were to be recognised long after asylums were built for lunatics, and even to a period within the remembrance of persons now living. It is, indeed, only within the last thirty years that the exertions of the Society of Friends, which commenced at York about forty years sooner, became really successful in awakening general attention to the treatment required to restore health of body and of mind in those affected with the dreadful malady of insanity.

Much has been lately written in the public journals on the subject of proper residences for the insane, arising partly out of one exceptionable case of mismanagement recently occurring in a private asylum, but containing views and observations founded on abuses which have long ceased to characterize asylums in general. These writings have naturally caused great uneasiness in the minds of all who have relatives afflicted with insanity; and have also contained or led to suggestions, either impracticable or which would multiply the evils so justly condemned.

The mortality among the insane, and recoveries from all forms of mental disorder, appear to be so much influenced by the sanitary circumstances surrounding them, as perhaps alone to afford an excuse for offering some remarks on the subject to the Department of Public Health, and for describing some of the peculiar characteristics of insanity which must always,