

MARTINEAU, Harriet. 1850. "A New Plea for a New Food". *Household Words* 2(58):. 138-140.

nambulism are partially awake, or in a state of unusually and preternaturally profound sleep? The phenomena we have above referred to—particularly those connected with the insensibility of the body and the organs of the senses—lead us to believe, that in somnambulism there is an increased intensity of sleep, producing an extreme degree of unconsciousness in regard to the physical organisation, very similar to that which we find in hysterical, cataleptic, and many other nervous affections. The mental phenomena exhibited in this state are those connected with exaggerated dreams, and as the physiology of dreams is by no means well understood in the healthy state, still less can they be explained under the aspect of disease.

It may be asked, How somnambulism, being an affection likely to entail more serious diseases upon persons subject to it, is to be cured? When the general health is affected, the family doctor, we apprehend, will very speedily put an end to metaphysical mystery; but in young persons, even where it is hereditary, attention must be paid to diet, regimen, and a due amount of bodily exercise. The shower-bath has sometimes been found serviceable. It is thought, also, that it may be resisted by a strong effort of the will, inasmuch as, in young persons, it has been suppressed by the fear of punishment; but this, on the other hand, may have a very contrary effect, disturbing and exciting, rather than composing, the nervous system. In the North of Scotland the following plan is in some schools adopted. The youthful somnambulist is put to sleep in bed with a companion who is not affected, and the leg of the one boy is linked by a pretty long band of ribbon or tape to the leg of the other. Presently, the one disposed to ramble in his sleep gets out of bed, and, in so doing, does not proceed far before he awakens the non-somnambulist, who in resisting being dragged after him, generally throws the other down, which has the effect of awakening him. In this way we have been assured that several such cases have been effectually cured: But is it always safe thus to awake a person during the paroxysm? Maenish relates the case of a lady who being observed walking in her sleep into the garden, one of the family followed her, and laying hold of her, awakened her, when the shock was so great that she fell down insensible, and shortly afterwards expired.

We feel satisfied that all sudden and abrupt transitions should be avoided. The state of sleep, apart from somnambulism, is one of natural repose; the organs of the body have their various functions appropriately modified; and we cannot help thinking that to interrupt abruptly the course of Nature, and throw, as it were, a dazzling light upon the brain, the functions of which are in abeyance, is unwise, and may prove injurious. Many persons suddenly awakened out of a deep sleep, complain afterwards of severe headache. We

conceive, therefore, that somnambulists who may be considered in a state of preternaturally profound sleep, ought not to be forcibly awakened. It is true that some somnambulists, like the servant girl described by Doctor Fleming, above referred to, have been awakened without after ill consequence, but as a general rule, the nervous system ought not to be subjected to any rude or unnecessary shock. The management of, and treatment of the somnambulist, must, it is obvious, depend very much on age, sex, temperament, and upon the causes, in particular,—whether physical or mental,—to which the affection may be ascribed. The most interesting circumstance connected with somnambulism is that it brings palpably under our observation a preternatural state of being, in which the body is seen moving about, executing a variety of complicated actions, in the condition, physically, of a living automaton, while the lamp of the human soul is burning inwardly, as it were, with increased intensity; and this very exaltation of the mental faculties proves, incontestably, that the mind is independent of the body, and has an existence in a world peculiar to itself.

A NEW PLEA FOR A NEW FOOD.

WHEN the great question of the day and year was, how to feed the Irish in their extremity of hunger, large quantities of the cheapest flour that could be found were imported. Indian meal was brought over from America. The Irish ate it, because they must eat it or starve; and many were the English poor who did the same. The English rich tried it at their tables, with a real anxiety to recognise in it a wholesome and pleasant article of food. How impossible this was found, Mr. Carlyle and others have told the world. Under the best management, under the most careful disguises, the food was found unpalatable. It was sour, or bitter, or musty; sometimes all these.

The reason was this. The moisture contained in the grain is an acid. When the shell of the grain is broken, this moisture forms an oxide, all the sweet qualities of the grain disappear, and a bad flavour is substituted. Whether the meal came over ground, or merely broken, or kiln-dried, before it sailed, the effect was much the same, and people naturally concluded that the mischief was done by bringing the meal over the sea. The case was thus supposed to be hopeless, and the "yellow meal," as the Irish call it, was regarded as a mere refuge, and an odious one, from starvation.

This is now found to be a mistake; and, long as it will probably take to remove an impression so reasonable, it may be worth while to declare that Indian-corn flour may now be had in a perfect state, as wholesome and pleasant as any other flour, and so cheap

as to make it an object of serious importance to establish the facts of the case.

A Mr. Stafford, in America, discovered the cause of the mischief, and invented a process by which the acid moisture of the grain is evaporated, without injury to any of its other constituents. The meal is passed over warm cylinders, and comes away almost as incapable of deterioration as sand. It has been shut up in a garret for two years; it has been carried round the world, without losing its sweetness and delicate flavour. This meal can now be sold at two-thirds of the price of the best wheaten flour. With the addition of the cost of carriage into the country, it may be reckoned at less than three-fourths of the price of wheaten flour. Owing to the exertions of the American Minister, and others in London, an extensive trial is in progress there; and here and there, in country districts, a cask has been distributed among neighbours, who immediately become anxious to know how they may obtain the flour regularly. But, as yet, little is done towards introducing it where it is most wanted—among the Irish, who are still lingering on towards the grave, and the Scotch, who are in some parts sinking under the prospect of death by famine. In the island of Skye, the weather was tempestuous last summer. The harvest season was wet; the potatoes failed, as completely as in Ireland in 1847; few of the peasantry have seed corn or potatoes, and those few are daily driven to consume that which is their only hope for another year. A gloom hangs over the bare land, and over the sinking people. On the other side of the sea, the great American valleys are producing a vast surplus of this meal, over and above what the inhabitants can consume, or have, as yet, sold; and in London are the means of communication between those who abound and those who need.

The inventor of the new process has printed instructions and other advice to teach how the Indian-corn flour may be dressed. Our present notice would not be entertaining if it should take the form of an extract from a receipt-book; and we will, therefore, merely say, in regard to the cookery branch of the subject, that the ordinary English taste appears to be best met by a half-and-half mixture of the meal with wheaten flour, or two-thirds of wheaten to one of Indian flour. We cannot, however, refrain from giving the receipt for the true American pudding, which, though rarely or never described in receipt-books, is exceedingly grateful to the palates of tourists as well as natives:—

Six tablespoonfuls of Indian-corn flour; one pint of milk scalded with an ounce of butter (or suet); stir in the milk and butter to the flour, and also two tablespoonfuls of molasses, and a very little salt; lemon-peel or citron is an improvement. Tie up in a basin, with a thick cloth, and boil four hours. If

baked, it will take two hours. Eat with butter, molasses, or lemon. The flour should always be worked up with boiling water or milk. And, finally, the Americans in England complain of the varying qualities of our yeast, which they declare to be never the same from any two breweries, and therefore difficult to prescribe about in their receipt-books. They are glad when we use the dried German yeast, as giving the experiment of their flour the fairest chance.

Considering how many anxious persons are considering what can best be done for those emaciated Highlanders, who are ready to eat the very sea-weed under their feet, if it would only nourish them; considering how many new owners of Irish estates, and old owners of released estates, are pondering, day and night, what can best be done for the peasantry—may we not hope that the opportunity of introducing a fourth or third more good food for the same money will not be overlooked? May not the prevalent disrelish of the "yellow meal" be overcome by an explanation, that the flour under Stafford's patent is not the same article, nor anything like it? Is it not pretty certain that the food which is relished throughout the American navy, and at the tables of gentlemen in London, and tradesmen in country towns, would be well received among those who know, by personal experience, what dearth is in Scotland, and famine in Ireland? Dare we refuse to try?

Everyone may begin the experiment as he pleases, of course. One was tried in this way. A box arrived at a country town, containing several packages of the flour, done up in weight of seven pounds each. One was sent to the clergyman; one to each inn; one each, to three or four houses where good cooks were kept; and, again, to several shopkeepers. Various labourers were asked, as a favour, to accept a hot pudding, or a loaf, and give a perfectly honest account, whether they liked it or not. In every case but one, the report was favourable. Tradesmen and labourers came to the house to know how they could get more, without running the risk of expensive carriage, by ordering of the flour-dealers. The patron of the experiment sent to London for a cask, out of which, after paying the carriage by luggage-train, the flour will issue at little more than half the present price of wheaten flour in that somewhat expensive little town. As it is by no means the wish of the patron to steal the trade of the baker and flour-dealer, they will come up, bringing their own scales and weights, if they like, and weigh out for themselves; and then, if they please their customers, they can henceforth send their own orders to London. It appears that two or three pounds a year will be saved to the patron's purse by the adoption, to a certain extent, of this new food; and many and many a hard-earned shilling to the labouring man.

More than this,—how many shillings may be, not only saved, but brought to the labouring man, if a large importation of American meal should take place! The more food we take from America, the more of our manufactures will the Americans, or somebody else, take in payment for it. We all know how serious have been the alarm and the mischief of the varying and the enhanced price of cotton within the last three years, and how earnestly some capitalists are now setting to work to grow flax in England and Ireland, in order to render us somewhat less dependent on the United States for the staple of our largest manufacture. What a vast amount of risk may be saved if we divide with that country the production of that staple and of food! By such a method, there may be a vast and most moral and politic reduction of the gambling character of our manufacture and commerce, and of that worst of gambling which involves the state of human virtue and human life. Instead of our having all cotton from America, and all food (as regards America) grown at home, let us have some cotton and some food from America, and some flax and some food at home (with cotton from India by and by), and our operatives may find their lives equalised, somewhat in the same way that foreign commerce is deprived of much of its gambling character by marine insurance; the illustration, however, being a comparison of small things with great.

There is another view of the matter,—not so generally interesting as it should be, but profoundly so to those who understand and appreciate the case. Cotton is grown by slave-labour: Indian corn is grown by the labour of freemen. A great struggle,—one of the most serious in principle, and in its certain consequences, whenever they occur, that the human race has ever been engaged in,—is now going on, between the slave-power in the Southern States of America, which grow the cotton, and Abolition principles, in the free States in the North, which grow the food. Every increased demand for cotton on our part rivets the chains of the slave. Every increased demand for corn on our part strengthens the hands of those who would free the slave. Among the best—the most effectual—friends of the slave, are those who promote the growth of cotton in India, and of flax at home, and who encourage the demand of agricultural produce from the American States north of the Ohio. It is but to few, perhaps, that this plea will be interesting; but to those few, the interest will be supreme; for it is they who are aware that, of all the great political questions now stirring in the world, no one involves so many principles important to the welfare of the whole human race, as that of the abolition of slavery in the United States. Every moralist,—even every politician,—knows that the abolition is certain. It is the time alone that is uncertain: and that time will be hastened,—whether little or

much,—by the extensive use of this humble article,—this cheap Indian-corn flour,—in our islands.

A CHILD'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND.

CHAPTER IV.

CANUTE left three sons, by name SWEYN, HAROLD, and HARDICANUTE; but his Queen, Emma, once the Flower of Normandy, was the mother of only Hardicanute. Canute had wished his dominions to be divided between the three, and had wished Harold to have England; but the Saxon people in the South of England headed by a nobleman with great possessions, called the powerful EARL GODWIN, (who is said to have been originally a poor cow-boy,) opposed this, and desired to have, instead, either Hardicanute, or one of the two exiled Princes who were over in Normandy. It seemed so certain that there would be more bloodshed to settle this dispute, that many people left their homes, and took refuge in the woods and swamps. Happily, however, it was agreed to refer the whole question to a great meeting at Oxford, which decided that Harold should have all the country north of the Thames, with London for his capital city, and that Hardicanute should have all the south. The quarrel was so arranged; and, as Hardicanute was in Denmark troubling himself very little about anything but eating and getting drunk, his mother and Earl Godwin governed the south for him.

They had hardly begun to do so, and the trembling people who had hid themselves were scarcely at home again, when Edward, the elder of the two exiled Princes, came over from Normandy with a few followers, to claim the English Crown. His mother Emma, however, who only cared for her last son Hardicanute, instead of assisting him, as he expected, opposed him so strongly with all her influence that he was very soon glad to get safely back. His brother Alfred was not so fortunate. Believing in an affectionate letter, written some time afterwards to him and his brother, in his mother's name, (but whether really with or without his mother's knowledge is now unknown,) he allowed himself to be tempted over to England, with a good force of soldiers, and landing on the Kentish coast, and being met and welcomed by Earl Godwin, proceeded into Surrey, as far as the town of Guildford. Here, he and his men halted in the evening to rest, having still the Earl in their company, who had ordered lodgings and good cheer for them. But, in the dead of night, when they were off their guard, being divided into small parties sleeping soundly after a long march and a plentiful supper in different houses, they were set upon by the King's troops, and taken prisoners. Next morning they were drawn out in a line, to the number of six hundred men, and were barbarously tortured and killed, with the exception of every tenth man, who was sold