



UNWINDING THE ACCURSED CHAIN.

THOSE who have read the Confessions will have closed them with the impression that I had wholly renounced the use of Opium. This impression I meant to convey, and that for two reasons: first, because the very act of deliberately recording such a state of suffering necessarily presumes in the recorder a power of surveying his own case as a cool spectator, and a degree of spirits for adequately describing it, which it would be inconsistent to suppose in any person speaking from the station of an actual sufferer; secondly, because I, who had descended from so large a quantity as 8000 drops to so small a one (comparatively speaking) as a quantity ranging between 300 and 160 drops, might well suppose that the victory was in effect achieved. In suffering my readers, therefore, to think of me as a reformed Opium-eater, I left no impression but what I shared myself; and, as may be seen, even this impression was left to be collected from the general tone of the conclusion, and not from any specific words—which are in no instance at variance with

the literal truth. In no long time after that paper was written, I became sensible that the effort which remained would cost me far more energy than I had anticipated; and the necessity for making it was more apparent every month. In particular I became aware of an increasing callousness or defect of sensibility in the stomach; and this I imagined might imply a schirrous state of that organ either formed or forming. An eminent physician, to whose kindness I was at that time deeply indebted, informed me that such a termination of my case was not impossible, though likely to be forestalled by a different termination, in the event of my continuing the use of opium. Opium, therefore, I resolved wholly to abjure, as soon as I should find myself at liberty to bend my undivided attention and energy to this purpose. It was not, however, until the 24th of June last that any tolerable concurrence of facilities for such an attempt arrived. On that day I began my experiment, having previously settled in my own mind that I would not flinch, but would "stand up to the scratch"—under any possible "punishment." I must premise that about 170 or 180 drops had been my ordinary allowance for many months; occasionally I had run up as high as 500, and once nearly to 700; in repeated preludes to my final experiment I had also gone as low as 100 drops; but had found it impossible to stand it beyond the fourth day—which, by the way, I have always found more difficult to get over than any of the preceding three. I went off under easy sail—130 drops a-day for three days; on the fourth I plunged at once to 80. The misery which I now suffered "took the conceit" out of me at once; and for about a month I continued off and on about this mark; then I sunk to 60, and the next day to—none at all. This was the first day for nearly ten years that I had existed without opium. I persevered

in my abstinence for ninety hours—*i.e.*, upwards of half a-week. Then I took—ask me not how much; say, ye severest, what would ye have done? Then I abstained again; then took about 25 drops: then abstained: and so on.

Meantime the symptoms which attended my case for the first six weeks of the experiment were these: enormous irritability and excitement of the whole system; the stomach in particular restored to a full feeling of vitality and sensibility; but often in great pain; unceasing restlessness night and day; sleep—I scarcely knew what it was; three hours out of the twenty-four was the utmost I had, and that so agitated and shallow that I heard every sound that was near me. Lower jaw constantly swelling; mouth ulcerated, and many other distressing symptoms that would be tedious to repeat; amongst which, however, I must mention one, because it had never failed to accompany any attempt to renounce opium—*viz.*, violent sternutation. This now became exceedingly troublesome, sometimes lasting for two hours at once, and recurring at least twice or three times a-day. I was not much surprised at this, on recollecting what I had somewhere heard or read, that the membrane which lines the nostrils is a prolongation of that which lines the stomach; whence, I believe, are explained the inflammatory appearances about the nostrils of dram-drinkers. The sudden restoration of its original sensibility to the stomach expressed itself, I suppose, in this way. It is remarkable also that, during the whole period of years through which I had taken opium, I had never once caught cold (as the phrase is) nor even the slightest cough. But now a violent cold attacked me, and a cough soon after. In an unfinished fragment of a letter begun about this time to — I find these words:—"You ask me to write the

— Do you know Beaumont and Fletcher's play of Thierry and Theodore? There you will see my case as to sleep; nor is it much of an exaggeration in other features. I protest to you that I have a greater influx of thoughts in one hour at present than in a whole year under the reign of opium. It seems as though all the thoughts which had been frozen up for a decade of years by opium, had now, according to the old fable, been thawed at once—such a multitude stream in upon me from all quarters. Yet such is my impatience and hideous irritability that, for one which I detain and write down, fifty escape me; in spite of my weariness from suffering and want of sleep, I cannot stand still or sit for two minutes together. 'I nunc, et versus tecum meditare canoros.'

At this stage of my experiment I sent to a neighbouring surgeon, requesting that he would come over to see me. In the evening he came; and after briefly stating the case to him, I asked this question:—Whether he did not think that the opium might have acted as a stimulus to the digestive organs; and that the present state of suffering in the stomach, which manifestly was the cause of the inability to sleep, might arise from indigestion? His answer was—No; on the contrary he thought that the suffering was caused by digestion itself, which should naturally go on below the consciousness, but which from the unnatural state of the stomach, vitiated by so long a use of opium, was become distinctly preceptible. This opinion was plausible; and the unintermitting nature of the suffering disposes me to think that it was true; for, if it had been any mere *irregular* affection of the stomach, it should naturally have intermitted occasionally, and constantly fluctuated as to degree. The intention of nature, as manifested in the healthy state, obviously is,

to withdraw from our notice all the vital motions, such as the circulation of the blood, the expansion and contraction of the lungs, the peristaltic action of the stomach, etc.; and opium, it seems, is able in this, as in other instances, to counteract her purposes. By the advice of the surgeon I tried *bitters*. For a short time these greatly mitigated the feelings under which I laboured; but about the forty-second day of the experiment the symptoms already noticed began to retire, and new ones to arise of a different and far more tormenting class; under these, but with a few intervals of remission, I have since continued to suffer. But I dismiss them undescribed for two reasons: first, because the mind revolts from retracing circumstantially any sufferings from which it is removed by too short or by no interval. To do this with minuteness enough to make the review of any use, would be, indeed, *infandum renovare dolorem*, and possibly without a sufficient motive: for secondly, I doubt whether this latter state be any way referable to opium—positively considered, or even negatively: that is, whether it is to be numbered amongst the last evils from the direct action of opium, or even amongst the earliest evils consequent upon *want* of opium in a system long deranged by its use. Certainly one part of the symptoms might be accounted for from the time of year (August); for, though the summer was not a hot one, yet in any case the sum of all the heat *funded* (if one may say so) during the previous months, added to the existing heat of that month, naturally renders August in its better half the hottest part of the year; and it so happened that the excessive perspiration, which even at Christmas attends any great reduction in the daily quantum of opium—and which in July was so violent as to oblige me to use a bath five or six times a-day, had about the setting in of the

hottest season wholly retired, on which account any bad effect of the heat might be the more unmitigated. Another symptom—viz., what in my ignorance I call internal rheumatism (sometimes affecting the shoulders, etc., but more often appearing to be seated in the stomach), seemed again less probably attributable to the opium or the want of opium than to the dampness of the house* which I inhabit, which had about that time attained its maximum, July having been, as usual, a month of incessant rain in our most rainy part of England.

Under these reasons for doubting whether opium had any connection with the latter stage of my bodily wretchedness—(except, indeed, as an occasional cause, as having left the body weaker and more crazy, and thus predisposed to any mal-influence whatever)—I willingly spare my reader all description of it; let it perish to him; and would that I could as easily say, let it perish to my own remembrances, that any future hours of tranquillity may not be disturbed by too vivid an ideal of possible misery!

So much for the sequel of my experiment; as to the former stage, in which properly lies the experiment and its application to other cases, I must request my reader not to forget the reasons for which I have recorded it. These were two: first, a belief that I might add some trifle to the history of opium as a medical agent. In this I am aware

* In saying this, I mean no disrespect to the individual house, as the reader will understand when I tell him, that, with the exception of one or two princely mansions, and some few inferior ones that have been coated with Roman cement, I am not acquainted with any house in this mountainous district which is wholly waterproof. The architecture of books, I flatter myself, is conducted on just principles in this country; but for any other architecture, it is in a barbarous state: and, what is worse, in a retrograde state.

that I have not at all fulfilled my own intentions, in consequence of the torpor of mind, pain of body, and extreme disgust to the subject which besieged me whilst writing that part of my paper; which part being immediately sent off to the press (distant about five degrees of latitude), cannot be corrected or improved. But from this account, rambling as it may be, it is evident that this much of benefit may arise to the persons most interested in such a history of opium—viz., to Opium-eaters in general, that it establishes, for their consolation and encouragement, the fact that opium may be renounced; and without greater sufferings than an ordinary resolution may support, and by a pretty rapid course* of descent.

To communicate this result of my experiment was my foremost purpose. Secondly, as a purpose collateral to this, I wished to explain how it had become impossible for me to compose a Third Part in time to accompany this republication; for during the very time of this experiment, the proof sheets of this reprint were sent to me from London; and such was my inability to expand or to improve them, that I could not even bear to read them over with attention enough to notice the press errors, or to correct any verbal inaccuracies. These were my reasons for troubling my reader with any record, long or short, of experiments relating to so truly base a subject as my own body; and I am earnest with the reader that he will not forget them, or so far misapprehend me as to believe it possible that I would condescend to so rascally a subject for its own sake, or indeed for any less object than that of

* On which last notice I would remark, that mine was too rapid, and the suffering therefore needlessly aggravated; or rather, perhaps, it was not sufficiently continuous and equably graduated. But, that the reader may judge for himself, and above all, that the Opium-eater,

general benefit to others. Such an animal as the self-observing valetudinarian—I know there is; I have met him who is preparing to retire from business, may have every sort of information before him, I subjoin my diary:—

FIRST WEEK.			THIRD WEEK.		
Drops of Laud.			Drops of Laud		
Mond. June 24	...	130	Mond. July 8	...	300
— 25	...	140	— 9	...	50
— 26	...	130	— 10	} Hiatus in MS.	
— 27	...	80	— 11		
— 28	...	80	— 12		
— 29	...	80	— 13		
— 30	...	80	— 14	...	78
SECOND WEEK.			FOURTH WEEK.		
Mond. July 1	...	80	Mond. July 15	...	76
— 2	...	80	— 16	...	73½
— 3	...	90	— 17	...	73½
— 4	...	100	— 18	...	70
— 5	...	80	— 19	...	240
— 6	...	80	— 20	...	80
— 7	...	80	— 21	...	350
FIFTH WEEK.			Drops of Laud.		
Mond. July 22	...	...	...	...	60
— 23	...	...	...	...	none.
— 24	...	...	...	...	none.
— 25	...	...	...	...	none.
— 26	...	...	...	...	200
— 27	...	...	...	...	none.

What mean these abrupt relapses, the reader will ask, perhaps, to such numbers as 300—350, etc. ? The *impulse* to these relapses was mere infirmity of purpose; the *motive*, where any motive blended with this impulse, was either the principle of "*reculer pour mieux sauter*;" (for, under the torpor of a large dose, which lasted for a day or two, a less quantity satisfied the stomach—which, on awakening, found itself partly accustomed to this new ration); or else it was this principle—that of sufferings otherwise equal those will be borne best which meet with a mood of anger. Now, whenever I ascended to my large dose, I was furiously incensed on the following day, and could then have borne anything.

myself occasionally, and I know that he is the worst imaginable *heautontimoroumenos*; aggravating and sustaining, by calling into distinct consciousness every symptom that would else, perhaps, under a different direction given to the thoughts, become evanescent. But as to myself, so profound is my contempt for this undignified and selfish habit, that I could as little condescend to it as I could to spend my time in watching a poor servant girl, to whom at this moment I hear some lad or other making love at the back of my house. Is it for a Transcendental Philosopher to feel any curiosity on such an occasion? Or can I, whose life is worth only eight and a-half years' purchase, be supposed to have leisure for such trivial employments? However, to put this out of question, I shall say one thing, which will perhaps shock some readers; but I am sure it ought not to do so, considering the motives on which I say it. No man, I suppose, employs much of his time on the phenomena of his own body without some regard for it; whereas the reader sees that, so far from looking upon mine with any complacency or regard, I hate it, and make it the object of my bitter ridicule and contempt; and I should not be displeased to know that the last indignities which the law inflicts upon the bodies of the worst malefactors might hereafter fall upon it. And, in testification of my sincerity in saying this, I shall make the following offer. Like other men, I have particular fancies about the place of my burial; having lived chiefly in a mountainous region, I rather cleave to the conceit, that a grave in a green churchyard, amongst the ancient and solitary hills, will be a sublimer and more tranquil place of repose for a philosopher than any in the hideous Golgothas of London. Yet if the gentlemen of Surgeons' Hall think that any benefit can redound to their

science from inspecting the appearances in the body of an Opium-eater, let them speak but a word, and I will take care that mine shall be legally secured to them, *i.e.*, as soon as I have done with it myself. Let them not hesitate to express their wishes upon any scruples of false delicacy, and consideration for my feelings; I assure them they will do me too much honour by "demonstrating" on such a crazy body as mine; and it will give me pleasure to anticipate this posthumous revenge and insult inflicted upon that which has caused me so much suffering in this life. Such bequests are not common; reversionary benefits contingent upon the death of the testator are indeed dangerous to announce in many cases: of this we have a remarkable instance in the habits of a Roman prince, who used, upon any notification made to him by rich persons, that they had left him a handsome estate in their wills, to express his entire satisfaction at such arrangements, and his gracious acceptance of those loyal legacies; but then, if the testators neglected to give him immediate possession of the property, if they traitorously "persisted in living" (*si vivere perseverarent*, as Suetonius expresses it), he was highly provoked, and took his measures accordingly. In those times, and from one of the worst of the Cæsars, we might expect such conduct; but I am sure that from English surgeons at this day I need look for no expressions of impatience, or of any other feelings, but such as are answerable to that pure love of science and all its interests, which induces me to make such an offer.

