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EXTRAORDINARY ANOMALY.

BERNARD CAVANAGH.

IN the hope that the narration of the following singular circumstances may attract the attention of medical and scientific men towards its extraordinary subject, we lay it before the readers of the *Irish Penny Journal*:—

Bernard Cavanagh is about twenty-four years of age, and now living with his parents at nearly a mile distant from the little town of Swineford, county Mayo. The parents are respectable, of reputable character, and in comfortable circumstances. They assert—indeed they have made affidavits before a magistrate of the county—that for nearly the last four years he has existed without tasting sustenance of any kind. They state also that from the 2d September 1836 to the 2d July 1840, he neither spoke nor rose from his bed except to allow it to be arranged, during which operation he never opened his mouth; and this portion of the statement is borne out to a considerable extent by the fact of his having been visited frequently, and at various periods, by persons of high respectability as well as of the lower class, on all which occasions he was observed invariably in the same position, with his hands on his breast and his eyes fixed on the window.

The night before he betook himself to bed, he knocked at the door of the priest's house, and stated that he wished to communicate something to him; but the reverend gentleman declined admitting him, in consequence of the lateness of the hour, saying that he could impart whatever he wished to state on the morrow.

"But I will not be here to-morrow," responded Cavanagh; and he was right: the next day he took to his bed.

In the interval between September 1836 and the present season, public attention on a limited scale was occasionally directed towards Cavanagh. But the report of his utter and continued abstinence from food was treated as a monstrous fable by every one at any distance from his immediate locality, and the extraordinary allegations respecting him were beginning to fade from general recollection, when, to the utter astonishment of every one in his neighbourhood, he arose from bed and recovered his speech and powers of moving about; since which time he continues, according to the accounts, without sustenance in any shape, and has been visited by thousands of persons from various quarters.

In his youth, Cavanagh's education extended barely as far as the acquirement of reading and writing; but he constantly exhibited strong marks of religious enthusiasm, often proceeding to Meelick chapel (about three miles from his residence) to one mass, and then attending another at his own parish chapel of Swineford. It is said, too, that he at one time constructed a sort of rude building for his private devotion in the open fields, and repeatedly went to prayers at meal-times in his father's house, contenting himself with *one* meal in the day, as if preparing himself for his total fast. Accordingly, since resuming his speech and motion he haunts the chapel at all hours by day and night, continuing for hours together apparently in private prayer, and generally attended by a large concourse of the peasantry, whom he addresses by fits and starts, and many of whom are naturally, under the circumstances, beginning to deem him not a human being at all, but a shadow.

He seems not inclined to speak much, though he states he has had "high visions." His reply to the clergymen respecting his revelations and fasting, is, that he is fed by the Word; that he is not at liberty to detail his visions for the gratification of man; and that no one should judge lest he be judged.

Cavanagh is about the middle height, of a grave emaciated countenance; his motions are quite unembarrassed, and his voice is sonorous and distinct when he speaks, which is still but seldom, as he seems to utterly disregard his visitors, whatever their rank.

As we said before, he continues daily to draw thousands of the peasantry around him, who eagerly watch every word that falls from his lips, as they place implicit faith in the assertion that he has lived without any description of food for the last four years, and of course regard him as something entirely beyond the pale of ordinary humanity. We are, however, not so easy of belief in a case so much at variance with the ordinary regulations of nature; at the same time that we are free to admit that it is hard to conceive what motive the young man or his parents could have for carrying on such an imposition, as the latter endeavoured at first to conceal the matter altogether, and, in the next place, have repeatedly re-

fused money offered by their respectable visitors, though, in fact, their means are a good deal diminished by the hospitality extended to each successive guest; while a young sister, who has constantly attended Cavanagh since he has lain and fasted according to the statement, persists in declaring, with the strongest appearance of innocence and belief in the truth of her own assertion, that it was impossible he could have tasted any thing during any part of that time unknown to her, and that he never had.

That a person of narrow intellect and strong devotional propensities should be seized with a religious monomania, and that to a being of a weak mind and a debilitated frame strange visions should occur, is perfectly comprehensible; but that the frail materials of the human frame, which needs the nourishment of food as much as the flower requires sunshine and moisture, should endure for such a period without support, is so unprecedented in all the records of mankind, and so contradictory to the general laws of nature, that it would require the most powerful proofs indeed to convince the intelligent mind of its truth. We therefore again express our strong hope that this slight sketch may produce the effect of having Cavanagh's case submitted to the test of eminent medical skill—a test to which the parents profess their entire willingness to assent, and thus a case of the grossest imposition be detected, and thousands of simple beings disabused, or one of the most extraordinary of nature's anomalies be clearly ascertained and exhibited. A.

SCENE IN THE THEATRE AT LEGHORN.—My time passed delightfully while I remained in Leghorn. The Russian fleet was at anchor in the Bay, commanded by Admiral O'Dwyer, a distinguished seaman, and an Irishman by birth. The Storaces and myself often went on board his ship, and were delighted by hearing the Russians chaunt their evening hymn. The melody is beautifully simple, and was always sung completely in tune by this immense body of men. There was at the same time in the harbour a privateer from Dublin, called the Fame, Captain Moore: he and his first officer Campbell were Irishmen, and had a fine set of Irish lads under them. When Storace's benefit took place, the officers and crew who could be spared from their duty, to a man (and a famous sight it was) marched to the theatre, and almost filled the parterre. At the end of the opera, Storace sang the Irish ballad "Molly Astore," at the conclusion of which, the boatswain of the Fame gave a loud whistle, and the crew in a body rose and gave three cheers. The dismay of the Italian part of the audience was ludicrous in the extreme. The sailors then sang "God save the King" in full chorus, and when done, applauded themselves to the very skies; nothing could be more unanimous or louder than their self-approbation.—*Reminiscences of Michael Kelly.*

TRUTH.—Truth is the foundation of virtue. An habitual regard for it is absolutely necessary. He who walks by the light of it has the advantage of the mid-day sun; he who would spurn it, goes forth amid clouds and darkness. There is no way in which a man strengthens his own judgment, and acquires respect in society so surely, as by a scrupulous regard to truth. The course of such an individual is right on and straight on. He is no changing, saying one thing to-day and another to-morrow. Truth to him is like a mountain landmark to the pilot: he fixes his eye upon a point that does not move, and he enters the harbour in safety. On the contrary, one who despises truth and loves falsehood is like a pilot who takes a piece of drift-wood for his landmark, which changes with every changing wave. On this he fixes his attention, and, being insensibly led from his course, strikes upon some hidden reef, and sinks to rise no more. Thus truth brings success; falsehood results in ruin and contempt.—*Dr Channing.*

GAMING.—I look upon every man as a suicide from the moment he takes the dice-box desperately in his hand; and all that follows in his fatal career from that fatal time is only sharpening the dagger before he strikes it to his heart.—*Cumberland.*

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