

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION.

May, 1869.

It is with no slight degree of pride and satisfaction that I presume to publish a fourth edition of my Letter on Corpulence, in the hope and belief that it may still further interest and benefit the Public. The preceding editions were composed and issued with all sorts of apparent defects and deformities from my utter inability to afford any substantial evidence of the merit and utility of the system beyond my own personal and short experience.

Five years have now elapsed since the third edition was published. It has happily attained a world-wide circulation, and afforded me a vast amount of pleasure and gratification, derived from the conviction that I have been the means of bringing under public consideration and discussion one of the little known and much neglected laws of nature. The popularity of my unpretending brochure is manifest, not only in the surprising sale of no less than 63,000 copies, in this country alone, but by its translation into foreign languages and its large and rapid circulation in France, Germany, and the United States. In addition to this I have received nearly 2,000 very complimentary and grateful letters from all quarters of the world.

Feeling intense interest in a thorough examination of this important question, I solicited correspondence, in order that I might obtain the fullest information from the experience of others. This, of course, has consumed a great deal of my time, as well as occasioned considerable expense. Fortunately, however, I had leisure, inclination, and means at my disposal, and considered it a privilege to employ them in the service of my fellow-creatures. The correspondence has been a great source of interest to myself, and I believe will likewise interest and benefit the public at large.

The great principle which Mr. William Harvey (my medical adviser), of Soho Square, inculcated, having been confirmed by my own personal experience, I was enabled to speak with perfect confidence, and I became invulnerable to the ridicule, contempt, or abuse which were not spared in the earlier stages of the discussion. I believe I have subdued my discourteous assailants by silence and patience; and I can now look with pity, not unmixed with sorrow, upon men of eminence who had the rashness and folly to designate the dietary system as "humbug," and to hold up to scorn the man who put it forth, although he never derived nor sought pecuniary or personal recompense, but simply desired, out of gratitude, to make known to other sufferers the remedy which he had found so efficacious to himself.

I heartily thank the public press for the general fairness of its criticisms, and feel deeply indebted to the Morning Advertiser for its able article on 3rd October, 1865, when I was so sadly and unjustly attacked by certain prominent members of the British Association, whose feelings, now that the subject has been more widely and intelligently examined and discussed, I do not envy.

My sole objects in issuing a fourth edition are:

First - To offer my further personal experience on the subject since I published the third edition in 1864.

Secondly - To adduce some remarkable proofs of the benefits afforded to others by the dietary system, in verification of my own testimony.

Thirdly - To apply any profits which may arise from its sale to various charitable objects, after the plan I followed with the unexpected gains of the third edition.

I have been strongly and frequently advised to publish some of the highly interesting reports I have received from correspondents, in proof of the great value of a proper dietary system in advanced life, and of the soundness of Mr. William Harvey's advice, which proved so beneficial to me; but I have hitherto refrained from doing so, under the belief that if the statement of my own personal experience was not credited, no weight would be attached to any other evidence which I could adduce. At length, however, I have yielded to the suggestion, and can only hope that this accumulated and unimpeachable evidence may prove interesting and convincing, even to the most resolute unbeliever.

It has been reported to me that many medical men have argued that I could not have consulted any eminent members of their fraternity on the subject of obesity. I beg leave emphatically to assure the public that, for the 20 years, previous to consulting Mr. Harvey, I had no occasion to consult a medical man, for any other ailments except those which are the inevitable consequences of corpulence; and that, although my medical advisers were neither few, nor of second-rate reputation, not one of them pointed out the real cause of my sufferings, nor proposed any effectual remedy, until I appealed to my friend, Mr. Harvey, the celebrated aurist, on account only of deafness.

I will not affirm that I said to each "pray remove my corpulence," for I had been told that it was, and really thought it to be, incurable; but all my disorders resulted from it, and Mr. Harvey was the first to acquaint me with the fact.

It is possible, and I think probable, that even Mr. Harvey was somewhat surprised at the extraordinary and speedy result of my rigid adherence to his advice, because he had long before prescribed the proper dietary system to reduce or cure corpulence, but his patients having hitherto imprudently slighted his prescriptions, it was only my very strict compliance that completely proved the accuracy of his judgment. My only merit consists in entire obedience to Mr. Harvey's advice. To him alone belongs all the credit of the remedy. He was the first to lead me on to the true road of health, and I was probably the first of his many patients who kept to it.

I have never assumed the slightest medical knowledge, but, on the contrary, I have assured every correspondent that I was utterly ignorant of the physiological or chemical reasons for the wonderful results produced by the prescribed dietary; nor do I come before the public now with any pretensions whatever to such knowledge, but simply to offer my five past years' experience in confirmation of my original observations upon the great fact, backed by the experience of numerous correspondents in all classes of society, male and female, in the hope that the evidence which I have collected may induce medical and scientific men to promote a still wider knowledge of this important truth, "that change of diet is frequently necessary in advancing and advanced life to secure good bodily health and comfort, particularly to the corpulent and obese."

It was unfortunate, and doubtless detrimental, in the early stages of my crusade against Corpulence, that theoretical writers in Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, and other influential periodicals, should have dwelt so strongly upon my four meals a day, presuming they were four heavy meals. No part of my pamphlet states this.

Since attaining manhood I have been rather remarkable for the moderation of my meals, and I very much doubt if any man, in sound health, and actively occupied, has consumed less in the course of the twenty-four hours. I am thoroughly convinced, that it is QUALITY alone which requires notice, and not quantity. This has been emphatically denied by some writers in the public papers, but I can confidently assert, upon the indisputable evidence of many of my correspondents, as well as my own, that they are mistaken.

I apprehend that people of larger frame and build may require a proportionately larger quantity of the prescribed diet, but they must be guided by their own judgment in the application of the principles laid down.

It was probably my misfortune, never to have heard of a celebrated work, *La Physiologie du Goût*, by Brillat Savarin, and other treatises by Bernard and Dancel; but I had full confidence that our own eminent medical men (second to none in Europe) were well informed of every new scientific fact discovered in Paris or elsewhere, and I never dreamed of consulting those foreign authorities, from whom, as the public press has since informed me, I might have obtained a remedy for the cure of Corpulence.

My unpretending letter on Corpulence has at least brought all these facts to the surface for public examination, and they have thereby had already a great share of attention, and will doubtless receive much more until the system is thoroughly understood and properly appreciated by every thinking man and woman in the civilized world.

I have been told, again and again, that the system was as old as the hills. I will not deny it, because I cannot; but I can say for myself and my many correspondents, that it was quite new to us; or some of us would doubtless have been recommended to practise it by medical advisers, as I have no doubt they are now, and as they surely will be hereafter more extensively.

Some writers have assumed that I had no great grievance in my corpulent state. Are failing sight and hearing, an umbilical rupture requiring a truss, bandages for weak knees and ankles, not serious grievances? Those only who have suffered from corpulence can adequately understand its miseries or appreciate the merits of a system so admirably adapted to its relief.

My earnest, and indeed my only desire throughout has been to ventilate this question in the interest of humanity, and to ascertain not only the advantages of the system now called "Banting," but also any possible mischief in its application, and I am bound to say, that I have not met with any case where harm has ensued from its practice under medical authority and supervision.

Two or three unfavourable results having been reported in the public papers, I instantly set to work to trace them, and proved them to have no better foundation than the frequent reports of my death. I may admit that about a month after the issue of the third edition, I received an abusive letter on the subject from an anonymous correspondent, who may flatter himself that he has preserved his incognito, but I venture to assure him that he has not, and that his abuse is no argument against the system, but simply a proof of his own want of manners and common sense.

In my desire to get at the whole truth, I sent a copy of my pamphlet to some of the leading professional men of the day, and I have received several kind and practical replies. A few of these will be found among the evidences I offer. One of these testimonies I cannot resist quoting here as well:

“The rules of diet you found so beneficial have long been “forced upon men who are under training for running, or “prize fights; apparently, however, their especial efficacy “was overlooked, because other rules relating to exercise, “sweating, & c., were mixed up with them.”

This plain, simple statement, in my opinion, unlocks the whole mystery, and solves the problem which had long slumbered, until my perseverance under Mr. Harvey’s treatment happily brought it under complete examination.

No doubt the system was known, and had been practised, but only to promote muscular vigour in healthy people, for special objects, yet had never been applied to the unhealthy and corpulent, because it was impossible for such people to take the necessary exercise and sweating. It is now proved that, by proper diet alone, the evils of corpulence may be removed without the addition of those active exercises, which are impossible to the sickly or unwieldy patient.

Another eminent medical man, whose letter will appear among the rest, was actually giving my pamphlets in the course of his practice. I was greatly surprised to hear of it, and wrote to ascertain the fact. He invited me to call on him, and showed me that my information was correct by pointing to a pile of them lying upon his table. He complimented me upon the publication, as it contained sound advice in cases like my own; and added, that the discovery was not Mr. Harvey’s, but was derived from “Mons. Bernard, of Paris.” I replied that Mr. Harvey had told me he had first derived his information from lectures which he had heard in Paris, by Mons. Bernard, in regard to diabetes, and some other complaints, but that he had himself applied it to cases of corpulency. He admitted that the simple record of my own experience of the value of the system had brought it to the clear light of day, and that if it had been written by a medical man, it would scarcely have been noticed by the general public at all.

Probably no one was ever subjected to more ridicule and abuse than I have been, in English as well as in foreign journals. My only object, however, has been the good of my fellow creatures. To have accomplished this object, in any degree, is a sufficient reward for my expenditure of time and means, and an ample compensation for the insolent contempt of some, and the feeble ribaldry of others.

I certainly was somewhat astonished at one time, and not a little amused, to find that my death was generally reported, even to myself by some who did not happen to know me personally; and, at another, to hear that I had been seriously ill and afflicted with boils, carbuncles, and other ailments, through my rigid pursuit of the dietary system. I am, therefore, glad of this opportunity to state publicly (what hundreds of my friends can attest) that I do not know what gout or a headache is, that I have always ate, drank, and slept well, have had no carbuncles, boils, or any real illness whatever, since I began the system recommended by Mr. Harvey; indeed, the only ailment which I have had, was a little additional eruption in my hands in 1867, a discomfort by which I had been more or less troubled for years, but from which I was soon relieved, doubtless, by the continued pursuit of the dietary system.

I have, therefore, offered no nostrum or quack remedy, but have simply stated the results of my following professional advice, and have only claimed for it a thorough examination by the public, and our highly intelligent medical professors; indeed, I recommended all to consult their medical advisers before adopting what I individually considered a perfectly harmless system. I knew nothing of causes, physiological or chemical, for the wondrous effects produced by a generous, in exchange for a meagre, dietary; but believed, as I still believe, that it is a simple remedy to reduce and destroy superfluous fat; that it may be an alleviation, if not a cure, of gout; that it prevents or eradicates carbuncles, boils, and the elements of dyspepsia; makes advanced life more enjoyable, and promotes longevity.

I consider my general health extraordinary; indeed, I meet with few men at 72 years of age who have so little cause to complain. I trust, therefore, that if any future adverse reports of my health and condition should arise, they may be communicated to me through the Post-office, that I may be able at once to contradict, if possible, such silly rumours. I cannot, now, retract any-thing I have written on the subject, and hence the publication of a fourth edition, condensed, with such observations as five years' subsequent experience enables me to offer in verification of its general honesty and truth.

I have no doubt there is already a considerable reduction in the number of my corpulent and otherwise afflicted brethren, through the rigid or even partial adherence to the dietary called "Banting," but I have seen still far too many in my rambles about England, and to all such I trust the publication of a fourth edition of my pamphlet may be useful. I earnestly recommend any so afflicted, who choose to make trial of the system, to be accurately weighed, after consulting some medical adviser, before beginning it; and, again, at the end of seven days, during which short period the chief and most extraordinary diminution of weight occurs.

This will be ample time to convince the most sceptical of its merit and utility, and (I thereby give increased confidence to its further pursuit, under medical sanction. So short a trial of superior in exchange for inferior, or more simple diet, can surely do no great harm to the human frame, should the grievance arise from other causes than undue corpulence; but I believe medical men will be found in all quarters of the world who have been induced to investigate this important subject of late years, and that in consequence the public generally will now be more properly advised on the subject.

Many hundred appeals have been made to me to furnish correspondents with the prescription for the morning cordial, of which I spoke so highly. I could only prudently reply, that it was of an alkaline character, and refer them to their medical adviser, as what suited me might not suit them.

It may, however, save further trouble if I now print it in detail:

B~ Mag. Carbon

It is, however, of little public utility, as my medical adviser does not prescribe it to all alike indiscriminately, but it may probably allay public curiosity.

It is, perhaps, of small consequence to the public, but it is a question of great importance to me, to show that I have kept faith with them, and may be relied upon for the future I therefore invite their attention to the cost of the publication, and to the manner in which the profits have been expended.

The first edition of 1,000 copies of my pamphlet I presented to clubs, learned and medical societies, and to the public. The second edition, or 1,000 copies, I also gave to the public;

and 500 copies of the last I directed to be sold for the benefit of my Printers' Sick Fund, as I found that some preferred to purchase them.

These, and the distribution, cost me about £40, for which I did not expect or receive one penny in return.

I was advised that, to pay for the expense of printing, publishing, and advertising a third edition, of 20,000 copies, I should charge for them one shilling each, but as pecuniary advantage was neither my desire nor aim, I determined to issue them at sixpence each, and rather lose by it than think of profit. The sale, however, increased so wonderfully, that at the end of eight months 50,000 copies were sold, with a result which the press kindly published at the time.

Since that period 13,000 more copies have been sold, and I have increased pleasure and satisfaction in reporting the following total result:

	£	s.	d.			
Received - By the sale of 63,000 copies, as 58,154, or 4,846 dozens, and 2 copies, according to the trade custom, at 4s. per dozen	969	4	8			
Paid - £ s.d. For setting, correcting, casting, and printing 63,000 copies, bound in wrappers ..	633	13	0			
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brought forward ..	633	13	0	969	4	8
For advertising in the London and country papers, and incidental expenses ..	110	1	8	743	14	8
Leaving a profit to the Author of ..	£225	10	0			

Which I have had the gratification of distributing as follows:

	£	s.	d.
To The Printers' Pension Society, at the Anniversary Dinner, in March, 1864, per Chas. Dickens, Esq.	50	0	0
„ Ditto, subsequently	2	10	0
„ The Royal Hospital for Incurables..	50	0	0
„ The British Home for Incurables..	50	0	0
„ The National Orthopædic Hospital..	10	10	0
„ The City of London Truss Society..	10	10	0
„ The West London Hospital	10	10	0
„ The Great Northern Hospital	10	10	0
„ The Epileptic Hospital	10	10	0
„ The Alexandra Institution for the Blind	10	10	0
„ The Sick Fund of the Morning Advertiser	5	0	0
„ The Sick Fund of my Printers' Establishment	5	0	0
	£225	10	0

So much as regards the fortune which it was very generally reported that I had made by the "speculation"!!

It may possibly interest the public to know the result of my own proceedings and personal experience since I published my third edition in 1864. My weight has continued at about 11 stone, from which I have never varied more or less than 3 lbs., principally when I was experimenting to ascertain my own greatest dietetic enemy; and I have proved very satisfactorily that it is and was sugar and saccharine elements.

I have ascertained, by repeated experiments, that five ounces of sugar distributed equally over seven days, which is not an ounce per (lay, will augment my weight nearly one pound by the end of that short period. The other forbidden elements have not produced so extraordinary a result. In these, therefore, I am not so rigid. Some people (as will be seen by their letters) find other things detrimental. I never eat bread unless it is stale, cut thin, and well. toasted. I very seldom take any butter, certainly not a pound in a year. I seldom take milk (though that called so, in London, is probably misnamed), and I am quite sure that I do not drink a gallon of it in the whole year.

I occasionally eat a potato with my dinner, possibly to the extent of 1 lb. per week. I spoke of sherry as very admissible, and I am glad of this opportunity to say, that I have since discovered it promoted acidity. Perhaps the best sherry I could procure was not the very best, but I found weak light claret, or brandy, gin, and whisky, with water, suited me better; and I have been led to believe that fruit, however ripe, does not suit me so well taken raw as when cooked, without sugar.

I find that vegetables of all kinds, grown above ground, ripened to maturity and well boiled, are admirable; but I avoid all roots, as carrot, turnip, parsnip, and beet. I have not taken any kind of medicine for eighteen months, and find that my dietary contains all the needful regimen which my system requires. In the firm belief and conviction that the quality in food is the chief desideratum, and that the question of quantity is mere moonshine, I take the most agreeable and savoury viands, meat and game pies, that my cook can concoct, with the best possible gravies, jellies, &c., the fat being skimmed off; but I never, or very rarely, take a morsel of pie or pudding crusts.

My bodily organization may be somewhat different from that of others; but the facts which I have related are indisputable, for they are the result of my own personal experience, which I have made known for the benefit of others who have suffered, as I have done, and whose testimony of the efficacy of the remedy confirms my own.

Being fond of green peas, I take them daily in the season, and I gain 2 or 3 lbs. in weight as well as some little in bulk, but I soon lose both when their season is over. For this trespass I quite forgive myself.

The subjoined correspondence is only a portion of upwards of 1,800 letters which I have received. There is scarcely one out of the whole which does not breathe a spirit of pure thankfulness and gratitude for the benefits derived from the dietary system, and contain the most flattering encomiums on my character and motives.

One or two, indeed, of a totally opposite character have reached me, and I would not have refrained from publishing them, had the writers not thought proper to deprive them of any authority by concealing their names. I had originally selected a much larger number for publication, but I fear that even these few may be tiresome to some readers, though I have abridged them as far as possible by omitting personal compliments, and irrelevant matter and enquiries, &c., of little importance to any but the writers. They will, however, I believe, be perused with interest by many others, who can select such facts from them as may apply to their own special cases.

A great many of these correspondents - indeed, some of the most interesting - have granted me full permission to print their names and addresses, in verification, and I have no doubt whatever that I could obtain the consent of nearly all to the free publication of their letters; but I consider it quite unnecessary to give more than the number and date of the respective letters, assuring the reader that these extracts have been faithfully made, and that I am ready to produce the originals to any person who applies to me in good faith and honesty of purpose to examine still further this very important subject.

I could certainly have wished that the crowning proof of the veracity and utility of my statements had emanated from one of my own countrymen, but it was not to be, although one of them, as I have shown, unlocked the mystery and so far solved the great problem. I am indebted to a foreigner for this efficient service; and I now, in conclusion, request particular attention to the last article in this pamphlet, namely, - a lecture given before the King and Court of Wurtemberg, at Stuttgart, in December 1865, by the celebrated physician and professor, Dr. Niemeyer, which I have had very carefully translated.

I heartily thank that generous and able man for the valuable testimony which he has borne to the truth of the system, for the honour and credit which he has bestowed upon my medical adviser, Mr. William Harvey, and for his gratifying tribute to my own motives and conduct in publishing my experience to the world.

WILLIAM BANTING.

Kensington,
May, 1869.