headache or migraine, although the data sheet mentions headache reported to the company.

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ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Epidemic insanity

An extraordinary account of an outbreak of insanity has been reported in which first two brothers and then three sisters became violently mad in Skibbereen, Ireland, some of the patients being sent to the Cork Asylum. Various theories have been propounded as to the causation of this outbreak. It is not very unusual to meet with instances where two members of a family break down as the result of some common cause, generally the insanity of a member of the family, and in most instances the cases are very transient and hysterical in character. The so-called 'folie à deux' may involve more than two, and we know that in Roman Catholic countries like Ireland an epidemic of a religious character may arise and spread far and wide. We do not think the outbreak under consideration is likely to have depended on the food taken, as has been suggested, and we should be inclined to attribute considerable etiological importance to nervous heredity and a kind of expectancy which easily gives rise to the real disorder.

Reference

British Medical Journal, January 1897, 95.

Researched by Henry Rollin, Emeritus Consultant Psychiatrist, Horton Hospital, Epsom, Surrey

https://doi.org/10.1192/S000712500002897X Published online by Cambridge University Press