

Oct. 10.—Discharged recovered, and engaged as assistant upholsterer.

When so engaged we had an opportunity of examining him, and found him apparently well in mind. He was reticent as to his mental state when silent.

Dr. Mortimer informs us that the patient has had no relapse, and for some two years or more he has satisfactorily filled the post of storekeeper in the asylum. The patient evades any questioning in regard to his condition when he was in a state of stupor, or in respect to his former life. He is of an excited temperament, and rather egotistic. He is very steady in his habits.

A Case of Moral Insanity. By COLIN M. CAMPBELL, M.A., M.D., Medical Superintendent, Perth District Asylum.

M. E., 49, single, formerly a merchant, was admitted into the Perth District Asylum on May 19, 1885. He was stated to have been insane for some weeks; not epileptic nor suicidal, but dangerous to others.

The medical certificates stated that "He spends most of his time in a dark outhouse, smoking, and in a melancholy condition, refusing to work, and bursting out at times in uncontrollable passion, complaining of his sisters' ill-usage, which was untrue, and of his own condition being unbearable, whereas he was most comfortable. He was shaky, nervous, and partially incoherent in speech. That he had threatened his sisters' lives, had actually laid hands on them, and had said that he would do for them, and take seven years for it."

Along with him were brought some letters, recently written by him to his sisters, of a threatening character and insane expression; and the Inspector of Poor stated that he had been directed by the Procurator Fiscal to remove him to the asylum as dangerous.

Previous History.—His father and mother were in comfortable circumstances, and he received a good education. No history of positive neuroses in his family has been ascertained, but his father seems to have been a somewhat peculiar, though ingenious and successful man; and his sisters, both of whom are older than himself, are of an emotional, fussy, and suspicious temperament. His mother is said to have died of "decline." His parents and sisters spoiled him as a boy, and he was of a timid, sulky, and suspicious disposition, and very lazy, though with fair natural abilities and some mechanical turn. At an early age his father started him in a good business of his own as a grocer, and in this

he did fairly well for a year or two, guided by his father and living at home. But his moroseness grew upon him; he smoked heavily, avoided society, was found afterwards to have been given to quiet tipping, and is supposed to have been addicted to self-abuse. After a year or two of this life, he suddenly disappeared with a company of strolling players. This took all who knew him by surprise, as he had always been reserved and self-righteous, and his joining them turned out to be against the players' wishes, as he had no aptitude for the stage. He had taken all the money with him he could scrape together, and as long as it lasted he was allowed to travel with the company. The manager had, finally, to negotiate with his father to take him home, as he would not leave them of his own accord. After this he led an unsettled life for many years, at home and in America, sometimes with employment for a short time, oftener depending for support on contributions from his parents. Of this period of his life particulars are not known, and he himself is extremely reticent about it.

His last occupation was as an electrical mechanician in London. This situation he lost through unsteadiness and some quarrel, six years before admission; and he then returned to his native village, to his sisters' house, his parents having died a year or two before. His share of their property had, evidently with good reason on their part, been left to trustees for his benefit. He had attended his father's funeral, and, on hearing the first clauses of the will, appointing trustees for him, read, he left the room in indignation, and could never be induced to listen to or recognize the will thereafter.

For nearly six years previous to admission, then, he lived with his sisters, alleging ill-health—which was not very serious, although it is probable that at this period some lung mischief was active—as disabling him from earning his own living, and persuading them that it was their duty to support him. At first he did a little work, assisting them in a shop they kept; but he gradually became more and more lazy, ill-tempered, and tyrannical, lying in bed, exacting great attention, and becoming very angry and abusive when not supplied with all the tobacco and money he desired. When supplied with money, he used to consort with low characters, and spend it on drink in a secret manner. He abused his sisters for cruelty, and for appropriating his money, to all he could get to listen, although they appear to have treated him with even foolish indulgence, and to have been not a little afraid of him.

His share—one-third—of his parents' legacies was paid by his trustees to his sisters for his support during this period, the expenses of which it by no means covered. Latterly, he demanded to be supplied with money to live in Edinburgh, away from his sisters' cruelty; and this they, with great misgivings, finally consented to do, about six months prior to his admission. He had declared he

could easily get work at Edinburgh, and for a time he did act as a commission agent for several small ventures, but did hardly any business, and quarrelled with his various employers. He seems to have spent most of his allowance in Edinburgh on drink, and to have suffered some real privations in consequence. His drinking habits throughout were quiet, and he was hardly ever incapably drunk. After a few months of this life, and on his sisters refusing to increase his allowance, he wrote the threatening letters already referred to. Failing thus to gain his point, he ventured to his native village, billeted himself again upon his sisters, whom he greatly alarmed by the violence of his language and his threats to "do for" them and for himself also. They were, therefore, obliged, after a few days, to take the steps resulting in his committal to the asylum.

The threatening letters referred to are nine in number, and cover a period of three weeks prior to his leaving Edinburgh. They are written in a large and shaky hand, and are all in the same strain. One, dated May 1st, is a fair sample. It runs as follows :—

MR DEAR SISTER,—I wrote you on Saturday last, and have waited till to-day expecting a reply—as none has come to hand I see you intend to carry out your line of action to the *bitter end*—*well* and *good*.

I make this *last* appeal and I do so in the hope of thus saving you as well as myself from *utter ruin*. *Mark well* what I now write. If you persist in the course you have adopted in regard to me I tell you again as I told you before and as I also told *your friend*, Mr. S— the last time you kindly sent me to him, I had already done three years of solitary confinement, and if I am compelled again to return to B— I am *quite prepared* and *will* do 5 or 7 years more in a different manner—*but remember this*, and I earnestly pray of you—*Beware!* this is now a case of Life or Death with me; I am quite regardless which; but if I have to die, *remember we Perish together*. I know you have the *Law* on your side, but all I demand is *Justice*. This I will have or perish in the attempt of obtaining it.

I can live here no longer than to-morrow or Friday. Mr. P. has now left his work, and is almost gone in consumption. They have a child who is daily expected to die with Dropsy in the head, a most pitiable case indeed; if you have no pity for me, let me beg of you to consider others—you have never had to go hungry—I do so now every day of my life; this I care not for, I have been long inured to it in former years, but even with the greatest economy I can exercise it is impossible to live on the wind. I can get no steady work, and you are well aware I am not able to do labouring work now as I did formerly, and even if I could it cannot be got here at present. I have worked very hard for a week past and as I told you in my last letter have made little or nothing of it. I have not been able to go out yesterday nor to-day; we have had rain all day so I was compelled to remain indoors. My situation is to me a very *horrible* one, and I could not wish the greatest enemy I ever had to undergo a similar fate. Alas! Alas! well may poor Burns exclaim—

"Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn."

I have never disgraced myself nor you so much as your wicked and cruel father has done me. I pray the Lord to forgive him.

If you see your way to reply to this appeal which is my *last one from here*,

do so at once *on receipt*—should I not hear from you by Friday night—you may expect to see me on Saturday. I will require to leave everything behind me as I cannot pay this week's bill.

My brain seems on fire. I can write no more. You little know, and I do sincerely trust never may experience the torture and suspense I have lately endured.

If I have written anything to give offence, all I can do is to ask your pardon, my language may be strong, but *dire necessity* alone compels me to use it.

Trusting you are still in moderate health, and keeping well, I remain, ever,

Your affect. but disconsolate Brother,
M. E.

I am far from being well, but this of course is of little moment. M.E.

Condition on admission.—On admission, M. E. was found to be a tall, well-built man, somewhat emaciated, with bright brown eyes, very sallow complexion, well-developed cranium, good upper features, and iron-grey hair, a full beard of which concealed a weak mouth and chin.

His teeth were greatly discoloured by smoking, his digestive functions were somewhat feeble, his heart sounds weak and occasionally irregular, and the breath sounds over the left apex harsh, but he had no cough, and the lung mischief was evidently quiescent.

His expression was exceedingly sulky and morose; he appeared depressed, and kept his eyes down while speaking. He did not converse freely at first, but answered all ordinary questions in coherent language, and in a rational manner. His memory was fairly good. He became somewhat agitated as he spoke of being put into the asylum, maintaining his sanity, and, when his sisters were referred to, he became much excited; his lips turned blue and trembled, his palpebral muscles twitched, and his fists were clenched, as he worked himself up, inveighing, with strong language, against what he called their cruel and unnatural treatment of him. His abuse was in very general terms, though his expressions were very strong, and he evidenced considerable command of language. He shifted his ground adroitly when pressed to bring definite serious accusations against them, and all that could be clearly made out amid his flood of invective was that they had treated him with less respect and indulgence, and had given him less money than he desired. His peculiar appearance, and the uncontrollable passion and agitation he worked himself into while speaking of them, gave one the impression that he concealed some definite delusions of suspicion regarding them.

He was extraordinarily unreasonable in discussing this subject: He indulged in fierce invective, in high-flown language—the delivery of long sentences appearing to give him some satisfaction—but he could not be brought to the point, nor induced to state definitely in what way his sisters were cruel, why he had lived with them if he did not like them, why he had threatened them, what

he thought of his present position, or what he would do if and when discharged. The following is an example of this:—

One day, when he had been abusing his sisters for defrauding him of his share of his parents' property, I succeeded at length in nailing him down to the admission that he had not seen the will, but had gone out of the room when he heard its first clauses read appointing trustees for himself. He immediately seized on the fact that he had not seen the will, and made this the basis of a fresh complaint of injustice, and the subject of a long tirade against his family and their business men: I then suggested that I would try to get a copy of the will for him to read. This proposition appeared rather to disconcert him, and he became sulky and said it was no use. A few days afterwards I brought him a copy of the will, obtained from one of his trustees. He utterly refused to read it, or even to touch it! After some floundering, apparently in search of some excuse for this refusal, he triumphantly stated that he would read it if he were out of the asylum, but that it was useless for him to read it while an inmate, as a patient could not take action in a court of law, adding, with a sniff, "and you know, or ought to know, that yourself." Having thus furnished himself with a fresh text, he proceeded to enlarge on the injustice of his detention in the asylum, &c., &c., and, as usual, adroitly evaded the subject on hand. He gave one the impression that he was unwilling to read the will, for fear its provisions took from beneath his feet the ground on which he had based his accusations of injustice.

His language and conduct in this instance were very characteristic of his mental state for the first twelve months of his residence in the asylum: This extraordinary perversion of reasoning power, simulating the exaggerated wilfulness of a spoilt child, characterized all his sayings and doings with reference to his treatment by his family. It was an interesting leading symptom, and added seriously to the gravity of his threatening language and behaviour in the same connection prior to admission, and to the dangers of further developments and serious results following premature discharge, while he continued to manifest a vindictive sense of injustice and cruelty, and displayed such agitation when the subject was mentioned.

For long it was thought that some positive delusion must underlie such marked symptoms of uncontrollable agitation, but, during numerous prolonged and exhaustive interviews, none such could be discovered to exist.

He was a quiet and orderly patient, but sulky and disdainful to those around him. He expressed great contempt for the asylum, its inmates, and management, and used to incite other patients to complain and to little acts of rebellion. He himself complained of his food, clothing, bedding, want of tobacco, disturbance by other patients, &c., constantly. He would not work outside, though pressed to do so, but did some ward work, and occasionally paraded

little acts of attention to the sick and feeble. He always spoke of his own health as very delicate, and made a great fuss over one or two very trifling attacks of indisposition. He smoked as hard as he could with the limited supply of tobacco. He was not observed to masturbate. He displayed no active religious sentiment. He ate and slept well as a rule.

With tonics and fresh air his general health improved, and, as regards his mental condition, by July, 1886, he had become somewhat milder in temper and more reasonable. Taking advantage of this improved state, and anxious to discharge him if possible, I pointed out to him his position, and when, as usual, he violently maintained his sanity past and present, I told him that though I believed him insane, I would if he liked treat him for a time as if he were sane, and that, in the first place if his conduct towards his sisters did not indicate insanity, it did indicate a very selfish, lazy, and cowardly disposition; in the second place, that his threats and violence were inconsistent with personal liberty, and must be regarded as either insane or criminal; that his apparently uncontrollable hatred of his sisters, and his impaired reasoning power with reference to his family relationships, prevented his discharge, but that if he showed that he possessed what he claimed to possess, a sane power of self-control and reasoning, for a short definite period, I should feel justified in trusting him again outside. I also pointed out to him that if he acted again when he got out as he had done before admission, he would almost surely be sent back to the asylum. I also told him a few unpalatable truths regarding his natural disposition, which he relished very little.

I deliberately adopted this tone with this patient, and maintained it for some time. In no other case I have treated, have I employed, or been tempted to expect benefit from the employment of, moral suasion with such decided plain speaking.

For about a fortnight after this. M. E. was decidedly more reasonable, and I was congratulating myself on this result, when he rather discouraged me by effecting his escape.

In view of his extraordinary perverse clinging to false grounds in his accusations, I venture to suggest the conclusion I felt almost compelled to come to, that he planned this escape in order to evade the appearance of acquiescence in past proceedings, and the implied promise as to future good behaviour, which waiting for, and as it were accepting, his promised discharge might predicate.

He was absent for a fortnight, and made his way to Edinburgh, where he succeeded in interesting a lawyer in his case, with whom he planned taking legal proceedings against his sisters. He admitted this when brought back, but he could not be got to allow that the will, such as it was, was binding, or that he acted unreasonably in trying to institute legal proceedings regarding it when he was not only ignorant of its contents, but actually refused to acquaint himself with them. As was his habit, he evaded these

questions, and worked himself into a state of insane agitation over his hard fate, and the injustice with which he had been treated, just as before. This escape, and apparent sympathy he obtained from the lawyer in Edinburgh, and his recapture, acted prejudicially apparently at first, and for a time he was additionally moody and reserved. By degrees, however, he became more communicative, and as he did so it became apparent that his condition, while similar in character, had become decidedly modified in degree. Agitation and invective diminished greatly, and, while he maintained their injustice, he could speak of his sisters quietly.

I continued to treat him as we had arranged, on the hypothesis of his sanity, and by consequently uttering unpalatable truths; and this mode of treatment, I believe, along with the moral effect of the failure of his escape and plans for litigation, aided him in regaining the self-control which began to be apparent. He got out, too, a good deal in the fresh air during this summer season, and his general health and spirits showed some improvement also. This was in August, 1886.

This improvement continued for several months. In November he was still morose, but much less markedly so. He adhered to his accusations of unnatural ill-treatment by his sisters, but he did not enlarge thereon, and was almost quite free from agitation when discussing them. He said all he wished was never to see or hear of them again, and he agreed that he would not return to his native village nor hold any communication with them. An interview with one of his sisters, both of whom he had violently refused to see before, was arranged for, to test his power of self-control. The lady was unfeignedly alarmed at the prospect of his possible discharge, and afraid to see him, but was at length prevailed on to do so. He received her in sulky silence, but without any sign of agitation. He said, in a dignified manner, "I wish to have nothing to do with you again," and refused to converse further. His appearance indicated comparative indifference.

The gain in self-control evidenced at this interview, together with his general improvement, were judged sufficient to justify his discharge. Arrangements were made for him to go to Edinburgh, and there, and there only, receive a weekly allowance through the inspector of poor, and he was accordingly discharged as technically "recovered" on Nov. 15, 1886, after eighteen months' residence in the asylum.

Since discharge he has lived in Edinburgh, receiving his allowance, and occasionally getting light work, which he throws up in a few days as too trying for his health. He has held no communication of any kind with his sisters. I believe he makes frequent attempts to interest the lawyers again in his case, but with no result as yet that I have heard of.

To recapitulate briefly: among the salient points of this interesting case there stand out:—

1. Eccentricity of father, death from "decline" of mother, and parallel eccentricity of sisters.

2. Indulgence as youngest child and only son. Reserved and timid boyhood. Premature establishment in business. Drinking habits. Self-abuse (?) Sudden outburst in running off with acting company. Erratic, lonely, and semi-dependent subsequent life. Disappointment about father's will. Probable onset at this time of phthisis. Lazy, self-indulgent life, with sisters themselves eccentric. Over-smoking, idleness, and further drinking. Exacerbation of symptoms; insane unreasonableness, egotism, and hypochondria. Struggle for living in Edinburgh. More drink and subsequent privation. Threats of murder and suicide. Violent language and conduct. Action of Procurator Fiscal. Committal to asylum.

3. On admission, moroseness, egotism, hypochondria, violent language regarding sisters, agitation and loss of control, aggravated by extraordinary perversion of his reasoning powers on this and allied subjects, and peculiar half-conscious self-deception, amounting to quasi delusions of suspicion, illustrated by his conduct and language about the will. Absence of any definite delusion. Delicate general health.

4. Slight improvement, mental and physical, after considerable time, from discipline, air, exercise, tonics, reduced tobacco, and enforced alcoholic abstinence. Effect of unusual treatment by moral suasion. Escape. Attempt to start a lawsuit. Moral effect of failure of escape and collapse of legal proceedings. Progressive gain in self-control, diminished violence of hatred, less perversion of his reasoning powers, and general health and spirits, test interview with sister, discharge, and subsequent behaviour indicative of improvement.

I have called this a case of "Moral Insanity," following Prichard and subsequent legal authorities. There was of course in this case no special defect of "moral sense," and the term, "Affective Insanity" would perhaps more correctly indicate the morbid condition.