

Recovery from Chronic Insanity—four cases—with the record of fourteen other cases in which recovery took place in over three years. By P. POPE, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., Clinical Assistant to the Birmingham Asylum.

The record of these cases would seem undoubtedly to show that recovery from chronic insanity, though rare, is not such an exceptional event as one is led to suppose. The publishing of Dr. Strahan's cases in the last number of the "Journal of Mental Science" has induced me to publish the following eighteen cases, in some of which recovery took place in over eight, nine, and ten years. This would surely explode the idea that recovery after two years is even exceptional; the above cases (with one exception) being a record of a period of only thirteen years.

The first case recorded (that of George M.) is interesting, apart from the length of time the patient was in the asylum (over nine years), with regard to the action of bromide of potassium upon the maniacal outbursts in an epileptic, especially when the fits had to a great extent ceased, the amount that may be given, and the beneficial effects of an uninterrupted course of treatment. The third case is interesting in the recovery taking place at the very commencement of the climacteric after puerperal mania (recovery in the first instance taking place after a severe bodily illness, the patient again becoming insane after childbirth).

CASE I.—George M. Recovery after eleven years. Was admitted to this asylum in December, 1878. Married; *æt.* 40; no occupation. Certificate: "Wild look; excited manner; refusal to answer questions. Dangerous to others; has chased his niece with a knife."

On admission patient was very restless; expression vacant; mind much impaired.

For some months he was weak-minded and childish in behaviour. He was epileptic, and suffered a good deal from fits. These improved considerably under pot. brom., and he was allowed out on trial on May 10th, 1879.

He returned to the asylum on May 26th, having had nine fits since he had been at home (two weeks); he was very violent and unmanageable; the fits continued, and he was prescribed gr. xx doses of pot. brom. three times a day. He became quiet, and his manner became dull and bewildered, and his behaviour again childish.

Soon after this his manner entirely changed; he became at intervals very violent, the outbursts corresponding to and following the fits; at these times he took dram doses of pot. brom. three times

a day. After taking these doses for short periods his behaviour became quiet, when the bromide was discontinued.

Although there was no increase in the fits, the maniacal outbursts became much worse. A note made on September 30th, 1880, states that "the patient is going from bad to worse."

He remained in this condition for a year. On September 10th, 1881, he had no less than seven fits; his violence after the fits was at this time excessive; he used to break the windows and destroy the furniture. The bromide was again given in dram doses three times a day, and both the fits and periodical outbursts decreased.

The fits steadily improved. In March, 1882, he had only two fits—one on the 8th, the other on the 25th. (In this year the patient had eighty-five fits; sixty-six in 1883; fifty-two in 1884; and only thirty-one in 1885.)

The fits became less and less frequent, and the maniacal outbursts much improved; he relapsed, however, greatly in July, 1883, when the pot. brom. had been discontinued for some months. He was much more violent and excitable than usual, and his ideas were very exalted, the fits meantime steadily decreasing.

The bromide was again prescribed in dram doses three times a day, with the result that his condition slowly and steadily improved. A note made in May, 1885, describes him as quiet and industrious, with occasional outbursts.

The maniacal outbursts, however, continued at intervals until November, 1886, when he was put on dram doses of pot. brom. uninterruptedly. From this time his recovery commenced; the maniacal outbursts left him entirely; he was fit to be allowed out on trial on May 13th, 1887; he was discharged on July 1st, when the doses were reduced from 60 to 20 grains.

This he takes three times a day with three grains of ammon. carb. He presents himself from time to time at the asylum; is perfectly able to manage his affairs; is quiet and rational, free from fits, and his recovery appears to be permanent.

Whether if he discontinued the bromide he would have a return of the fits and relapse into his former condition I am not prepared to say.

CASE II.—Wm. W. Recovery after eleven years. Was admitted March 2nd, 1864. Widower; æt. 51; labourer. Insane one week; cause, trouble (death of his wife). Certificate: "Incoherent; inability to distinguish persons. Has tried to injure others and to strangle himself."

On admission patient would not speak; he rolled on the floor groaning, and resisted anything being done for him; was very delusive; stated "that women were in a conspiracy to deceive virgins, his wife being one of them; that persons came in the night and moved his bed."

He was very excited at times, jumping up and throwing the bed clothes about; he remained restless and excited until July, when he

became much quieter. He was treated with æth., ammon., and liq. opii sed., and for his bowels, which were much confined, mist. rhei. co., calomel, and ol. crotonis at different times.

He was again very excited and violent on August 5th, and continued very violent at intervals until 1868.

In January, 1868, he made marked progress, and was employed about the ward; he was taciturn at times, and had the delusion that his food was poisoned.

He remained fairly quiet and useful until May, 1869, when he became very violent, and was excited and troublesome for some days.

From this date he made gradual and steady improvement, and was discharged cured on August 3rd, 1875.

CASE III.—Mary P. Recovery after seven years. Was admitted June 7th, 1879. Married; æt. 33. Insane two months; cause, husband's ill-usage. Had been confined seven weeks previously with ninth child.

Had been previously in the asylum one year, from 1876 to 1877. She was then suckling a child thirteen months old. On her previous admission she had a bewildered expression. Pulse 120; breasts full of milk; bubo in left groin, and gonorrhœa (from husband). She had erotic tendencies.

She had rheumatic fever on June 7th, 1877, and as her bodily health was regained she became rational in manner and conversation. Discharged August 8th, 1877.

On her readmission patient was raving and swearing; pupils unequal; breasts full of milk; she was very violent.

This state continued for one month, when she had calm intervals, alternating with periods of excitement, the former being of very short duration for nine months, when her excited periods became less and at longer intervals.

She was very erotic in her quiet intervals, when she seemed to cultivate the softer passions, giving the rein to her erotic tendencies.

The patient menstruated very irregularly.

Her mental improvement continued, her maniacal outbursts became rarer, and she was discharged cured on April 19th, 1886, in good health and spirits.

The patient is now in service, and her recovery seems to be undoubtedly permanent.

CASE IV.—Unias P. Recovery after seven and a half years. Admitted March 8th, 1876. Married; æt. 35. Insane two months; cause, jealousy; predisposing cause, heredity. Medical certificate: "Delusions that people are alive who are dead, and of her husband not being hers; that she has robbed the church, etc."

On admission a short, dark, thin woman of bilious temperament; has a wild and restless expression; pupils normal; pulse 120; feeble

laugh ; a good deal of thick yellow sputa. Respiratory sounds weak, especially on right side ; no marked dulness.

Patient was very melancholic ; she refused her food, was very dull and quiet ; obstinate, and talked incoherently. This condition lasted until March 23rd, when she took some food, having been fed with the stomach pump until this date.

On taking her food her bodily health at once improved, but mentally she continued very melancholic, discontented, and dull in manner.

She had the delusion which persisted that the Medical Superintendent was her father.

She remained in this condition until May, when she was persuaded to employ herself by sewing.

She improved ; but in April, 1878, relapsed into her former condition ; she refused to work ; spoke in a feeble and plaintive manner, and was incoherent. During this time she took her food, and was in fair health bodily.

She remained a quiet, melancholic, weak-minded patient until January, 1883, when she was induced to occupy herself again, and her mental condition at once improved.

The improvement continued uninterruptedly, and she was discharged in February, 1884.

Besides these cases I find notes of fourteen others, in a period of thirteen years alone, in which recovery took place after three years of treatment in this asylum, viz. :—One male over eight years, one over five, two over three, one female over seven years, two over five years, three over four years, and four over three years.

Confessions of a Young Lady Laudanum-Drinker. Dose, Four Ounces Daily, in Two-ounce Doses.

The following letter addressed to a distinguished member of the Association has been placed in our hands, and we think that we shall be doing good service by printing it in the Journal. The writer's mother brought her to Dr. —, and consulted him as to what course he would advise in her case. He counselled immediate and absolute stoppage of laudanum and residence for a time in an asylum, where alone perfect surveillance could be secured. After leaving him and thinking over his advice, she was unable to bring herself to adopt it. She decided, however, to leave home with her daughter and devote herself entirely to her recovery, never leaving her, and preventing her obtaining any opium.