1. *Observations on the Treatment of certain forms of Epilepsy by Bromide of Potassium.* By ROBERT M'DONNELL, M.D., Surgeon to Jervis Street Hospital.
(*'Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science,'* February, 1864.)
2. *On the Action of the Bromide of Potassium.* By S. W. D. WILLIAMS, M.D., L.R.C.P. Lond., House-Surgeon General Lunatic Asylum, Northampton.
(*'Medical Times and Gazette,'* July 23.)
3. *Epilepsy, and the Administration of Bromide of Potassium.* By G. GODDARD ROGERS, M.D., Physician to the West London Hospital.
(*'Lancet,'* December 10.)

IN the '*Journal of Mental Science*,' July, 1864, p. 281, we gave a report of Mr. Behrend's observations on the action of bromide of potassium in inducing sleep, as published in the '*Lancet*,' May 28th. Dr. M'Donnell, in his paper in the '*Dublin Quarterly*,' observes, that he writes "with the view of directing the attention of practitioners to the use of a remedy—bromide of potassium—which, if due discrimination is practised in the selection of the cases for which it is suited, will be found one of singular efficacy. I am very well aware," he says, "that many medical men have already recognised the value of this remedy. I do not speak of its use as any novelty. Sir Charles Locock, in 1853, bore strong testimony in its favour; since then Dr. Brown-Séquard, Dr. C. Bland Radcliffe and others, with an experience far beyond what I can boast, have added the weight of their evidence in the same direction. Dr. Radcliffe says:—'I can testify that this remedy has proved more or less serviceable in cases the most dissimilar in character; so serviceable that the name of Sir Charles Locock ought to be remembered with gratitude by every epileptic, and by many suffering from other forms of convulsive disorder.' Sir Charles Locock, writing in 1853, says:—'About fourteen months ago I was applied to by the parents of a lady who had hysterical epilepsy for nine years, and had tried all the remedies that could be thought of by various medical men, myself among the number, without effect. This patient began to take bromide of potassium last March twelvemonth, having just passed one of her menstrual periods, in which she had two attacks. She took ten grains, three times a-day, for three months; then the same dose

for a fortnight previous to each menstrual period ; and for the last three or four months she had taken them for only a week before menstruation. The result has been that she has not had an attack during the whole of this period. I have only tried the remedy in fourteen or fifteen cases, and it has only failed in one, and in that one the patient had fits not only at the time of menstruation but also in the intervals."

After relating a well-marked case of epilepsy connected with uterine disturbance, and in which great relief had followed the use of the bromide in ten-grain doses three times a-day, Dr. M'Donnell adds :—"These and other similar cases lead to the belief that we have in the bromide of potassium a remedy of considerable efficacy in epileptiform disease, when connected with uterine derangement. But in urging my professional brethren to use it in such cases, I would say that it certainly will not be found successful in every case, even of epilepsy connected distinctly with menstrual derangement. I have administered it, with the consent of my colleague, Dr. Banon, to a young woman in the Mountjoy Female Convict Prison, who had puerperal convulsions at the birth of her first child, and has since been epileptic, her attacks occurring for the most part at the menstrual period. In this case, although I expected much from it, I cannot say that any substantial benefit has arisen from its use, yet it has been given perseveringly and in large doses. With reference to the dose, from a not inconsiderable experience in the use of this medicine, I can state that it may be given with perfect confidence and safety, in much larger quantities than it is usually prescribed. I have given thirty or forty grains, and even more, three times a-day, for months without observing any bad results ; and of this I am certain, that often such a dose as ten grains, three times a-day, is too small to develop any good result. Although the independent testimony of several practitioners points to cases of epilepsy, with derangement of the uterine functions, as those in which the bromide of potassium is most likely to be beneficial, yet there are others in which its effects are unquestionably good."

Dr. S. W. D. Williams has recorded, in the 'Medical Times and Gazette,' some observations of his own on the use of this drug.

"Through the kindness of Dr. Wing," he writes, "I have been enabled freely to try it in as many as thirty-seven cases. These were all epileptics, and I append a table showing in one column the number of fits registered during the last five months of last year, when they were taking no medicine, and in the other the number registered during the first five months of this year, when each case was taking, on an average, ten grains of the salt twice daily.

Males' Names.	Fits during last Five Months of 1863.	Fits during first five Months of 1864.	Females' Names.	Fits during last Five Months of 1863.	Fits during first Five Months of 1864.
W. M.	148	107	E. H.	23	19
J. R.	69	45	E. J.	25	37
J. B.	32	21	M. K.	60	27
J. J.	246	91	E. H.	29	9
W. L.	55	37	E. W.	50	56
S. L. B.	19	24	C. S.	17	23
T. H.	40	29	S. A.	82	85
C. B.	52	46	M. L.	20	5
R. H.	112	102	A. S.	41	22
G. M.	47	64	E. G.	46	53
W. W.	36	37	H. W.	1	—
J. L. M.	33	26	M. L.	57	8
T. G.	13	4	A. C.	11	22
R. G.	30	9	M. C.	1	—
J. K.	25	16	S. A. P.	577	556
E. E.	8	14	S. A.	1	—
W. O.	10	10	S. S.	73	37
W. M.	29	14	T. G.	13	11
J. J.	8	10	—	—	—
	1012	706		1127	970

From this table it will be seen that the number of fits amongst the males decreased by 306, and amongst the females by 157; that all the patients but 5 males and 6 females were benefited more or less; that the improvement was, however, more apparent amongst the males than the females; but that no patient of either sex was entirely cured. It is right to remark that all these patients are more or less insane, and many of them extremely violent at times.

“Mr. Henry Behrend, the writer in the ‘Lancet,’ confines his remarks to the powerful effect this drug has on ‘insomnia and restlessness, accompanied and dependent on nervous excitement and irritability,’ and this statement my own observations fully corroborate; but I have not the same confidence in recommending, as he does, the unfettered use of half-drachm doses; for in several of the cases recorded above, it was found necessary to reduce even the average—ten grains twice daily; and in the majority the first use of the drug was accompanied by sickness and lassitude. Those patients on whom the drug seemed to take the most effect in this way were seven in number; after using it for a few days the action of their hearts became slow and fluttering, the eye lost its lustre, the skin was cold and clammy; they had a wearied, anxious look, and complained of headache, and sickness, and shivering, and of unusual weakness at

the knees, and invariably sat crouched up by the fireside all day, evidently devoid of all energy and resolution. Curiously enough, in all the cases thus powerfully affected, the fits were increased instead of diminished. The drug excited hypercatharsis in two patients, which was repeated, again and again, each time it was renewed; the fits in both these cases were diminished; in the case of the female, from 41 to 22. One patient, S. A., was apparently, five months ago, one of the most healthy persons in the home—fat, strong, and rosy; but soon after taking the bromide, the peculiar symptoms described above developed themselves, and the medicine was immediately omitted; but, although she rallied a little, her system never thoroughly recovered itself; tubercles became developed in the lungs, and she died towards the end of April. Truth compels me to confess that I have my doubts whether the bromide of potassium had not something to do with this poor girl's death—at all events, this occurrence has made me very watchful when using it. On the other hand, considerable benefit has arisen from its use in some cases; it undoubtedly exercises a most powerful influence on the nervous system, and often soothes the irritability of epilepsy, even if it does not diminish the frequency of the fits, when no other medicine will take any effect, and in this way will be found a most valuable adjunct to the repertory of an asylum dispensary. I cannot think that it has much effect, however, on the sexual system; for in some cases where it was used more especially with that view, there was no apparent result; but of its powers in inducing sleep in cases dependent on nervous irritability there can be no doubt, and often from ten to twenty grains, twice daily, will suffice to effect this."

Dr. Rogers, in his observations in the 'Lancet,' on the "Use of the Bromide of Potassium in the Treatment of Epilepsy," publishes the following interesting case, which we give in full, to show how fair a trial the remedy had, and the method of its administration:

CASE.—R. B——, æt. 34, married, with two children, the youngest eleven years old, first came under treatment at the West London Hospital in May, 1861. About six months after marriage she miscarried, and had for three weeks frequent attacks of syncope, followed a few weeks later by a convulsive seizure, during which she lost her consciousness. She does not remember being told afterwards whether she foamed at the mouth or bit her tongue. These attacks were few in number for some years; but she often had "fainting fits" and "sighing fits," during which she "felt lost"—(*petit mal*?)

In the early part of 1861 the fits recurred more frequently; so that she was obliged to give up her employment as occasional nurse. Feeling low-spirited, and despairing of aiding her family, she came to the hospital. She was rather below the middle height, of florid complexion, with a wild staring expression, and very excitable manner. The heart's action was somewhat feeble, the breathing tranquil, and the bowels apt to be somewhat relaxed.

Pressure of the crowd in the waiting-room, or the anxious struggle to be amongst the first served with medicine after seeing the physician, would sometimes bring on a seizure. One I particularly remember was most violent, and lasted a long time. Although the true fits, or, as she always termed them, the "struggling fits," were principally confined to the pre-menstrual or post-menstrual epochs, yet they occasionally followed coition, as I learned from the husband, who, by the way, has been a noted pedestrian in sporting circles during the past twelve years.

I first gave turpentine and castor-oil draughts; but no worms were dislodged. Bichloride of mercury with bark was next tried; and remembering that valerian had been mentioned by some authorities as putting in a claim for approval, I tried it in many forms—infusion, ammoniated tincture, valerianate of iron, of zinc, and of quinine. Dr. Duncan Gibb, who was about that time my colleague, had been giving the bromide of ammonium to allay irritability and decrease sensibility of the larynx and pharynx prior to using the laryngoscope. Thinking the same drug might act beneficially on the mucous lining of the uterine organs, I administered it freely to my patient; but with no good effect. The same was the case with iodide of potassium; and I then accidentally refreshed my memory by reading Sir C. Locock's paper on the bromide.

From the 21st November, 1862, to the 3rd December, R. B. took bromide of potassium in four-grain doses three times a day, with compound tincture of valerian. Between these dates she had two fits of a mild character. The medicine was intermitted until the 9th, when she came in great distress, saying that she was suffering from severe flooding, and had had several violent fits, on one occasion nearly falling into the fire. She was ordered to resume the medicine.

Jan. 2nd, 1863.—To leave off the tincture of valerian, and take ten grains of the bromide in water three times a day.

8th.—Two severe attacks.

16th.—No seizure since last entry.

She now took quinine and ammonia up to March 6th. The seizures were very frequent during a portion of this time, and she suffered severely from menorrhagia.

From the 13th March to the 12th May she took ten grains of the bromide three times a day, and much improved. In fact, she relied solely on the medicine, and declared that the fits would return directly she left it off. To test this statement, during the latter half of July I merely prescribed a placebo of aromatic water; but so great was her distress that she implored me to allow her to resume the original medicine, and during August and September she took fifteen grains of the bromide three times a day. I afterwards increased the dose to a scruple. Beyond this dose I never found occasion to go with the patient, and, from my experience in other cases with larger doses, I am compelled to differ from Dr. M'Donnell when he says that ten grains three times a day is "too small a dose to develop any good result."

In January, 1864, I discharged my patient, she not having experienced a severe fit, or one of the *petit mal* description, for more than three months. She resumed her former work of nursing, and I saw nothing more of her until the 10th of June last, when she came to me complaining of vertigo and "fulness about the throat," the "choking aura," which was the sure precursor of a seizure at a menstrual period. Two days later the seizure occurred, but it was of a very mild type. I kept her on scruple doses of the bromide up to the 15th July, seeing her during this time on six occasions. She remained quite free from attacks up to the time of her dismissal in

July, and on the 3rd November I heard that her good health had been uninterrupted. I do not mean to say that she is cured; but in 1861 and 1862 her life was a burden in consequence of frequent attacks, and from these she has enjoyed an immunity for three, four, or five months.

With reference to the supposed action of this drug in reducing the sexual powers, Dr. Rogers adds, that "systematic writers on materia medica have dwelt much on the anaphrodisiac influence of bromide of potassium. I do not think its beneficial influence is to be looked for in a simple lowering of the sexual power. When that power is unduly drawn upon, a degree of irritation is produced which the bromide may calm. But in the case above related, I had the fullest opportunities of learning from the husband that there never had been any diminution in his wife's *empressement*. And to arrive at greater certainty, the husband coming under my care for some trivial ailment during his wife's attendance at the hospital, I took the opportunity of administering the bromide of potassium to him in fifteen and twenty-grain doses three times a day. The information supplied after the lapse of a month satisfied me that here, at all events, the depressing property of the drug was *nil*. Where there is irritation and frequent priapism, the result of onanism or venereal excess, and where there is every reason to conjecture that such irritation is at the bottom of the epileptic seizures, then the bromide of potassium is, I think, of service."

Murder and Insanity.

(*Abstract of Return to an Address of the Honorable The House of Commons, dated 5th April, 1864.*)

Return of the number of persons in each of the last seven years, from 1857 to 1863 inclusive, committed in England and Wales for trial on the charge of murder; the number of such persons put on their trial; the number acquitted, distinguishing those acquitted on the ground of insanity; the number found insane on arraignment; the number of such persons convicted of murder; the number of such persons convicted of manslaughter; and the number of concealment of birth; and the number executed.

YEAR.	Committed and put on their Trial.	Acquitted.	INSANE.		CONVICTED.			Executed.
			Acquitted as Insane.	Found Insane on Arraignment.	Of Murder.	Of Manslaughter.	Of Concealment of Birth.	
1857.....	100	36	9	5	20	19	11	13
1858.....	99	35	11	4	16	19	14	11
1859.....	106	44	5	3	18	28	8	9
1860.....	80	28	2	3	16	17	14	12
1861.....	94	30	6	2	26	13	17	14
1862.....	108	32	10	7	28	19	12	15*
1863.....	104	41	7	6	29	12	9	22
Total	691	246	50	30	153	127	85	96

* Sixteen were condemned. One committed suicide on the morning of his intended execution.

H.-WADDINGTON.

WHITEHALL, 27th April, 1864.