TWO EXAMPLES OF THE
BENEFICIAL
EFFECTS OF MERCURY

IN SOME
SEVERE AFFECTIONS OF THE BRAIN.
By COLIN CHISHOLME, M.D. F.R.S.

CASE I.

A FEMALE, aged 17, to whom I was called in August 1811, had for some time been affected with a pain in the region of the liver, accompanied with irregular symptoms of hysterics. The catamenia were regular in their periods and quantity. She was put on a course of mercury, and recovered from all her complaints. In December following there was a relapse of these complaints; but the hysterical affections were more violent, for there were frequent paroxysms, in which, after strong convulsions, she fell into a state of mental derangement, consisting in delirious ravings and bursts of laughter. The natural functions were not interrupted; she had even a ravenous appetite. As

the pain in the right hypochondrium continued, leading to a suspicion that an affection of the liver might have a connexion with these symptoms, the mercurial course was repeated, so as to produce a copious salivation. Under this all the symptoms disappeared. From an imprudent exposure to cold, before she had recovered her strength, all the same symptoms again returned. I had, on this occasion, an opportunity of verifying what Dr. Parry has alleged respecting the compression of the carotid arteries; for I found that this instantly, though temporarily, stopped the convulsions. On the first compression she fell into a state of syncope, and also on the second; but to this succeeded a state of general rigidity of the whole body and extremities, and a suspension of respiration, answering to the description of catalepsy. In ten minutes she started up in a state of mental distraction, which continued for ten minutes. She then relapsed into the cataleptic state; this alteration continued for an hour and ten minutes, and she then recovered her reason and recollection. Recourse was again had to the mercurial plan with complete ultimate success.

CASE II.

A woman, aged 50, to whom I was called on the 1st June, 1812, had, about six weeks before, as I was informed, been suddenly seized with excessive head-ach and vertigo, dimness of sight, palpitation, sense

of stricture across the *scrobiculus cordis*, great heat of skin, quick and strong pulse ; there had also been a sense of suffocation and a fit of convulsion, which lasted for some hours, and was succeeded by *mania*. The whole paroxysm was completed in twelve hours. These fits returned daily. Evacuants, which I directed, seemed to relieve her, in-somuch that she was free from fits till the 6th, when they recurred with much more violence than ever ; for the most forcible means of coercion became necessary to restrain her under her tumultuous maniacal emotions. Encouraged by the favourable termination of the former case, I put her under a course of mercurial friction. In six days after commencing this, the paroxysms had entirely vanished, and she was restored to her reason. The friction having been continued so as to produce a ptyalism, she recovered her health, and remained well when I last saw her, which was the 27th of December.

Bristol, 1st Jan. 1813.