

PROTRACTED RECOVERY

FROM EXTENSIVE COMPOUND COMMUNUTED FRACTURE OF LEG.

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The uncertainties of prognosis are frequently illustrated by fatal results from apparently trivial causes, while, on the other hand, it is sometimes our fortune to witness wonderful recoveries from injuries which would generally be considered almost necessarily fatal, either to life or the usefulness of the member affected.

The following case possesses some interest, not only on account of the ultimately favorable result, but also on account of the protracted recovery.

A railroad employé, 31 years of age, of good height and physical development, in good health, but not free from the use of alcoholic drinks in excess at times, was admitted to the Pennsylvania Hospital, under the care of Dr. W. Hunt, October 29, 1869, suffering from injuries received by being run over on the railroad.

On examination, the right thigh was found to be much swollen and discolored, giving evidence of very serious and extensive contusion of the part. The knee-joint was unharmed, but below the knee the limb was extensively injured. On the inner and upper side, about three inches below the joint, was a lacerated surface about three inches in length, communicating by a rather narrower opening with the seat of a commuted fracture of the tibia. *At a distance equal to about one-third the circumference of the leg on the upper and outer side was a wound about an inch in length, which was found to communicate with a fracture of the fibula.*

The fracture of the tibia was freely examined at the time, and found to include, as nearly as could be ascertained, the entire shaft of the bone for a distance of two and a half inches to three inches, the fragments consisting of a large one and a number of smaller ones. The fracture of the fibula was not comminuted.

The patient was profoundly depressed at the time of admission, but, gradually recovering, efforts were made to save the limb. He remained in the hospital until April 6, 1870, during which time several fragments of bone were removed through the