

## MENTAL MEDICINE.

### THE TREATMENT OF DISEASE BY SUGGESTION.



A VERY practical and distinguished physician of old New York said to his class, twenty-five years ago, that he needed but five remedies to cope with any ordinary form of disease. As a great element of his brilliant success in his profession was his individuality and power over men, it is probable that this limited armamentarium was supplemented by one of the best possible attributes that a doctor can possess—the ability to give confidence and to stimulate faith.

With the increase of our knowledge of medicine there is a growing skepticism upon the part of well-informed medical men in regard to the infallibility of much-vaunted drugs, and the advances of the past few years, which have been attended by so many important discoveries, show that a majority of diseases are due either to degeneration or to microbic infection, and in this respect preventive measures are perhaps, after all, the most important. The influence of mind upon body is also nowadays being weighed more critically, and the liberalism of the age permits us to analyze and accept many phenomena which in the past were so wonderful and so far beyond explanation as to be relegated to the domain of quackery and charlatanism. To-day the curious and intensely interesting conditions following expectant attention, or the exercise of mental inhibition, are induced by a large number of physicians, who accomplish astonishing results, and a limited number even believe in the removal of organic disease by applicable mental therapeutic measures. The history of the widely varying examples, more or less accurately reported, of mental concentration with impaired consciousness and pliable will-power, subject to the suggestions and commands of an active agent, are too numerous and familiar to need special mention.

The antiquity of mental therapeutics need not be discussed here; sufficient is it to say that

the history of all peoples teems with illustrative cases of miraculous cures. Those persons who have visited any of the small chapels scattered along the French sea-coast are familiar with the votive offerings—most of which attest a faith-cure—and the pathetic decorations consisting of crutches and sticks that are hung upon the walls, proving the miraculous recovery of grateful invalids who have gone their way rejoicing. The traditions of the Roman Catholic Church furnish many well-authenticated instances of the astonishing effect of the exercise of the mind on the body. The influence of faith as a curative factor, however, need not always be of a strictly religious nature. After all, the fundamental condition of expectant attention, and the natural awe of that which is mysterious or beyond the ken of the subject, is the groundwork of all cures, enabling the skilful physician to impress his patient by appeals to the imagination, and the money-making humbug to make diagnoses upon locks of hair furnished him by his credulous dupes or by dramatic operations. In another direction we find the so-called mind- and faith-cures, which have become so popular of late, and which are patronized by persons whose religious faith permits them to adopt so eminently proper a method, and one so in accord with a very deep part of human nature. That there can be any occult transference between two people who sit back to back is a manifest absurdity, but in all these proceedings the passive agent is in a receptive condition, and under the circumstances is undoubtedly affected by the expectation of some hoped-for thing that is to happen.

The emotional excitement so often connected with intense religious feeling is an element of the greatest importance in relation to suggestion, and many of the cures that are ascribed to prayer are, after all, only examples of what may be done by mental therapeutics. A familiar case is related by Bernheim,—that of the Princess Schwarzenberg, who had remained paralyzed for eight years despite the best medical skill. She was immediately cured, however, by a young peasant who made so strong an impression and inspired such hope that she discarded the apparatus that had been used to overcome the deformity of the limbs, and when suddenly appealed to, and told to rise and walk,



she did, and was afterward entirely cured. It was probable in this case, as in others, that what is known as an "ideal paralysis" existed, which was cured by the sudden emotion attendant upon the development of her enthusiastic religious faith, and by the sudden suspension of inhibition.

Many persons in this country are familiar with the faith-cure of Newton, who went about the country giving exhibitions forty or fifty years ago, and a large number of ideational invalids who passed in review before him were immediately restored to health by his exhortations and suggestions. Those with hysterical blindness recovered at once their vision, paralytics discarded their crutches, and a large proportion of patients whose sufferings were chiefly subjective were promptly relieved. In these cases, of course, suggestion was used. As a rule, with the spread of the news of such performances a delusional epidemic was established, and his labors became easier in consequence.

By suggestion we are enabled to explain many so-called miracles, none of which are more wonderful than those which occur at Lourdes, where even now extensive pilgrimages are made. French literature is full of instances of really astonishing cures made at this famous place, and M. Henri Lasserre has collected a large number of such cases, some of which are simply marvelous. Long-standing paralyses and contractures, and disturbances of vision innumerable, were promptly relieved by the use of water from the famous springs. Lasserre speaks of the case of Mlle. Marie Moreau, a young girl of sixteen, who suffered from that form of blindness called amaurosis, the sight of one eye being wholly gone. After nine days of prayer, a bandage dipped in the water of Lourdes was applied to her eyes, and in the morning she arose completely cured. So wide-spread is the belief in the wonderful powers of this water, that it is no uncommon thing to find devout Catholics sending for it even from America. One invalid who came under my notice, and who suffered from an incurable nervous disease for many years, would never take an ordinary dose of medicine without diluting it with water from this source, for which she regularly sent.

From time immemorial there have been instances of suggestion attending the use of amulets, the bones of saints, and fetishes of various kinds, which have worked miracles or effected marvelous cures, and every once in a while some popular craze marks the appearance of an epidemic of imaginary cures. Whole communities share in common the belief in the power of a madstone, which is treasured by its fortunate possessor, and sought after by

persons hundreds of miles distant who are unlucky enough to have been bitten by a more or less rabid dog. Sometimes these are simply broken *aërolites*, porous stones, or trilobites. But if such credulity exists, especially in the wild parts of the Western and Southern States, what can be said of the universal belief in common rings made of iron or antimony, which are worn by educated and oftentimes scientific people as a sovereign cure for rheumatism? Some years ago I was invited to pass judgment upon a very popular article of so-called electric clothing. The most careful tests with the galvanometer, however, failed to reveal the existence of the slightest current, and it is to be assumed that the virtues of this particular belt were no greater than those of some less pretentious natural object.

In the early part of the century a Frenchman, the Abbé Lenoble, invented a magnet by which disease was to be cured; and about twenty years ago his theories and those of Burcq were revived by Charcot and Bourneville, as well as by many of their advanced countrymen, who performed a series of experiments at La Salpêtrière and other places with astonishing results. That the application of magnets to the surface of the body under ordinary circumstances could produce no effect whatever, is patent to the common mind. An enterprising and venturesome young medical man of New York even went so far lately as to place his head between the armatures of one of the powerful magnets at the Edison shops without suffering the slightest embarrassment or manifesting any alteration in pulse. But, strange to say, when the magnets are applied to certain hysterical subjects, various alterations in sensibility occur, which are undoubtedly due to some influence of imagination. Exactly how this occurs it is impossible to say in the present stage of experimentation. That it is not magnetism which acts is made clear by the fact that if a gold or silver coin be laid upon the anesthetic skin of a hysterical woman, the sensation will be altered at the place of contact, or transferred.

After Lenoble's time, a money-making quack introduced to the world what were known as "Perkins's tractors." These consisted of two small rods of wood or metal, which were applied to the painful or diseased part of the body, and were supposed to remove the *materies morbi* and the symptoms. The tractor craze became universal, and for a time suggestion almost superseded all other forms of medical practice. One of Gillray's most clever caricatures represents a gouty English squire being subjected to the treatment; the "tractor" is held to the nose by a peruked and pompous individual for the purpose of removing the vivid evidence of disease,



while the neglected grog stands upon the table as a silent reminder of the cause of the sufferings of the victim.

How far it is permissible to appeal to the imagination of nervous people is an open question. The instances in medical literature where subterfuge and more or less justifiable deception were adopted are numerous indeed, and the phenomenal success of some of the greatest quacks who ever lived is undoubtedly to be ascribed to ingenious humbugging. Strange to say, where in desperate cases fictitious operations have been resorted to, the results have not always been happy; for, after the first apparent conviction, there has been a reaction, which rather implies that the morbid concentration of the patient is far more deep-seated, and is of the nature of a disease in itself. Unquestionably, the use of deception for the purpose of combating various mental states is at times justifiable, and is especially familiar to persons who see much of the insane.

I can recall a rather amusing experiment which attended the introduction of the phonograph, by which I was able, after many unsuccessful efforts, to correct the delusions of a religious lunatic and to make him eat. This man was an Irishman of a low order of intelligence, who had persistently refused food for several days, and who could not be persuaded to eat or drink until he was brought into a room where a phonograph was concealed. A carefully worded command suited to the case, which had been recorded upon the wax cylinder of the phonograph before his visit, was rolled forth in loud and oracular tones, he being unaware of its source. The effect was immediate, and for a time encouraging.

No matter how apparently mysterious and inexplicable a cure may be, or how illogical the *modus operandi*, it will be found that after all there is some appeal to the patient's imagination in the direction of hypnotic suggestion. What are the possibilities of this method of treatment it is difficult to state. That it ever cures organic disease I do not believe. But there are a variety of maladies, chiefly of a functional nature, but nevertheless exceedingly serious in their obstinacy, which may be removed by it when other remedies fail. Physicians generally are familiar not only with the loss of vision which has been referred to, but with a loss of voice as well, which are simply hysterical conditions that may persist for years. It is also a well-known fact that there are motor disturbances, and what are known to all surgeons as neuromimeses, the most common forms of which counterfeit affections of the joints, and sometimes baffle the most thorough expert examination. These are the cases that have been cured by suggestion by quacks and

others, who have, after all, really used a legitimate mode of treatment in a disreputable way. Though through ignorance they usually fail to apply proper remedies to grave organic conditions, they sometimes strike the mark in some one of these imitative diseases that have been mistakenly regarded as organic, making a coup which gains for them a magnitude of reputation, dwarfing their incompetence, and obscuring their failures in other directions.

It is only within the past few years that scientific men have really adopted suggestion in a rational way, and the advances in psychology and psychopathology have paved the way for the use of a most potent agent. Our knowledge of disorders of motility and the disturbance of the governing coördinating faculties permits us to determine the pathology of certain convulsive and spasmodic conditions which until recently were simply looked upon as vague symptomatic states. Writers' cramp, which is a diseased automatism, has been repeatedly cured by suggestion made during the hypnotic state, some of which remained to control or antagonize the conditions in the intervals between the séances. I have seen forms of persistent tremor, chorea, speech defects, and other motor disturbances very much ameliorated, if not always cured, by the methods of Luys and Bernheim.

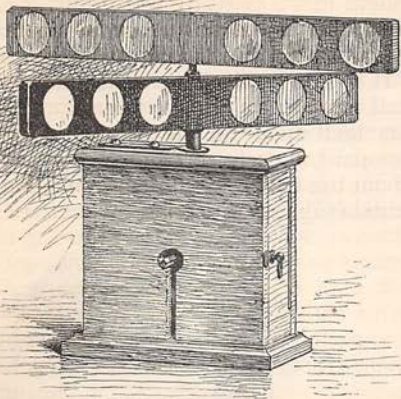
In England and elsewhere suggestion has been used for the correction of certain mental states manifested in moral perversion, among which dipsomania and certain varieties of infantile viciousness figure; and my own experience has convinced me that in some insanities it is certainly a most valuable means for combating the development of delusions, and in restoring the equilibrium of an unbalanced nervous system. A form of mental disorder which has been described by the French as *folie du doute*, and by the writer as introspective insanity, in which the person, whose intellectual health in most respects is unaffected, though he is tortured by doubts of the most aggravating and morbid kind, is decidedly relieved by the production of the hypnotic state, and the suggestion of certainty and assurance. Its efficacy in the cure of insomnia is undoubted, especially where the wakefulness is the result of more or less excitement.

The use of suggestion implies the production of the hypnotic condition of varying depth, and where this is induced the individual is rendered passively receptive to mental impressions that may be made by the operator. This state, which is brought about in several ways, is characterized by an abstraction which varies decidedly in different persons, and is more easily induced by successive séances. Not only does the individual act upon suggestions made to



him at the time, but it is sometimes possible to determine the nature of his actions in the waking stage by suggestions of which he is ignorant; and as a result of this it has been found possible to bring him more or less permanently

son looking at them is exceedingly curious, and the rhythmical retinal impression is very apt in a few minutes to cause a condition of sleep which in many cases is followed by the trance state. He has used and advocated this appliance in cases of chorea and shaking palsy with most encouraging results.



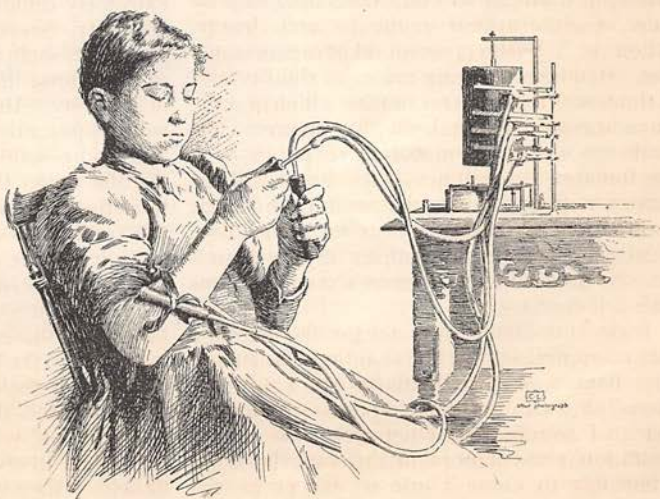
THE FASCINATEUR.

under the dominance of a psychical influence. Therefore, if the desired result is a moral one, there is an agency at work which has been found practically to combat morbid impulses, and to antagonize neurotic cravings.

Practically, there are two methods of inducing the hypnotic state, one of which primarily influences the organs of special sense, and the second the psychical or mental, although the production of the hypnotic condition is a strictly compound one, and the mental phenomena are those most dominant. Any agency that tends to the absorption and preoccupation of the individual favors the mental isolation which for the time being makes the subject oblivious of his environment, and renders him the servant of another's will. Mechanical and other agencies which induce rhythmical exercise of special function are serviceable aids in putting the subject in a receptive condition. Luys has invented for this purpose an apparatus which he calls the *fascinateur*. It consists of two bars of ebonite containing six mirrors on each side, and these bars or arms are revolved in opposite directions by means of clockwork. When placed in a dark room and illuminated by a bright light, the effect upon the per-

A number of tests have been suggested for the determination of the muscular condition in true hypnosis as distinguished from hysteria, and it will be found that in the former there is great steadiness, while in feigned conditions, in which consciousness remains, a tremor will very soon occur. I have been in the habit of making the subject grasp an india-rubber bulb filled with a colored fluid. Into this dips a long glass tube of small caliber. The movements of the column of fluid which result from the slightest pressure are so delicate that the variations of muscular tension are readily perceived. A combination of Marey's tambours may be used for recording a permanent tracing, and an arrangement of this kind is figured in the illustration.

The original mode of Braid, and that often resorted to to-day, is to make the subject look at a bright ball or other object held slightly in front and above the eyes in such a way as to cause a straining of vision. A year or more ago, believing that the same effect could be obtained by other means, I devised a pair of spectacles containing prisms with an extreme angle through which the subject looked at a bright light. In this way certain muscles of the eyeballs were brought into violent effort; and when expectant attention was stimulated by verbal suggestion, the patient very often became unconscious. So far as I know, no systematic attempts have been made until recently to appeal



THE MYOGRAPHIC TEST.



to the other senses; but bearing in mind the soothing effect of monotonous sounds, and of the steady dripping of water, which not only induces sleep in some wakeful people, but is often resorted to for a curious purpose by physicians and others, I devised an apparatus by which not only rhythmical impressions could be made upon the finger-tips, but repeated musical sounds were indefinitely evoked from a finely strung catgut by a revolving wheel. I found that it was much easier to produce the hypnotic sleep when the several senses were acted upon at once than when one alone was appealed to.

The popular method of passes or contact, which play so large a part in the operations of traveling quacks, and are familiar to most people, may be said to belong to the first order of procedure. The other method—that of Bernheim—implies the purely psychic mode of operation. This, under ordinary circumstances, is often exceedingly difficult, and unless the operator has the fullest confidence in himself, and is not too sensitive to the ridicule that may follow a failure, is more efficacious than the mechanical system.

The mode of Bernheim and others is to place the subject in a chair, and by conversation to suggest the sleep that is to come. The person, whose embarrassment and fear are dispelled, is told, after his mental equilibrium is restored, to look at the operator and to think of nothing but sleep. He is told that his eyelids begin to feel heavy, that he cannot keep his eyes open, and next that they are closed. Sometimes it is very curious how quickly the person accepts the suggestion, and how readily sleep actually occurs. It is a matter of only a few minutes with a willing subject, and children particularly very often pass almost immediately into a hypnotic state, becoming slightly paler, and breathing regularly and deeply. When the hypnosis is profound, it is commonly associated with a certain muscular rigidity, and at times with a peculiar condition which in some respects resembles catalepsy. When pressure is made upon certain motor-nerve points,—of the forearm, for instance,—the hand will assume a new position as the result of muscular contraction, which often lasts for some time. While in this state suggestions of many kinds may be made, and the person's conduct is influenced thereby.

I am not inclined to accept the extreme views enunciated by those of my profession who have looked with alarm upon the irresponsibility which attends hypnotic suggestion, nor do I believe that a person whose normal condition is one of moral integrity can be made knowingly to commit crimes, except as the result of an abstract suggestion in which he

is ignorant of the nature of the consequences of what he is about to do.

While the indiscriminate production of the hypnotic state is to be deprecated, I cannot picture the horrors that have been incorporated in a bill introduced by a certain Senator from the Pacific coast; and I, moreover, do not believe that any really bad results can follow the proper use of this means of treatment by well-educated and intelligent medical men.

It will be remembered that during the Eyraud murder trial in Paris considerable stress was laid upon the hypnotism of Gabrielle Bompard, and a lively controversy was started. About this time one of the most intelligent students of suggestion detailed an interesting series



CATALEPTIC RIGIDITY.

of experiments which went to prove that it was extremely difficult to produce absolute moral obliquity. Several women were selected for experiment, some of whom were respectable, and others whose life had destroyed every vestige of modesty. Although both classes of patients were apparently in the hypnotized state, it was found impossible to make the decent women disrobe when they were told to do so, while the others showed no reluctance in obeying the commands of the operator.

So far as the proportion of people susceptible to hypnotism is concerned, it is generally agreed that it is very great. Hulst, an American physician, shares the views of James and others in regard to the large number of people susceptible to hypnotic influence; and Fetterstrand, in over three thousand cases, failed in only ninety-seven, while Fovel enunciates the doctrine that every sound individual is hypnotizable. My own experience, however, is less encouraging.



There seems to be a great difference of opinion in regard to the susceptibility of insane and hysterical patients, and a number of practical observers believe that it is with the greatest difficulty that patients who are insane can be influenced at all. It is quite certain that established insanity renders its victims unfit for psychopathic treatment, but this is by no means true with light mental disturbances. Cases reported by Booth, four in number, which comprised varying forms of nervous disease,—in which, however, hysteria figured mainly,—were cured in from seven to fifteen séances.

The varying susceptibility of the subject to the influence of suggestion makes the adoption of hypnotism as a surgical application an exceedingly doubtful measure, despite the stories that have been reported of operations that have been performed in France. With some persons who are trained and easily made unconscious, it is possible to burn the skin or introduce sharp instruments without evoking complaint. At La Charité, and elsewhere, teeth have been extracted without any suffering whatever.

There are some individuals who are able to bring about an autohypnosis by an effort of will, and every surgeon is familiar with this phenomenon, which is occasionally induced by those who refuse to take anesthetics, or are possessed of strong will-power. I can well remember the case of a stolid Irishman who underwent a protracted operation upon the face, involving the extraction of a tumor, and who quietly submitted to all manner of cutting and tearing without a single word of protest, apparently not suffering in the least. The method adopted by those who exercise a sudden expenditure of muscular force in grasping the dentist's chair suggests the production of autohypnosis in a minor degree.

There seems to be a good deal of skepticism in regard to the value of suggestion-cures in Europe, and Dr. Ernest Hart is disposed to ridicule and pooh-pooh the claims of the Nancy school, quoting Babinski, who analyzed and disproved the cures that had been so universally reported. Of course the phenomena of hypnotism are expressed under so many conditions that the element of fraud must occa-

sionally enter, but it is unfair to condemn all the students of this subject because certain of its exponents have been imposed upon. Dr. Hart's attack upon Dr. Luys, who had been deceived by his subjects, does not by any means disprove the large number of authenticated experiments, and the good work notably of Richet, Bernheim, Janet, Myers, and James.

There is undoubtedly a degree of enthusiasm, particularly in France, which brings with it a certain amount of credulity, and the experiments especially in regard to sensory transference can be viewed only with a great deal of suspicion. I have been informed by a well-educated and thoroughly responsible French physician of the details of an experiment which it certainly would take a stretch of the imagination to appreciate, and which is an instance of what I mean. Two subjects, A and B, were taken into separate rooms and thrown into the hypnotic state. B would volunteer the statement that his ear had been pinched, his face slapped, or that pins had been run into him. It subsequently transpired that these very things had been done to A at the same time that they were felt by B. It is quite probable in this instance that the subjects were of the class known to traveling mesmerizers as "horses," who are utterly dishonest and who very often act in collusion. Mr. Labouchère's recent exposé was evidently of a person of this order, who had trained himself to perform many of the tricks which are produced for the delight of the gullible.

To establish clearly the importance of adopting psychopathy as a means for the relief of disease, we must draw the line very sharply, and exclude the vast amount of dramatic nonsense which has found its way into the newspapers. The time has certainly come when this subject should be studied in a dignified and scientific manner, and honest physicians should separate it from every vestige of the claptrap and stage effect with which it has been invested for so many years.

The therapeutic use of suggestion is in its infancy, but there can be no doubt that ultimately its importance will be recognized by every thinking person, and it will be adopted as an important and legitimate aid.

*Allan McLane Hamilton.*

