

THE ETERNAL GULLIBLE.

WITH CONFESSIONS OF A PROFESSIONAL "HYPNOTIST."



THAT genial old skeptic, Montaigne, summed up his criticism of life in the terse aphorism, "L'homme se pipe." Man cheats himself even more than he is cheated. Gullibility springs eternal in the human breast; in the evolution of the race other feelings and beliefs wither away like organs which have lost their use; this alone abides with us as an inalienable birthright. In the immortal words of Robert Macaire, "Tout passe; mais les badauds ne passeront jamais." In the "eternal gullible," which is a primary constituent in the nature of "this foolish-compounded clay, man," lies the whole secret of the success of quackery of all kinds. This chronic disease of the human mind is subject to periodical exacerbations under the influence of what appear to be pandemic waves of credulity. At the present moment we are passing through such a phase of occultation of common sense, and hypnotism, spiritualism, telepathy, "spookism" in its various manifestations, Mahatmism, Matteism, and intellectual fungi of a like kind, flourish in rankest luxuriance in the minds of men and women, some of whom in other respects give evidence of more than average intelligence.

To prevent misconception, it may be well for me to repeat here that I do not deny the physical facts of hypnotism and its heteronyms. It is the interpretation of them, put forth by some hierophants of the cult, that I consider erroneous. I fully admit that, under the influence of certain psychological stimuli, persons whose nervous system is ill-balanced, or at best in a condition of "unstable equilibrium," readily pass into a state which we may, if we choose, call "hypnotic sleep." In view of the doubtful connotation which, owing to unsavory associations, the word "hypnotism" has acquired, I prefer to designate the condition here referred to as "Braidism," after the name of its most philosophical exponent, the late Mr. Braid of Manchester. I think there can be no doubt that the condition is mental and purely subjective, but there must also be a pathological coefficient on which the susceptibility of the patient to the so-called "hypnotic influence" depends. As to the nature of this coefficient, or of the condition which it underlies, we are at present in the dark; there are unfortunately still some riddles in medicine of which the solution has yet to be discovered, and this which we call "Braidism," or "hypnotism," is to that

extent one of them. However, we are at least sure that there is nothing miraculous or preternatural about this condition, no "magnetism," no "efflux of will-power," no added function of the organism or new power of mind — unless it be the credulity of those who accept them as signs and wonders. The hypnotist counts for nothing in the matter, except as an object inanimate or animate affecting the imagination of the subject, who is always self-hypnotized.

A chief obstacle in the way of the scientific investigation of hypnotism is the difficulty of finding any solid footing in the quagmire of error, self-delusion, and downright imposture in which this *ignis fatuus* of the human intellect lives and moves and has its being. Even in the hands of medical men of high character the proportion of truth to mere error is as Falstaff's half-penny worth of bread to his intolerable deal of sack. As for the hypnotism and the crystal-gazing of the drawing-room and of the public platform it is, so far as the "subjects" are concerned, of imposture all compact. In a little book recently published, the first edition of which was exhausted in a few months, I showed how Dr. Luys's subjects, in their own words, "gulled" him, and how sadly he played the part of dupe and decoy. If such things be possible in the green wood of an intellect originally trained to scientific observation, what is likely to happen in the dry sticks and shavings of half-educated, wholly uncritical, and superstitious minds ready to take fire at the slightest spark of the mysterious? The fact is that without specially trained "subjects" hypnotism could not exist. Even Charcot had to put his chief subjects through a long course of training to fit them for his public displays at the Salpêtrière. In accordance with a fundamental law of political economy, the demand has created the supply; hence that curious product of our latter day *Aberglaube*, the professional "subject," has come to be. Of the nature and significance of this "sign of the times" something may be gathered from the tale I am about to unfold.

Some little time ago I was the recipient of the confessions of a professional subject, who had come to see the error of his ways, or, as I fear is more probable, finding his occupation gone (for your "subject" loses his commercial value by over-use), was not unwilling to unfold the story of his "professional" life for a consideration. He was sent to me by the editor of London "Truth," into whose sym-

pathetic ear he had first poured the story of his career as a *corpus vile* of pseudo-scientific experiment. The confessions of this ingenuous youth are amusing and instructive, though, as in most confidences of the kind, the light is thrown strongly on the sins and shortcomings of others, while the penitent's own peccadillos are left in shadow. They are, unfortunately, too long to give in full, but I may say that the original documents submitted to me prove that in the most noted hypnotic exhibitions given on public platforms at the Aquarium in London, and other places of amusement, the performers, both hypnotizers and hypnotized, are, almost without exception, conscious humbugs going through a prearranged "show," and, to quote the *vates sacer* of the Heathen Chinese, "the same with intent to deceive." In the inner circles of the music-halls, the "line" of the professional subject is, I find, as well recognized as that of the contortionist, or any other variety of mountebank. He is engaged in the usual way, and his earnings are proportionate to his professional skill, that is, to his power of gulling the groundlings. Nor, taking into account the disagreeable experiences which he has to go through, can it be said that his line of business is particularly remunerative. His muscles must be under extraordinary control; his palate must be disciplined to tolerate, and his stomach to retain, such delicacies as castor-oil, mustard, Cayenne pepper, paraffin, and ipecacuanha; and he must bear pain with the impassive stoicism of an Indian brave. It is clear that a professional subject must not only be born, but must be made, and to the making of him there must go an amount of trouble worthy of a better cause. His professional equipment must include some measure of histrionic ability, as, in his time, he has many parts to play. Above all, he must, like the Roman augurs, cultivate a command of countenance which shall prevent his laughing outright in the faces of his dupes.

My interesting penitent has allowed me the privilege of seeing his business correspondence, from which the story of his professional life, from year to year, can be extracted. According to these documents, his first introduction to mesmerism was at St. James's Hall; this important event is best described in his own words:

When I first went to the above show, I was sitting among the audience when a mesmerized subject rushed up to me, and said the place was on fire. He tried to pull me away from my seat, but I would not go, till at last Mr. —¹ came up and awakened him. As I was leaving the building, that subject came up to me, and apologized for the trouble he had occasioned me. He asked me whether I would have a ticket for the following evening; he gave me a ticket, and I came again

the following evening. When I saw him again, he asked me if I believed in it; I answered yes. He asked me if I thought I could do the same; I said no. He said he would teach me if I liked.

My penitent has been endowed by Nature with a countenance which resembles Pindar's verses in being "significant to the initiated." I am therefore not surprised that he was quickly recognized by the sympathetic intuition of a kindred spirit, as one born to hypnotic greatness. In his modest diffidence as to his capacity in that direction we may recognize the "unconsciousness" which, according to Carlyle, is a distinguishing attribute of the highest genius. An appointment was made for the following morning at an address in the classic region of Drury Lane, and there the neophyte received his first lesson in the mystery of his art.

When I came there I saw half a dozen other young fellows who went through all sorts of tricks. Mr. — was not present. Then he [presumably the amiable subject who had discerned the latent possibilities in our friend's expressive physiognomy] told me to sit down and close my eyes and pretend to fall asleep, and he stuck a needle in my arm and asked if it hurt much. I said no. After a few more tricks, like falling from my chair, I was asked to come up for one week for 15s. Being without employment, I accepted. When I came up for the first time on the stage, the mesmerist tried to put me to sleep, but I did not [sic], as I was afraid.

Some further tuition was necessary, and for a short time the candidate was not trusted to do anything on the stage beyond going to sleep, in the mean time learning different tricks at the seminary in Drury Lane. He was an apt pupil, and very soon he was able to do several things which he had been taught, such as "laugh, cry, smoking tallow candles, and being fireman." The rapid progress of our hero is proved by the fact that apparently within a couple of weeks of his being taken in hand by the principal of the Drury Lane Academy aforesaid, whom he calls his "agent and trainer," he, in his own words, "went through catelepsy [sic], oil-drinking, needle, and all other tricks."

In the course of time we find our now fully fledged "subject," whom I will call L., performing with a well-known professor of hypnotism at the Royal Aquarium and elsewhere. He seems to have been at first taken on trial, but having gone to sleep, been pierced with needles, and drunk a glass of "paraffin mixture" to the satisfaction of the mesmerist, he was engaged as a regular "subject" at £1 15s. a week. By this operator L. was, in his own words, "put in catelepsy" [sic], and had two fellows laid across him, with the master himself on top.

¹ I have all the names as they stand in the original documents, but omit them here.

In fact, so promising a subject was he considered that he was selected by the "professor" for private demonstrations. Having been seen talking to gentlemen in the Aquarium, he received a serious caution from his employer not to reveal the fact that he was pretending to be under mesmeric influence, and not "to go to anybody's private house," presumably on his own account. He speaks of having worked eighteen months with his employer at different places, such as the Agricultural Hall, Bow, Sanger's, and Shoreditch, besides the Royal Aquarium. During this engagement his stomach was put to some severe tests, as he had at various times to eat tallow candles, cigarettes, raw onions, etc., and to drink a variety of "vile concoctions."

L. next became connected with another "professor," with whom he performed at the Aquarium, giving "two shows a day," going through "the usual tricks." The "professor's" style seems to have been of the robust order; he is described as throwing "the subjects most unmercifully about, and especially the bad ones." At the request of a doctor a penknife was on one occasion stuck into L.'s arm. The following newspaper report of the "show" at the Aquarium is interesting in view of L.'s own statement as to his previous appearances on the same stage:

The subjects were very much of the same class of men that Mr. — operated upon, and in some instances they were challenged as to whether they had not appeared with —, *an assertion which they stoutly denied.*

At one time Succi, the fasting man, traveled with them, and he also appears to have been smitten with the noble ambition to become a mesmerist. He tried his prentice hand on L., who, being nothing if not accommodating, allowed him to succeed, to the great disgust of his employer, who feared that Succi might set up as a rival showman in the hypnotic line.

L. next appears as an instructor in the art and mystery of hypnotism. Under his tuition his pupil soon blossomed into a "professor," and gave some successful public exhibitions of his mesmeric influence, which led to an engagement at the Royal Aquarium. There he and his *fidus Achates* remained eight months, demonstrating the wonders of hypnotism to an admiring public. At these performances our poor fakir of a "subject" had to put six bonnet pins through his cheeks, drink any amount of paraffin mixture, go twice a day through "catalepsy, and imitate Samson the strong man."

With Dr. —, another member of the hypnotic fraternity, our hero became acquainted through an advertisement in the "Era." On calling upon the mesmerist he saw three country lads going through what may be called the goose-step of mesmerism and hypnotism. L.,

however, who had got more insight into the inwardness of hypnotism than most of his employers, advised his master to get London subjects, who might be supposed, in the classic words of Sam Weller, to be "up to snuff and a pinch or two over," and warned him against the danger of his show being wrecked by the stupidity of country subjects. His engagement with Dr. — does not seem to have been very brilliant in point of profit. The terms were, however, subsequently raised on L.'s giving assurance that he was used to the "needle business." But the interesting partnership was dissolved because although the subject had all the heavy work to do he could obtain no further increase of pay. The letters before me show the extremely businesslike way in which these public hypnotists arrange for a proper supply of subjects who travel with them as regular members of the "company," and have to give satisfactory assurance before being engaged as to the quality and extent of their powers.

L.'s advice to his employer was thoroughly sound; it would be to the last degree dangerous for a professor of hypnotism to trust to local talent for his public displays. A proof of this occurred while L. was at Birmingham. The "Dr." usually took the precaution of giving the oil-drinking and "all the heavy and difficult things" to L. to do. One night, however, he tried to make one of his country subjects take the oil, but the latter refused, and a scene was prevented only by L.'s ingeniously creating a diversion which changed a beginning hiss into applause.

Another "professor" he first met at the Middlesex Music Hall, where, with an eye to possible business, he gave the hypnotist his professional card. The result is seen in the following letter, dated October 16, 1891.

I have just dropped across your card. I am going to open at Greenwich on Boxing Day. I want two subjects.

I should like to know whether you are used to the oil and needle business and can do *catelepsy*. Please let me know by return.

Apparently L. was able to satisfy this eminent performer as to his exceptional talents as a subject to such an extent that he was eager to secure another subject equally gifted. This is shown by the following extract from a letter dated December 20.

Yours to hand. If the other fellow is also used to the needle and oil he can come as well. I will give you each thirty shillings for the seven days. Be at the Hall at 3 o'clock sharp. Do not disappoint me. Inclosed find two tickets.

P. S. Learn a good comic song if you can.

The postscript shows that in addition to his powers as a fakir, and to his general histrionic

capacity, the subject who wishes to reach the highest pinnacle in his profession must, as Goethe said, "develop his powers in every possible direction," and all for thirty shillings a week. This particular "professor" "made impressions without talking to the subjects," but as a man of forethought who left nothing to accident, he was careful to give instructions beforehand as to what was to be done every night. L.'s powers of endurance were somewhat severely tested by an inquiring doctor, who stuck a penknife into his leg, and tested him by lighting a match under his eye, and by "rubbing the eyeballs." Here our subject takes us into his confidence, and reveals one of the tricks of the trade, for he says, "having the eyes turned up, we cannot see anything." If this device succeeded in deceiving any member of the medical profession, it could have been only by the operation of faith, which not only moves mountains, but seems to deprive otherwise observant men of the use of their senses. Truly the hypnotic showman and his acolytes, finding people so willing to be deceived, may almost be forgiven for saying with Autolycus: "Ha! ha! What a fool Honesty is, and Trust, his sworn brother, a very simple gentleman!"

L.'s next employer was an "editor," who had become acquainted with him at the Royal Aquarium during one of his previous performances there. He is said to have been very skeptical at first, but L. convinced him — an interesting example of the faith born of the will to believe, of which theologians tell us. Behold now the able editor reincarnated as a professional hypnotist, giving exhibitions at Blackfriars Road, Brentwood, the Metropolitan Music Hall, and at private houses. This new avatar seems, however, to have been a failure. To quote the words of L., "He did not seem to succeed, so took on private pupils, which he is training now," a view of the place of the teacher of hypnotism which may be compared with Lord Beaconsfield's description of critics as men who have failed in literature and art.

L.'s next engagement was with a lady hypnotist, with whom, to use his own words, he "gave different shows at all sorts of clubs and music halls." They were also engaged for the Royal Aquarium, which seems to be the San Carlo of such exhibitions; but here the professional jealousy of a rival hypnotist interfered with the arrangement, and they had to seek fresh fields and pastures new. The fair mesmerist would seem to have been the object of considerable jealousy on the part of her male rivals. Miss —, we are assured, was at first a believer in her own possession of a mysterious mesmeric power, but L. opened her eyes on the subject, a useful part he was well qualified to play. The following extracts from the business

correspondence of this lady are interesting, as showing the care that has to be taken in selecting for these exhibitions subjects that can be trusted to go through the usual rites without indecorous levity, and without mistaking the situation.

To-day my arrangements have been completed, and am now under the orders of — [a well-known theatrical agent], so that at any time he may be pleased I shall have to appear, so according to your promise I want you to procure about six easy subjects to begin with. I should be pleased if you could forward their addresses. (Only men who could be surely relied upon, I mean that would come upon the stage for sure, and temperate.) For each man I will allow you two shillings; their wages will be settled by my agent to-morrow, which I shall see to being liberal.

Sorry I could not write as promised on Saturday, but nothing really definite was arranged concerning the men's wages. The latest desire of Mr. — being that on Wed. he would like to see just two of the *smartest* subjects obtainable — must be "gentlemanly" with a view to their further engagement — he has some idea of my getting up quite a novel show (with perhaps two men only). Now if you care to make one find the other (don't forget he must be smart and good-looking — that's the order), I should prefer a cataleptic subject if this is agreeable, please to be at —'s office — at 1:45 sharp on Wed. morning.

The lady's style is a little incoherent, and she shows an ultra-feminine contempt for punctuation; but she manages to make it clear that she wants a particular kind of goods delivered punctually and in sound condition. L. seems to have been successful in finding the class of subject required, for on August 7, 1891, Miss — writes:

Thanks for your prompt reply with addresses. I will allow you to judge them, as to subjects I *suppose them to have been controled before*. I don't know how soon I may require them — of course with you.

From the stipulation as to the subjects having been controlled before, the lady seems to have been somewhat distrustful of her own powers, but her confidence in her leading subject, Mr. L., was evidently complete. In another letter we find her asking for subjects "not too well known," and especially bargaining for a supply of "decent young men" that she can depend upon. This difficulty in connection with professional subjects — that they may become too well known — recurs more than once in Miss —'s letters: thus she adds a postscript to one, to the following effect:

N. B. I hope they are not too easily recognizable at the Aquarium. I should like their names and addresses.

The following letter is an example of the careful way in which the arrangements for these performances are made beforehand.

The gentlemen would have to be at the hall at 6:30 sharp. For this occasion I will give them 4s. each — and this will in all probability lead to a permanent engagement at once, — for which the proprietor has already undertaken to pay 5s. a turn each and every occasion, being, as it is a music hall, one half hour only — it is a stage rather bigger than at Aquarium, and being rather a decent place, of course *I must this time be sure of their turning up*. Now could you get about eight men, one half cataleptic, for this occasion? *Write by return* as there is so little time — only if agreeable — they *must come*, and I will meet them that I may know them upon the stage just for the first time.

L. performed with many other hypnotists, professional and amateur. Among the latter were the author of a book on hypnotism which has been somewhat favorably noticed in the British press, and a well-known "faith-healing" divine. It is all the same story, *mutato nomine*.

Whether L. actually gulled the various "professors," "Drs." etc., to whose influence he submitted as completely as he states may be doubted, and in any case the matter is of no interest to any one but those who may have paid their shillings and half-crowns on the understanding that they were to see a thaumaturgic display of a genuine kind. The case is different, however, as regards members of the medical profession whom he professes to have deceived. That he actually has succeeded in imposing on certain doctors is beyond question, but the evidence before me in no way bears out the statement made in "Truth," that L. "had again and again solemnly been experimented on by eminent English doctors, and that he had simply made fools of them all." On the other hand, it is clear that he succeeded in humbugging the editor of "Truth" himself. After speaking of a "learned caucus" at St. Mary's Hospital, where "some medico performed the amazing feat of raising a blister upon him [L.] by mere 'suggestion' while he [the subject] was under hypnotic control in the next room," Mr. Labouchere goes on to say, "If that worthy medico could have heard the youth describe to me how he raised the blister, I think he would have taken down his brass plate forthwith, and have retired into private life for very shame. This 'promising subject' further bore on his body the marks of a serious surgical operation, which, by his own account, he had undergone in France for an enormous fee at the hands of two doctors. Both of these votaries of science seem to have been so anxious to test the possibility of performing the operation on a hypnotized patient that they quite omitted the preliminary formality of ascertaining whether the patient was not quite as wide awake as themselves." While admitting that he has only the patient's word for this edifying story, the editor of

"Truth" makes it clear that he fully believes, or at least sees nothing improbable in it, a suggestive circumstance which seems to show that after all there may be something in hypnotism.

There can be no doubt, however, that L. found some of his most confiding dupes among members of the medical profession. Speaking of one of these, a demonstrator of physiology at a London medical school, L. says:

This gentleman I first met at the Royal Aquarium after leaving the stage. He made an appointment with me at his house and tried to mesmerize me. The first time I did not let him succeed entirely, next time the same, but the third time he succeeded to get me under his entire control. He mesmerized me always with his *eye-glasses* on, and that made me sometimes laugh in his face. He asked me the reason and I replied he looked at me so stern, that made me laugh. He made any number of difficult experiments on me, viz., making me write my name at different ages like 7 years, 9, 12, 15, and 19 years of age. He used to put me to sleep and make an impression on my mind that as soon as he rapped on the table I have to wake. There were then always three gentlemen present, but I always succeeded. He also gave me ink to drink, and tested my pulse on a pulse-tester machine; while there he did the blister trick. Of course, Mr. — was a very firm believer in mesmerism. I have heard nothing of him lately. At his place I met Dr. — of — Hospital, where I gave a show. — did all sorts of tricks with me. He also experimented heavily with an electric battery. He made me fetch certain books from the book-case; also when he touched a flower to fall asleep. He made me a teetotalar [sic], and I promised to remain one. He also put an impression on me never to be mesmerized again by any one. Of course, all these things never come true.

Poor Mr. — would seem to have been fooled to the top of his bent, and from the correspondence which his tricky subject placed in my hands he would seem to have paid, one way or the other, a good deal of money for the imposition practised upon him. He may, I think, be taken as a type of the scientific man who is led astray when he touches hypnotism and cognate subjects, not so much by the want of knowledge or powers of observation, as by what I should call want of insight into character to control the merely scientific judgment.

Being curious to study the technic of so exceptionally gifted an artist as "L.," I accepted his offer, to use his own elegant language, "to give a show at my house." I invited several medical acquaintances interested in hypnotism, including Dr. J. Milne Bramwell, Dr. Hack Tuke, Dr. Outterson Wood, Surgeon-Colonel J. B. Hamilton, Mr. Wingfield, and others, to be present on the occasion. L. brought two other subjects with him: one of these was introduced

by him as his cousin, but there was so strong a family likeness between all the three, that they might easily have passed for brothers. There are few people, who, as Sydney Smith said of Francis Horner, "have the Ten Commandments written on their faces." It is, therefore, not the fault of these ingenious youths that their physiognomy is not exactly, to put it delicately, such as would generally be accepted as a guarantee of good faith. They went through all their ordinary "platform" business, simulating the hypnotic sleep, performing various antics "under control," and in particular "going through catalepsy," to use my friend's own phrase. Not the least interesting part of the "show" was the preliminary hypnotization of L. by the demonstrator of physiology already referred to, whose eyes had not yet been opened to the fact that he had been imposed upon. When he commanded L. to "sleep" the latter obediently did so, with all the usual appearances of profound hypnotization, muscular relaxation, facial congestion, upturned eyeballs, not moving when touched, apparent insensibility, stertor, insensibility to sound, light, and external stimuli. The performance was splendid and complete, and Mr. — enjoyed a moment's triumph. But L. instantly woke up again with a leer as soon as the operator announced that he was "under influence." Mr. — made several further attempts to hypnotize his former subject, each time with the same result. The situation was comic, yet had in it an element of pathos; the operator was so earnest a believer that the shock of his awakening was almost painful to witness.

L.'s performance was not destitute of merit, but to the critical judgment it left a good deal to be desired. He overdid his part, the congestion of his face being exaggerated to a degree almost suggestive of impending apoplexy, while his snoring somewhat overstepped the modesty of nature. These points were dwelt on by more than one of the gentlemen present, but I am not altogether free from a suspicion that in some of the cases at least the observation was of an *ex post facto* nature. On the whole, it was a very clever, but somewhat overdone, imitation of the ordinary hypnotic sleep.

One of L.'s companions seemed to me to simulate the hypnotic sleep better than he did, but L. at once dispelled any illusion there might have been by unexpectedly gripping him behind the knee. Some exhibitions of "post-hypnotic suggestion" given by the two were well calculated to tickle the groundlings in a music-hall, but could hardly have deceived any serious observer. The "catalepsy business" had more artistic merit. So rigid did L. make his muscles that he could be lifted in one piece like an Egyptian mummy. He lay with his

head on the back of one chair, and his heels on another, and allowed a fairly heavy man to sit on his stomach; it seemed to me, however, that he was here within a "straw" or two of the limits of his endurance. The "blister trick" spoken of by "Truth" as having deceived some medical men was done by rapidly biting and sucking the skin of the wrist. L. did manage with some difficulty to raise a slight swelling, but the marks of the teeth were plainly visible.

As to the wonderful operation on his throat, L. made a great mystery of it, and required a good deal of pressing before he could be induced to allow the scar to be seen. The reason of this unexpected modesty was apparent as soon as the part was shown, for the wound had obviously been self-inflicted. How any one could have imagined that such a wound had been made by a surgeon's hand, it is difficult to understand. When challenged on the subject, L. took refuge in the supposed *sub sigillo* nature of the transaction, a sudden awakening of conscientious scruples which was in amusing contrast with the extreme freedom of his voluntary confidences on all other matters relating to his professional experiences. Though the appearance of the scar itself was conclusive, the true nature of the "operation" was abundantly proved by the evidence of the records of the Royal Free Hospital, Gray's Inn Road, which, by a kind of poetical justice, the much-beguiled Mr. — was the means of bringing to light.

One point in L.'s exhibition which was undoubtedly genuine was his remarkable and stolid endurance of pain. He stood before us smiling and open-eyed while he ran long needles into the fleshy parts of his arms and legs without flinching, and he allowed one of the gentlemen present to pinch his skin in different parts with strong crenated pincers in a manner which bruised it, and which to most people would have caused intense pain. L. allowed no sign of suffering or discomfort to appear; he did not set his teeth or wince; his pulse was not quickened, and the pupil of his eye did not dilate as physiologists tell us it does when pain passes a certain limit. It may be said that this merely shows that in L. the limit of endurance was beyond the normal standard, or, in other words, that his sensitiveness was less than that of the average man. At any rate, his performance in this respect was so remarkable that some of the gentlemen present were fain to explain it by a supposed "post-hypnotic suggestion," the theory apparently being that L. and his comrades hypnotized one another, and thus made themselves insensible to pain. Such a power would have been invaluable to the Jews whose grinders were extracted by our Plantagenet kings, and to the heretics who fell into the clutches

of the Inquisition. So far-fetched an explanation is, however, unnecessary. As surgeons have reason to know, persons vary widely in their sensitiveness to pain. I have seen a man chat quietly with the bystanders while his carotid artery was being tied without the use of chloroform. During the Russo-Turkish war, wounded Turks often astonished English doctors by undergoing the most formidable amputations with no other anesthetic than a cigarette. Hysterical women will inflict very severe pain on themselves — merely for wantonness or in order to excite sympathy. The fakirs who allow themselves to be hung up by hooks beneath their shoulder-blades seem to think little of it, and, as a matter of fact, I believe are not much inconvenienced by the process.

The impression left on my mind by L.'s performance was mainly a feeling of wonder that so vulgar and transparent a piece of trickery should ever have imposed on any one. Yet, though having no scientific interest in itself, the "show" has a *foolometric* value of a very distinct kind. That any medical man should have thought "phenomena" such as those obligingly displayed by these subjects worthy of serious study is, as Carlyle would have said, "significant of much." What weight can be attached to the judgment of persons so devoid of the critical faculty when dealing with these matters? If they allow themselves to be gulled by so sorry an impostor as L., are they not likely to be as wax in the hands of subjects of a higher order, in whom a natural genius for deception has been developed, and I may say educated, by the unconscious tuition of scientific enthusiasts? I am willing to believe that some subjects may, like *Hamlet*, be "indifferent honest," at least at first; but it must be as difficult for a person who is habitually made the subject of such experiments to remain truthful as for a publican to be a total abstainer. The wish to please the investigator leads in the first instance to a little over-coloring; then come a harmless experiment or two on the scientific pundit's credulity, and so on, the appetite for deception growing by that it feeds on, to systematic imposture. Men are easily induced to see what they are anxious to see, and even the dry light of science does not always keep its votaries out of this pitfall. "Suggestion" often acts more powerfully on the operator than on the subject.

It is not too much to say that the majority of observations of hypnotic phenomena which we are invited to accept on the authority of men of acknowledged scientific competence and indisputable personal integrity are vitiated by the fundamental assumption that the subjects are trustworthy — that is, neither deceiving nor self-deceived. This source of fallacy is one to which the scientific experimenter is

perhaps peculiarly exposed. He is rather apt to look upon his subjects as the pathologists look upon their rabbits and guinea-pigs, simply as the abstract quantities, x , y , or z , in a scientific theorem, without taking into account the possible disturbing influence of the "personal equation." In investigating the phenomena of hypnotism, scientific phenomena must always be controlled and directed by the practical insight of the man of the world, and a cardinal principle in all such inquiries must be to look upon all experiments on trained mediums or hysterical subjects as utterly worthless. How even the best trained scientific judgment may be misled by disregard of this fundamental truth was only too well illustrated by the example of Charcot, who finally abandoned his researches in this department of neurology in disgust.

The rules of scientific criticism which should guide us in estimating the value of such experiments cannot be better formulated than they have lately been by Professor Moriz Benedikt of Vienna, in the following sentences: "1. Hypnotic phenomena in general cannot be accepted as scientifically established facts *without objective proof*. Performances at the command, or at the supposed wish, of the experimenter take place under the pressure of his authority, even in the case of persons who are not deliberate deceivers, relatively few persons being capable of independent volition and independent thought. 2. Only experiments on unprepared individuals who have not been initiated into the mysteries of hypnotism have any value; experiments on 'mediums' are worthless. 3. As a rule, only very few individuals and very few conditions are suitable for hypnotic treatment."¹

Professor Benedikt adds — and the vast majority of the medical profession will agree with him — that the repetition of such experiments on neurotic subjects cannot be too strongly condemned. Systematic hypnotization is not only useless, but actively harmful, as it has "a demoralizing influence on the intellect, the will, and the physical independence of the subject."

While, however, admitting as I have already said, that hypnotism is a reality, I repeat that the great bulk of the "phenomena" described by observers reputed to be "scientific" is founded on imposture. What is true in hypnotism is not new, — for it is only old-fashioned mesmerism masquerading under a newly coined Greek name — nor is it of any practical use to mankind. The "cures" attributed to its agency are exactly similar to those wrought by "faith-healing," when they are not altogether imaginary.

Ernest Hart.

¹ "Hypnotismus und Suggestion: Eine klinisch-psychologische Studie." Leipzig und Wien, 1894.

the world will not willingly let die. A characteristic of the best work, if not its ultimate test, is suggestiveness — the awakening rather than the satisfaction of the mind: more must be meant than meets the ear; and this, it must be admitted, is likelier of achievement in the presentation of the ideal than in the transcription of the actual. For this reason poetry will always remain the first of the arts — the vehicle for the successive perpetuation of what is best worth having out of the common inheritance of the race.

But even in so ideal an art as poetry, to paraphrase the Laureate, Art reveals herself in many ways,

Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

How much less is it worth while to dogmatize as to methods in departments of prose expression? It is not style that makes the man, but the man that makes the style. That the narrative manner of Grant is, let us say, Doric, is not without a significant relation to the character of the man. So, in fiction, power reaches its end through the natural speech of the writer. The law of the conservation of force holds good in all forms of literary expression: as much power as is put into a work can come out of it, no more and no less. And art, indispensable as it is, exists merely to give currency to power. Art for art's sake is as though the dynamo should exist for the battery.

When one comes to consider wherein the power of the great novelists consists, it may be found to be closely related to what, in spite of the psychologists, we have agreed to call the heart. Klopstock was

clearly shallow in thinking that the highest test of a work of art is that it should bring tears to the eyes. On the stage and elsewhere the most superficial emotions are thus stirred by the vulgarest expedients. The stronger roots of human nature are planted deeper, and one must go deeper to feed them. The true artist must first realize his scene in his own feeling. Many a reader has wept with Thackeray over the death of Colonel Newcome who has been much more permanently affected by the nobility and pathos of his life. In "Middlemarch" the meeting of Dorothea and Rosamond is an unforgettable glimpse of triumphant womanly sympathy. To name over to one's self the favorite scenes of fiction is to count a rosary of art, with every bead of which one's heart goes out in adoration. Against these treasures how empty is the word-painting of the artificial school! Not the most exquisite technic — though it be that of a Bourget — can compensate for the lack of this broad human feeling. The way to oblivion is paved with the bones of clever authors. The most admired of recent books in America at the present time owes its vogue to the fact that, in spite of serious faults of style and construction, it produces an atmosphere of affection and sympathy to which it is impossible to feel one's self a stranger, and that from first to last the author's touch is free from the degradation of cynicism. "Manner is a great matter," of course, but genius is expansive, and shifts the boundaries of art. And genius is authoritative in fiction exactly in the proportion in which it speaks with the *vox humana*.

OPEN LETTERS.

Remarks on a Recent Hypnotic Experiment.

IN THE CENTURY MAGAZINE for October, 1894, in an article entitled "The Eternal Gullible," Mr. Ernest Hart related certain experiments made in my presence and in that of several other medical men. The crushing to a jelly of a portion of the skin on a young man's arm with a pair of strong pincers was the only one of importance. This lad had performed as a mesmeric subject, and Mr. Hart had bought the confession that he was an impostor. The amount paid I do not know; I heard afterward that he persistently demanded £50, but possibly he received much less. During the experiment he showed neither the ordinary signs of pain, nor, by dilatation of pupil or quickening of pulse, the physiological ones. Mr. Hart ridicules the idea that this was due to post-hypnotic analgesia, and cites natural insensibility to pain — the insensibility of hysterical women and of fakirs — as possible explanations. Before the operation some of the medical men examined the subject, and asserted that sensation was normal and that there were no signs of hysteria. The lad, moreover, was not an Indian fakir, but a somewhat unprepossessing-looking young Hebrew who had previously cut his own throat. His apparent insensibility might possibly have resulted from ordinary, not hypnotic, training; several circumstances, however, render this improbable. He was ignorant of the in-

voluntary signs of pain, yet these were repressed, and those who testified to his normal condition before the operation were of opinion that it was abnormal during it. My objection to the stage performance is that it is sometimes, though rarely, genuine, and is capable of harm; but in this instance all felt that Mr. Hart had failed to prove simulation, and expressed this opinion to him in writing.

At Dr. Hack Tuke's request, I submitted two of my own patients to various test experiments. Mr. Hart asserted that he could hypnotize them, and also awaken them when hypnotized by me. In this he was entirely unsuccessful; the genuine character of the hypnotic phenomena was admitted by all, including Mr. Hart, and in addition Dr. Tuke wrote me as follows: "As you were good enough to comply with my request in undertaking what might have been a thankless task, I write a line to thank you again, and to congratulate you on the result." These facts Mr. Hart passes over in silence.

The committee appointed by the British Medical Association unanimously reported that they had satisfied themselves of the genuine nature of hypnotic phenomena and of the value of hypnotism in medicine. Hypnotism has recently become a recognized method of treatment in many countries, and of those who employ it some occupy high official positions and have distinguished themselves in other departments of medi-

cine. They record operations performed during hypnotic anæsthesia, together with thousands of medical cases relieved or cured by hypnotic suggestion. Their statistics are fair subjects for investigation, but is it logical to conclude from the imperfectly recorded case referred to that they must be contaminated by simulation? The purchased testimony of one who had already avowed falsehood is of little scientific value; but granting the truth of his evidence, it has as little connection with hypnotism as the assertions of the village quack or bone-setter have with modern medicine. Such subjects could be bribed to simulate epilepsy or other convulsive disorders, but this would not justify the conclusion that these diseases, as observed by medical men, are usually fraudulent imitations.

It has been shown that the nervous and ill-balanced are the most difficult, instead of the most easy, to hypnotize, and, as stated by Professor Forel of Zurich, "Every mentally healthy man is naturally hypnotizable." No single case has yet been recorded where mental or physical harm has resulted from the skilled medical use of hypnotism. Suggestion plays an important part in the medicine of to-day. Dr. Tuke, speaking of the late Sir Andrew Clark, said: "Neither drugs nor diet formed the central factors of his treatment, or explained his success. 'Suggestion' lay at the root of it all. In short, Sir Andrew out-Bernheim Bernheim; he was, in a word, the most successful hypnotist of his day." Recent experiments have shown that the magnets with which Prof. Benedikt claims to obtain astonishing results owe their efficacy entirely to suggestion, and would be equally serviceable if made of wood. Suggestion in these forms, however, owes its virtue to faith on the part of the patient, frequently associated with ignorance in the operator, and increased knowledge is ever liable to rob it of its power. The hypnotist gives no material form to the mental influence, but tries to understand its nature and how to produce the physical condition — by no means dependent on the blind faith of the patient — most favorable for its development.

In medicine evolution is constantly taking place. Fevers and kindred disorders, long treated by blood-letting and starvation, then by feeding without drugs, or in conjunction with them, now seem likely to pass into the hands of the bacteriologist. In like manner, many functional nervous disorders, either treated by drugs or by suggestion in the form of magnets, electro-

pathic belts, or colored waters, seem likely to pass into those of medical men practising hypnotism.

LONDON, ENGLAND.

J. Milne Bramwell.

The Home-Makers and the Boom-Makers.

THE rapid settlement of the new Northwestern States has developed — or, rather, afforded a field of operation for — two classes of people essentially different in character: earnest, industrious, thrifty builders of homes, and adventurous, speculative builders of booms. Fortunately for the land, the former vastly outnumber the latter. Most unfortunately, however, while the army of the home-building class has devoted its energy and industry to the practical work of developing the vast resources of the soil and mines, to opening farms and digging minerals, the troop of boom-makers has actively given its perennial leisure to extravagant schemes of town-plating, visionary financial enterprises, and to the profitable farming of practical politics. Taking advantage of the absorption of the conservative classes in positive material development, it has cunningly manipulated itself into every representative place, always assuming to voice the demands, the necessities, and the sentiments of the Western pioneers; and the East has manifestly come to receive these adventurers as typical exponents of Western ideas.

The inevitable reaction from the criminal speculations of these boomers has lately been lying oppressively upon the West, paralyzing every legitimate enterprise; but it is awakening the conservative, candid men, who accomplish their reasonable undertakings, to the necessity of securing representation, politically and otherwise, by men who deserve and will secure and retain the confidence of the country.

A sturdy spirit occupied the new
Far Western land. Unflinchingly it met
The elemental odds; paid ground-rent debt
To Providence; with faith-born courage drew
Large drafts against unfailing Hope's account.
The summer's drought, the devastating hail,
The winter's storm, this spirit could not quail.
From Traverse Lake to Harney's lambent mount
The erstwhile desert bloomed, and there homes grew
Where modest culture dwelt. A noisy pack
Of pilfering coyotes — shifts that neither hew
The rock nor dig sweet wells — sent yelping back
A deafening tumult from the Coteau peaks.
The world said, "Hear! The Western spirit speaks."

WATERTOWN, S. DAKOTA.

Doane Robinson.

IN LIGHTER VEIN.

A Stranger to Luck.

WHEN I got off the train at Darbyville, which, as all will remember, is the junction of the L. M. & N. and O. P. & Q. railroads, and found that, owing to an accident, it would be an hour before the train came in on the latter road, I was vexed. Although ordinarily my own thoughts are agreeable companions, yet events of the past week, in which my good judgment had not borne a conspicuous part, made it likely that for the nonce these thoughts of mine would be

more or less unpleasant, and so I cast about for some human nature to study.

At one end of the platform three or four farmers were seated upon trunks. They were alert-looking men, and, like me, were waiting for the train. As I neared them, one of their number, a tall, lanky, sharp-boned, knife-featured fellow, imperturbably good-natured-looking, and with an expression of more than ordinary intelligence in his eyes, left them, and sauntered off down the road with long, irregular strides.