

Water was poured in to cover the bottles and iron filings added to increase the magnetic effect. The vessel was covered with an iron lid pierced with holes, through which iron rods were inserted. Around this the patients sat and applied the iron rods to the afflicted parts. Mesmer then entered dressed as Prospero, wearing a long robe of lilac coloured silk, and waving a wand. He hypnotised the patients, and they appeared to recover. Everyone was anxious to test the new healing by natural means, and the fees charged were sufficiently high to enable Mesmer to keep up the luxurious establishment which he had sufficient foresight to provide. A description of his house reads like a chapter from "The Arabian Nights": "Richly stained glass threw a dim, religious light on his spacious salons, which were almost covered with mirrors. Orange blossoms scented the air of his corridors; incense of the most expensive kinds burned in antique vases on the chimney-piece; æolian harps sighed melodious music from distant chambers; while sometimes a sweet female voice from above, or below, stole softly upon the mysterious silence that was insisted upon from all visitors." Alas! his success was as brief as it was gorgeous. In 1874 a Commission was ordered by the King, and appointed by the French Academy, to investigate the phenomena of mesmerism. Benjamin Franklin was one of the members, and the result of the investigation was "that the only proofs advanced in support of animal magnetism were the effects it produced on the human body; that those effects could be produced without passes or other magnetic manipulations; that all these manipulations and passes never produce any effect at all if employed without the patient's knowledge; and that, therefore, imagination did, and animal magnetism did not, account for the phenomena." Mesmer fled ignominiously from Paris and died at Meersburg 1815. In spite of the loss of the leader, disciples remained who, in sincerity and good faith, continued to practice the art. M. de Puysegur practised in Paris, and Dr. James Braid, of Manchester, revived the study in England in 1841, although he confesses that he commenced the work as a complete sceptic.

About the same time, Dr. John Elliotson, Lecturer on Clinics at St. Thomas's Hospital and Professor of Principles and Practice of Physic at London University, espoused the cause of mesmerism. The Committee of the hospital opposed its introduction, and Elliotson resigned and devoted his attention to a mesmeric infirmary, and the results of his experiments and observations were embodied in his treatise, "Surgical Operations in Mesmeric State without Pain," 1843.

Opinion on the subject of mesmerism was divided, and no theological controversy in the early ages of the Catholic Church was conducted with greater bitterness. Harriet Martineau, in 1844, underwent a course of mesmerism and was cured of a painful illness. The recovery excited great discussion, but so great was Miss Martineau's faith in mesmeric powers that she published sixteen "Letters on Mesmerism," giving an account of the case. This gave great offence to her friends, who regarded it as incompatible with her undoubtedly powerful intellect and philosophic mind.

Sir George Cornewall Lewis, about 1850, declared homœopathy, mesmerism, and phrenology to be impostures, and so many scientific men joined him in scouting the idea that hypnotic power was slowly relegated to ignorant empirics, who used it for the sake of gain or to cause amusement.

Of late years hypnotic power has received revived attention, but principally on the Continent, where operations are frequently performed while the nervous apparatus of the patient is in a perverted condition. Whether future investigations will strengthen its position in clinical practice is uncertain, but as far as the science has yet reached there are certain grave objections attending its use. In order that patients may be hypnotised to a safe degree of stupor for operations, it is necessary to act on them every day for several weeks, and this breaking down of volition may prove a serious injury to nervous persons. The state of hypnotic trance is in itself as dangerous as that from an anæsthetic, and recovery is less easily controlled. Thus, no lay persons should practise hypnosis any more than they should administer anæsthetics. But the gravest danger of all is that the powers of volition are deranged by hypnosis, and may be permanently enfeebled. The will is one of the highest mental faculties; it is the hand-maid of conscience. When conscience whispers the will must obey; for any evading of its dictates shows moral weakness, and actions are then guided by the lower and animal part of human nature, and there is no upward striving towards perfection.

NO FILTH, NO FLIES.

Mr. Henry Hill chose as the subject for his lecture to children at the London Institution "The Story of the Flies." He said that in this country alone there were from 3,000 to 4,000 kinds of flies, and about 40,000 species in the world. It had been proved conclusively that flies were conveyers of cholera, typhoid fever, and other diseases. He would never enter a house unless dirt was there. Where flies bred, said Mr. Hill, there must be filth; no filth, no flies.

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