

applies to all phases and conditions of subjective mental activity; and the necessity for harmonious conditions, so constantly insisted upon by spiritists as a condition precedent to the production of their peculiar forms of hypnotic phenomena, is seen to be a scientific fact of immense value and significance, and not a mere subterfuge to enable them to practice a fraud and impose on the credulity of their auditors.



CHAPTER VIII.

HYPNOTISM AND MESMERISM.

Warfare of the Schools.—History of the Science.—Mesmer's Career.—The Academicians.—The Successors of Mesmer.—The Royal Academy of Medicine.—Its Idiotic Prejudices.—Dr. Braid's Discovery.—Re-baptism of the Science.—Effects of Braid's Discoveries.—Liebault's Theory of Suggestion.—The Nancy School and the Paris School compared.—The Fluidic Theory.—The Law of Suggestion the Greatest Discovery in Psychic Science.—The Significance of Braid's Discoveries not Appreciated.—Hypnotism of Animals.—The Charcot School.—The Sources of its Errors.—Reform in Terminology suggested.—The Mesmeric Theory.—Braid's Processes not productive of Higher Phenomena.—Mesmerization of Animals.—Recapitulation of Points.

THUS far little has been said regarding the light which has been shed upon the subject under consideration by the discoveries of modern science. The more important of these discoveries having resulted from investigations of the subject of hypnotism, it will be necessary briefly to review the more salient features of that science, and to trace its progress from the time of Mesmer down to the present day.

Since the time when Mesmer first brought his discoveries to the attention of the scientific world the students of the phenomena which he evoked have been hopelessly at variance. That they should entertain diverse theories regarding the cause of phenomena so strange and full of mystery is natural. That they should, in the absence of knowledge of the subject, abuse and vilify each other because of their

differences of opinion, was to be expected. Hatred of our neighbor because his problematical theories do not agree with our undemonstrable hypotheses is, unfortunately, one of the salient weaknesses of human nature.

It is, however, comparatively rare that scientific investigators disagree regarding the demonstrable facts pertaining to a subject under investigation. Yet this is the condition in which we find the science of hypnotism after more than a century of research by some of the ablest scientists of the world. They are divided into schools, to-day, as they were in the infancy of the science. Indeed, the science is still in its infancy. Facts have accumulated, it is true; and they will be found to be of infinite advantage to some future investigator whose mind is capable of rising above the prejudices which characterize the different schools, and of assimilating and harmonizing their demonstrated facts into one comprehensive system.

Thus far the different schools have distrusted or denied each other's facts, and waged war upon each other's theories. The most carefully conducted experiments of one school will, in the hands of the other, produce opposite results. Hence each experimenter is irresistibly led to distrust the scientific accuracy of the methods employed by others, or to admit their integrity only at the expense of their intelligence: In the mean time each school has conducted its experiments seemingly by the most rigid scientific methods and with conscientious fidelity to truth; but the results of each apparently disprove the conclusions of all the others. Hence it is that, in the bibliography of hypnotism, we find an immense mass of well-authenticated facts which, tried by the standards of any one of the different schools, appears like an appalling hodge-podge of falsehood and delusion, chicanery and superstition. Indeed, no other science, since the dawn of creation, has suffered so much at the hands of ignorance and superstition as the science under discussion. Its ancient history is the record of the supernatural in all the nations of the earth. Its phenomena have been the foundation of all the religions and all the superstitions of ancient

times. Its modern history has also been largely a record of superstitious belief, fostered by chicanery and ignorance; the nature of the phenomena being such that in the hands alike of honest ignorance and conscious fraud they may be made to sanction every belief, confirm every dogma, and foster every superstition. It was these facts which drove scientific men from the field of investigation in the early modern history of the science. Mesmer himself, in the light of modern knowledge of the subject, is apt to be accused of charlatanism; but, as we shall see further on, he is entitled, in common with all investigators, to the largest measure of charity.

As before remarked, the facts of hypnotism obtained by the experimenters of the different schools appear to contradict each other. This, however, is obviously only an apparent contradiction, for it is axiomatic that no one fact in Nature is inconsistent with any other fact. It follows that there must be some underlying principle or principles, heretofore overlooked, which will harmonize the facts. It is the purpose of this chapter to outline a few fundamental principles which, properly understood, will enable the student of hypnotism to reconcile many seeming inconsistencies. An understanding of the salient points of difference between the various schools can best be conveyed by briefly outlining the modern history of the science.

Mesmer is entitled to the credit of having first brought the subject to the attention of the scientific world, although probably his attention was attracted to it by the writings of Paracelsus and Van Helmont. In the early part of his career he was deeply interested in the study of astrology, and he fancied that the planets somehow exerted an influence on the health of human beings. He at first thought that this influence was electrical, but afterwards referred it to magnetism. At that time his cures were effected by stroking the diseased bodies with artificial magnets. He achieved considerable success by such means, and published a work in 1766 entitled "*De Planetarum Influxa.*" In 1776, however, he met Gassner, a Catholic

priest who had achieved great notoriety by curing disease by manipulation, without the use of any other means. Mesmer then threw away his magnets, and evolved the theory of "animal magnetism." This he held to be a fluid which pervades the universe, but is most active in the human nervous organization, and enables one man, charged with the fluid, to exert a powerful influence over another.

Two years after meeting Gassner he went to Paris, and at once threw that capital into the wildest excitement by the marvellous effects of his manipulations. He was treated with contumely by the medical profession; but the people flocked to him, and many wonderful cures were effected. His methods, in the light of present knowledge, smack of charlatanism; but that he believed in himself was demonstrated by his earnest demand for an investigation. This the Government consented to, and a commission, composed of physicians and members of the Academy of Sciences, was appointed, of which Benjamin Franklin was a member. The report admitted the leading facts claimed by Mesmer, but held that there was no evidence to prove the correctness of his magnetic fluid theory, and referred the wonderful effects witnessed to the "imagination" of the patients. Their conclusion was that the subject was not worthy of further scientific investigation.

It is difficult at this day to conceive by what process of reasoning that learned body could arrive at such a conclusion. They admitted the existence of a motive force capable of controlling man's physical organization, that this force is amenable to control by man, and that this control is capable of being reduced to an art. Then they proceed to announce a discovery of their own, — a discovery, by the way, which turns out to be the most important which modern science had, at that time, contributed to the solution of the great problem. They discovered that the phenomena were purely subjective, thereby demonstrating the power of mind over matter. If they had stopped there, or if they had concluded that this wonderful force was worthy of the most searching scientific investigation, they

would have been entitled to the gratitude of all mankind, and the science would have been at once wrested from the hands of ignorance and empiricism. That they should content themselves with disproving Mesmer's theory of causation, and, after having themselves made a discovery of the true cause, should announce that their own discovery was not worth the trouble of further investigation, is inexplicable.

Soon after this, Mesmer was driven into exile, followed by the execrations of a majority of the medical profession, and died in 1815. He left many disciples, a majority of whom were shallow empirics, and mesmerism was brought still further into disrepute. There were a few able and scientific men, however, who still pursued the investigation, among whom were the Marquis de Puységur, Deleuze, and others. These gentlemen revolutionized the art by first causing their subjects to sleep by means of gentle manipulation, instead of surrounding them with mysticism in dimly lighted apartments filled with sweet odors and the strains of soft and mysterious music, as was the practice of Mesmer. They developed in their subjects the power of clairvoyance, and demonstrated it in a thousand ways. They caused them to obey mental orders as readily as if the orders were spoken. They healed the sick, caused the lame to walk, and the blind to see. In short, they so far revived the interest in the subject that the Royal Academy of Medicine, in France, felt compelled to order a new investigation. This was done in 1825. A committee was appointed, composed of the ablest and most cautious scientists in their body. For nearly six years that committee pursued its investigations, and in 1831 it submitted its report. It would be tedious to enumerate all the conclusions at which it arrived. Its principal efforts were directed to the determination of the therapeutic value of mesmerism. It confirmed much that had been claimed for it in that respect, and demonstrated the power of clairvoyance, by indubitable tests. It also confirmed the claim that persons could be magnetized at a distance as well as by contact, although

there is nothing in the report which shows how far the possibilities of suggestion were removed in that class of experiments. Indeed, in deference to truth it must be here remarked that mesmerists at that time had but a faint and undefined notion of the subtle *role* which suggestion plays in all psychological phenomena. Hence it follows that in examining the record of experiments in the higher phenomena of hypnotism we must make due allowance for possible error in all cases where the nature of the experiments does not preclude the possibility of suggestion having influenced the result, or where the possibilities of suggestion have not been intelligently eliminated.

The effect of this report was instantaneous and remarkable. The advocates of magnetism as a therapeutic agent, and the believers in the occult features of the phenomena, such as clairvoyance and thought-transference, had scored a triumph. But it served only to exasperate the average scientist and to intensify his prejudices. The Academy refused to dignify the report by printing it, and it rests to-day in silent oblivion in the manuscript archives of the institution. Another committee was soon after appointed, headed by a member who had openly sworn hostility to the doctrine. The result was what might have been expected. After the examination of two subjects under circumstances which, in the light of what is now known, rendered failure inevitable, the committee made a very undignified report, announcing the failure to produce the occult phenomena promised, and impugning the intelligence of the former committee. Strange and illogical as it may seem, the later report, which proved nothing, which was confined to an announcement of merely negative results, which simply showed that the committee did not witness certain promised phenomena, was accepted by the average scientist as containing the gospel of hypnotism, as against the report of the earlier committee, which, after five years of laborious research, announced that it had witnessed the phenomena in question and demonstrated their reality.

For some years subsequent to this the investigation of

the subject was confined to its psychological and therapeutic features; but every scientist who dabbled in it was tabooed by the majority of his associates. Many able works were produced on the subject, but none of them attracted the attention of the academicians until Dr. Braid, of Manchester, undertook to demonstrate the theory that the hypothetical magnetic fluid had nothing to do with the production of the phenomena. Braid discovered that by placing a bright object before the eyes of the subject, and causing him to gaze upon it with persistent attention, he could be thrown into the hypnotic sleep, during which many of the well-known phenomena ascribed to magnetism could be produced. This seemed to point to the possibility of a physiological explanation of the subject-matter. It attracted the attention of the scientists, and thus to Braid belongs the credit of causing the subject to be at last acknowledged as being within the domain of the exact sciences. The academicians were now mollified. The pet theory of the mesmerists appeared to have been demolished. The method was simple and easily applied. The phenomena of thought-transference could not be produced by its methods. It promised a physiological explanation; and, best of all, it had been given a new name. It had received many names before Braid undertook the task of rechristening it; but, with the exception of "mesmerism," each was objectionable, because it implied a theory of causation. The name "mesmerism" was obviously improper, because Mesmer was neither the discoverer of the force, nor the inventor of the practical method of evoking it. "Animal magnetism" implied Mesmer's theory of magnetic currents. "Mental or animal electricity" implied practically the same theory. "Neurology" indicated the science of the nervous system. "Patheism" (from the Greek radical signifying disease or suffering) and "etherology" (which means the science of the refined part of the atmosphere) were equally meaningless as applied to the subject. "Psycodunamy" signified the power of the soul; and "electro-biology" was American, and not

to be tolerated. But when Braid denominated it "hypnotism,"—from the Greek word signifying sleep,—it was hailed as a compromise sufficiently noncommittal to entitle it to recognition, and "hypnotism" it will be called until some academician drags to light the ultimate cause of all things.

Braid has been accorded a great deal of credit for his original researches and discoveries, but it is questionable whether he has not been the indirect means of retarding the true progress of the science. It is a remarkable fact that since his method of hypnotizing has been generally adopted, the higher phenomena, such as clairvoyance and thought-transference, have fallen into disrepute, and are now rarely produced. Indeed, it may be said to be practically a lost art, considered as a result of hypnotic processes. The cause of this will receive attention hereafter. Braid could not cause his subjects to obey his mental orders, and he disbelieved in the power of clairvoyance. He acknowledged that some of his subjects could tell the shape of what was "held at an inch and a half from the skin, on the back of the neck, crown of the head, arm, or hand, or other parts of the body," but held that "it is from feeling they do so."¹ He demonstrated the extreme sensitiveness of one subject by causing her to obey the motion of a glass funnel held in his hand, at a distance of fifteen feet.² Truly, a remarkable case of "feeling."

Braid is entitled to great credit for the discovery that the hypnotic state can be induced independently of the presence or co-operation of another person. Further than that, his work is practically valueless, for the reason that he never understood the power or influence of suggestion. It is therefore manifestly impossible to determine the value of any experiment of his, except in cases the nature of which precludes the possibility of suggestion being employed, or in cases where it was expressly eliminated.

Two facts, however, seem to have been demonstrated by his experiments, both of which are of the utmost importance :

¹ Braid on Hypnotism, p. 37, *note*.

² *Ibid*.

1. That the hypnotic sleep can be induced independently of personal contact with, or the personal influence of, another.
2. That the sleep can be induced by his method without the aid of suggestion.

The mistake which his followers have made is in jumping to the conclusion that because one of the primary conditions of hypnotic phenomena can be induced without the aid of the magnetic hypothesis, therefore the magnetic hypothesis is necessarily incorrect. The same logic would induce a man who for the first time sees a railroad train in motion to conclude that any other method of locomotion is impracticable. Braid himself was not so illogical; for he expressly says that he does not consider the methods identical, but does "consider the condition of the nervous system induced by both modes to be analogous."

Another mistake, shared in common by both the modern schools of hypnotists, is the failure to appreciate the significance of the fact that by Braid's method the hypnotic condition can be induced without the aid of suggestion. One school ignores the fact altogether, or considers it of doubtful verity, and the other regards it merely as an evidence that suggestion plays a secondary *role* in hypnotic phenomena. That both are to some extent wrong will appear at the proper time, as will also the fact of the failure of all the schools to grasp its real significance.

For some years after the appearance of Braid's book there was but little, if any, progress made in the science. His methods, however, were generally adopted, but the value of his discovery was not appreciated by his own countrymen; and it was not until the Continental scientists extended his researches that he obtained substantial recognition. Liébault was the first to confirm his experiments, and in 1866 he published a work, in which he advanced much that was new in fact and theory. He was, in fact, the founder of what is now known as the Nancy school of hypnotism. Many prominent scientists have followed him, and many able works have been produced, prominent among which

may be mentioned "Suggestive Therapeutics," by Professor Bernheim, and "Hypnotism," by Albert Moll, of Berlin.

Professor Charcot, of the Paris Salpêtrière, is also the founder of a school of hypnotism, which is generally known as the Paris school, or school of the Salpêtrière. Charcot's great reputation as a scientist obtained for him many followers at first, prominent among whom are Binet and Féré, whose joint work, entitled "Animal Magnetism," has been widely read both in Europe and America.

These schools differ widely both in theory and practice, their only point of union being their utter contempt for the theory and practice of what must still be known, for want of a better term, as the mesmeric school.

These three schools represent the grand divisions which it will be necessary to recognize in the discussion of the subject under consideration.

The leading points of difference between the three schools may be briefly stated as follows:—

1. The theory of the Nancy school is that the different physiological conditions characterizing the hypnotic state are determined by mental action alone; that the phenomena can best be produced in persons of sound physical health and perfect mental balance; and that this mental action and the consequent physical and psychological phenomena are the result, in all cases, of some form of suggestion.

2. The Paris school holds that hypnotism is the result of an abnormal or diseased condition of the nerves; that a great number of the phenomena can be produced independently of suggestion in any form; that the true hypnotic condition can be produced only in persons whose nerves are diseased; and that the whole subject is explicable on the basis of cerebral anatomy or physiology.

3. The mesmerists hold to the fluidic theory of Mesmer: that the hypnotic condition is induced, independent of suggestion, by passes made by the operator over the subject, accompanied by intense concentration of mind and will on the part of the former; that from him flows a subtle fluid which impinges upon the subject wherever it is directed,

and produces therapeutic or other effects in obedience to the will of the operator; that these effects can best be produced by personal contact; but that they can be produced at a distance and without the knowledge of the subject, and independently of suggestion.

In discussing the merits of these several schools, it is perhaps superfluous to say that it is self-evident that neither school can be entirely right. Each presents an array of facts which seems to support its theory; but as the theories are irreconcilable, and the facts apparently contradict each other, it follows that some fundamental principle underlying the whole subject-matter has been overlooked. It is the purpose of this book to suggest a possible way to the discovery of the principle,—the missing link which will unite the chain and bind the facts of psychological science into one harmonious whole.

The Nancy school of hypnotism is entitled to the credit of having made the most important discovery in psychological science. The fact that the subjective mind is constantly amenable to control by the power of suggestion, constitutes the grand principle in psychological science, which, when properly appreciated and applied, will solve every problem and illuminate every obscurity in the labyrinthian science of the human soul, so far as it will ever be possible for finite intelligence to penetrate it. It is safe to say that in all the broad realm of psychological science there is not a phenomenon upon which it will not shed light. It is no discredit to that school to say that its leaders and teachers do not yet seem to comprehend the profound significance of their discovery, and that in one direction they have extended it too far. It is the latter proposition which will first receive attention.

They hold, very correctly, that all the phenomena of hypnotism, subsequent to the induction of the hypnotic condition, are due to the power of suggestion in some form. That this is true, admits of no possible doubt. They also find by experiment that the hypnotic condition can be induced simply by the power of suggestion. Their conclu-