



REMARKS
ON
MESMERISM,

IN 1845,

BY

J. B. ESTLIN, F.L.S.

BEING A PORTION OF THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS,
DELIVERED AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING
OF THE BATH AND BRISTOL BRANCH OF THE PRO-
VINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL ASSOCIATION,
HELD AT BRISTOL, JUNE 27, 1845.

LONDON :

JOHN CHURCHILL, PRINCES STREET, SOHO.

SOLD ALSO BY H. C. EVANS, BRISTOL ; COLLINGS,
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OF ANESTHESIOLOGY

P R E F A C E .

In the Summer of 1843, lectures were delivered in Bristol upon Mesmerism, when the "higher phenomena" of this so-called science were exhibited by a young woman, the travelling companion of the lecturer; her testimony, however, as an honest and disinterested example of the truths she appeared on the platform to exhibit, was of the most unsatisfactory character. As is usual on these occasions, many of the audience, amused and astonished with what they heard and saw, left the theatre fully convinced that all the lecturer said, and all the girl performed, was entitled to their implicit belief; and, as is also usual at Mesmeric exhibitions, the attempts made by medical men or others to test the accuracy of the experiments, were received with little favour by the generality of those who witnessed the exhibition. In addition to these public lectures, a class

was proposed for the purpose of "investigating the phenomena of Mesmerism," under the auspices of the lecturer and his Clairvoyante, and it was understood that several medical men of this city had consented to join it. The Annual Meeting of the Bath and Bristol Branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association was held in Bristol just as this class was in the course of formation, and I availed myself of the occasion to read an Address, subsequently published,* counselling my medical brethren not to give the sanction of their names to the Mesmeric proceedings that were then going forward, under the firm belief that they would lower their dignity, and probably diminish their usefulness by so doing. From the handbills subsequently published by the lecturer, I should conclude that my appeal had not been unsuccessful. Not one medical man, I believe, attended the class.

I have not been an unobservant spectator of what has been going forward in respect

* An Address to the Members of the Medical Profession of Bristol and Bath, on Mesmerism. Renshaw, London; H. C. Evans, Bristol.

to Mesmerism in this country during the last six or seven years. I have seen the experiments of Dupotet and others, and, especially during the two last years, I have read much on the subject, and have had a peculiarly favourable opportunity of witnessing Mesmeric experiments.

In the following Address, I have desired to allow to the Mesmerists as great an amount of influence from their manipulations upon their patients as satisfactory evidence appears to warrant. I must, however, declare my belief, that the more the evidence which is adduced to prove even the simplest phenomena of Mesmerism (as artificial sleep) is scrutinized, the fewer do the instances appear where there is clear proof of the absence of all imposture. It is not I think either unreasonable or uncharitable to suspect deceit in all cases where the professors of Mesmerism gain money by their exhibitions, and it does not require much knowledge of the human mind or of the human character to be aware that, where pecuniary considerations could have no influence, a love of notoriety, and other

motives of this kind, from which neither the educated nor uneducated are exempt, may lead to a line of conduct not strictly in accordance with truth and sincerity. A distinguished writer, (whose opinion upon a psychological subject would carry much weight with it, were I at liberty to mention his name,) observed, "When I see a *gentleman*," (a man of education and of honour, who would scorn to be guilty of any imposition,) "when I see a *gentleman* mesmerised, and exhibiting Clairvoyance, then I will believe in it." The remark is pertinent, as designating by contrast the sex and class of persons who furnish by far the principal part of the evidence in support of the more extraordinary pretensions of Mesmerism.

Since the delivery of this Address, (its publication has been delayed by the severe illness of the writer,) Dr. Forbes has communicated to the *London Medical Gazette*, of July 18th, a report of his "Second search for Clairvoyance," and has satisfactorily proved that the pretensions of the French Adolphe to clairvoyant powers were as

unfounded as those of his brother Alexis. Dr. Forbes in the same publication has most properly held up to public reprobation the disgusting pretensions of a Miss Von Gönnern, a German professional Mesmerist.

To many the detection of the deception of itinerant Mesmerists will appear a work of supererogation, and there are numerous physicians of far inferior note to Dr. Forbes who would shrink from having their names connected with the legerdemain performances which he has so thoroughly exposed. The public, however, cannot but feel under much obligation to one holding the high rank among medical men of this country which Dr. Forbes occupies, for condescending to stamp with the authority of his name the detection of the impostures he witnessed. The course which he has taken in "*investigating Mesmerism*" may perhaps somewhat check the violence with which the Mesmerists call upon the medical profession to undertake this task, and temper the reproaches lavished upon its members for refusing to obey their summons. It is too obvious to admit of any doubt,

that as long as the so-called science is neglected by our profession, it can never make much progress in public favour. The members of the Medical Profession in this kingdom number not fewer, probably, than 30,000 : yet, in Ireland or Scotland what name of any note has ever been heard of as connected with Mesmerism ? In England how insignificant is their number !*

* The *Medical Gazette* of this day's date (Aug. 15) contains another proof of Dr. Forbes's indefatigable zeal in detecting and exposing the trickeries of clairvoyants. The narrative is most amusing. Its chief interest, however, does not consist in the discovery of the imposition of an audacious boy, who went down upon his knees to acknowledge and beg pardon for his deceit, but in the illustration afforded of the degree in which a belief in Mesmerism appears to obscure the reasoning powers of educated and thoroughly respectable persons; the present instance being that of a gentleman whose professional duties especially demand acumen in the careful sifting of evidence. Truly is it remarked to me, in a letter from a clerical friend, well known in the literary world,—“ There seems to be a sort of fanatical tendency among the disciples of Mesmerism, incapacitating even strong minds for sound observation and estimate of evidence.”

It certainly, however, requires a great exercise of charity not to suspect that in some instances, where deception of the most palpable nature has been completely exposed, a reluctance to believe and admit that they have been grossly imposed upon by those in whom they placed confidence, must have an influence in occasioning the extraordinary tenacity of Mesmerists to the opinions they have so confidently maintained.

I expect little favour from the Mesmerists, or from a rather numerous class of philosophic thinkers of the present day, in referring to an *a priori* argument against the duty of obeying the call to investigate the claims of Mesmerism, while the evidence in its favour, which we as yet possess, is of such very small amount.

Firmly convinced from historical and other evidence that Christianity originates in a Divine Revelation—holding the old-fashioned and un-German notion that the Divine mission of our Saviour was *proved* by the miracles he performed, I consider that any new science claiming a power of exhibiting manifestations very little different from what I believe to be miraculous acts on the part of Christ and his Apostles, ought to be supported by a vastly greater weight of evidence than Mesmerism can boast of, to render it worthy of any serious consideration.

Whatever be the opinion of the Neologists and other biblical critics as to the possibility that future investigations may divest the turning of water into wine at the marriage feast at

Can a of its miraculous character, I am little induced to doubt the truth of the Scripture narrative, or to investigate what may be thought a mode of explaining it, because a Mesmeriser and a servant girl in Northumberland profess to have produced a very similar phenomenon.

The following "Remarks" were published in the *Provincial Medical and Surgical Journal* of the 13th instant, but as that periodical is confined chiefly to the members of the medical profession, I have had a small edition of the article printed for more general circulation.

J. B. E.

Bristol, August 15, 1845.

REMARKS ON MESMERISM,

IN 1845.

In referring to mesmerism, I always feel an apology to be necessary for intruding the subject upon our medical meetings. When our anniversary was held in this city two years ago I was allowed to read an address exclusively upon animal magnetism. Local circumstances induced me at that time to bring the subject before the Society, and I had every reason for believing that a useful result ensued. The view then taken of mesmerism, and the recommendation to my brethren to refrain from giving their countenance to the performances of itinerant mesmerisers who were at that time lecturing throughout the country, was not allowed to escape the no very measured animadversions of one of the periodicals regarded as the organ of the mesmerists and the phrenologists,—the *Zoist*;—my fellow-sufferers under this infliction being Dr. Forbes and Dr. James Johnson, in whose company I had no cause to be ashamed of my position.

In addition, however, to the rebuke given for the views contained in that address, it was stated that the author of it had subsequently changed his opinions. I hope then I may be allowed the present opportunity

of making a few more remarks upon mesmerism, and of stating, that two years of increased attention to the subject, both by reading and observation, have only tended to confirm the sentiments I then took the liberty of expressing.

Considering how numerous the lecturers upon mesmerism are who have been perambulating the country, the practised performers who illustrate the pretensions of the art, the amusing and wonderful character of their exhibitions, and the undeniable dislike of the public generally to be undeceived when their wonder and curiosity are excited, mesmerism is certainly making but slow progress, and so long as medical men continue opposed to it, it never can gain but a very limited advance.

A work, however, in support of "Human Magnetism," as he terms it, has made its appearance since we last met from the pen of an accomplished and highly respectable member of the profession and of our Association, Mr. Newnham, of Farnham in Surrey. That such a defence of the most incredible facts of mesmerism should be produced by a person who had been a disbeliever about twelve months before, may be considered as one of those wonders which are so intimately connected with this curious subject. A really philosophic mind would require, one would suppose, a long period of rigid examination to obtain conviction of the reality of such astonishing facts as Mr. Newnham announces!

I can do little more than allude to Mr. Newnham's work at this time; it will not, I think, convert many medical readers to its views. My object in referring to it is, because the writer is one of our own body, and strongly censures his brethren for not extending to

mesmerism more of their patronage. What claim, however, has Mr. Newnham to the confidence of his brethren in the soundness of his judgment, when he gravely tells us such a story as the following, which is by no means one of the most wonderful in which he declares his firm belief? The subject was a girl, considered as a clairvoyante somnambulist; her master, Mr. Poulton, of the Alton Paper Mills.

When mesmerised, and requested to travel mentally to the house of Mr. Newnham, at Farnham, she professed to do so, ordered "George to put the ponies to," and pointed out many objects on the road. Arrived at Mr. Newnham's house she described the situation of his library, the shape of the tables in it, the position of, and view from, the windows, and the number of pictures in the room. She then described the objects in the landscape of one of the pictures, admired the frame of another, (which Mr. Newnham said was a very handsome one,) and "pronounced the subject to be a *portrait*, but whether of a man, or woman, she could not tell; it looked like a man, but was dressed like a woman." "It was, in fact," says Mr. Newnham, "a portrait of the Bishop of Winchester, in his robes as Prelate of the Order of the Garter." This girl Mr. Newnham declares had never been in the town of Farnham in her life, and her mesmeriser was never at Mr. Newnham's house.

Now, it would surely be the duty of any medical man who was satisfied that the remedial means he was advocating could, under any conditions of the human frame, produce such an astounding fact as this, to verify it beyond all possibility of doubt, by repeated experiment, under all conceivable variety of circumstances, and with every possible publicity. This case

is sufficient to exemplify the facility with which believers in mesmerism give credence to extraordinary phenomena themselves, and expect from others a similar credulity. The story is mentioned incidentally by Mr. Newnham as nothing out of the common, and he simply asks in reference to it, *What good* can arise from producing these effects of mesmerism? Others would be more disposed to ask, *What truth* there was in such a marvellous narrative? Mr. Newnham, as a philosopher, has no right to dismiss such a case with a "cui bono." It is either all true or all false: convinced as Mr. Newnham is of the former, he was bound to make the truth apparent to all the world before he could expect confidence in his judgment on any other mesmeric matter. But with the little evidence he gives, who is there that does not find it easier to believe that Mr. Newnham has been deceived, than that a power so contrary to the general judgment and experience of mankind as to the laws which regulate the acts and faculties of the human mind, should exist in this instance? Surely without denying the possibility of such a stupendous gift as is claimed for this uneducated girl, it is more rational, with the superficial evidence Mr. Newnham affords, to believe that she had by some channel unknown to him, heard about his study and pictures, than that the information was revealed to her in the mysterious manner supposed by him.

Lord Shrewsbury states, that in 1841, he saw at the village of Caldaro, in Italy, a young woman named Maria Mörl, in a state of ecstasy, whose hands, feet, and side, had marks called stigmata, upon those parts where wounds were inflicted upon Christ while on the cross, from which drops of clear blood frequently

flowed on Thursday evenings, and on Fridays; that while the Sacrament passed through the town, she marked its progress by turning towards it "as the needle turns to the pole," and when it came under her window, "she was instantaneously lifted off her bed and rested only on the point of the feet."

He also describes another young woman he visited in the Tyrol, called the Addolorata, of the name of *Domenica Lazzari*, whose forehead was marked as with a crown of thorns, covering the face with blood. Occasionally blood also flowed from her hands and feet: from the wounds in the feet it ran upwards to the toes while she lay in bed, contrary to the laws of gravity, or as it would have done had she been suspended to a cross with her feet downwards!

Now, these remarkable facts are fully as well authenticated as *Mr. Newnham's*, and the reasons which would lead us to suspect any deception on the part of the Italian young women, would apply with equal force to the spiritual visitant of *Mr. Newnham's* library.

With so marvellous a gift as that possessed by *Mr. Newnham's* clairvoyante, it must be mortifying to him that the labouring mountain produced such a very ridiculous mouse as the supernatural discovery of the picture of a man dressed like a woman! It is indeed to be lamented, that the operation of powers unheard of since the Apostolic age, should be confined to such ignoble performances as narrating the contents of a distant room, finding out a word purposely written in large characters and inclosed in an envelope, and playing at cards with the eyes closed, and similar miracles. It is well remarked by the writer of an able article in *Dr. Forbes' Journal*, in respect to clair-

voyants, that "instead of settling for ever, as they might easily do, all our doubts and difficulties in astronomy, geology, chemistry, and physiology, instead of unfolding the secrets of Cabinets, of Kings, and Prime-Ministers, these provoking people will persist in putting us off with such facts as counting the pictures in our dining-rooms, describing the colour of night-caps and doublets, and laboriously mis-spelling words within crumpled letters."

It does not appear that anything has occurred of late more than formerly, to demand from medical men what is called "*an investigation into the phenomena of mesmerism.*" Without any prominence or activity on our part in such investigations, facts quite sufficient to enable us to form a dispassionate judgment are continually developing themselves to our view. Our non-professional friends exclaim, "Why not mesmerise your patients before subjecting them to a painful operation?" It is a sufficient answer to such an inquiry that the success of the practice, as hitherto detailed, gives us no encouragement to try it. No one can deny that mesmerisers are very numerous; that they are most anxious to prove they can produce insensibility to pain; that opportunities are hourly presented to them of making experiments; that no doubt can exist that such facilities are not neglected; and, certainly, that the practitioners of the art have no backwardness in communicating to the public any result favourable to their system. Yet what is the amount of all that has been done in this country? Two amputations of the leg are said to have taken place without being much felt by the patients; teeth have been drawn; the operation for the cure of squinting, and other minor surgical operations, have been

performed without giving pain. Admitting the entire correctness of these latter statements, they are not entitled to much attention as facts in mesmerism. Operations, borne with fortitude, and described as almost painless, are of daily occurrence; and it is not improbable that in some few individuals the drowsiness, or diminished consciousness, that may be artificially induced on their nervous system, together with a firm conviction that mesmerism has the power of destroying sensibility, may render some persons indifferent to the pain of such operations. But with regard to more severe ones, instances of their being performed without suffering, must be vastly multiplied before any practical benefit can accrue. The subjects of them must be persons whose integrity, whose clearness of judgment, whose inability to bear pain without the ordinary expression of suffering, have been fully ascertained.

One of the cases of amputation above referred to, was that published by Dr. Elliotson, and is considered by many who are not friendly to mesmerism, to have withstood a fair scrutiny.

Usually, however, it is the fact, that the more these mesmeric cases are investigated, the less satisfactory do they appear; and that such is the fate of the other instance of amputation, (performed in the Leicester Infirmary, in August, 1844,) is, I think, proved by printed documents, as well as by private information which has come to my knowledge. The mesmeriser in this case was Mr. Hollings, the surgeon Mr. Toswill, and the patient a young woman in the Infirmary, who, it was affirmed, afforded a good example of the effects of mesmerism in rendering the body insensible to pain.

In opposition, however, to this statement, Dr. Shaw, physician to the Infirmary, who was present on the occasion, says in a letter to the Editor of the *Leicester Chronicle* of September 7, 1844, "The patient unquestionably exhibited strong marks of sensibility to pain during the operation. In fact, I do not consider that it was borne with more fortitude than is frequently displayed under equally trying circumstances, and without any adventitious aid. At the same time it is only justice to say, that the eyes were *closed during the whole time*—the features scarcely disturbed."

Mr. Paget, surgeon to the Infirmary, who was also present says, "During the operation there was a considerable groaning, writhing, and an approach to screaming. Indeed, I have seen those who, under operations equally severe, have, without mesmerism, given far less indications of pain, and but for the after declaration of the patient, I should have concluded that she had endured, *with no very unusual fortitude*, the ordinary amount of suffering."

Dr. Toogood, of Bridgewater, laudably anxious to ascertain the precise facts of this case, wrote to Leicester for further information, and ulterior investigation still more diminished its value as supporting the pretensions of mesmerism. It was ascertained that the patient had, on a former trying occasion, while under the control of mental influences, exhibited an unusual power of bearing physical pain. Having been pregnant, she denied her situation to the latest moment of possible concealment, and at length gave birth to a child without showing the least sense of pain. The writer of this account, (whose authority I have for making the statement,) also says in his letter to Dr. Toogood, that Mr. Hollings, the mes-

meriser of this patient, "had had permission, and had tried his art upon many other patients in the Leicester Infirmary for three or four months, but without the least results." The circumstances detailed must diminish the credibility of such a witness as this young woman; and render the example a very questionable proof of the influence of mesmerism in enabling a person to undergo a severe surgical operation without feeling it.

But let us examine for one moment, what it is we are asked to do when called upon, as a matter of professional duty, to *investigate mesmerism*? We are required to exert the moral influence which our characters have given us over truthful, confiding, susceptible minds, to experiment as to the extent in which we can mislead and deceive them. This statement is not too strong. Disbelievers, as I am happy to say most of us are, in the existence of any such magnetic or mesmeric principle as, it is maintained, may be transmitted by the *will* or manipulations of one person to the nervous system of another, we cannot conscientiously affect to possess the power of calling it into operation. And let me appeal to any intelligent physician or surgeon who has been but a few years in practice—more especially let me ask those who have been extensively engaged for twenty or thirty years in the important, I will say, *sacred* duties of our profession, if they could not, were they inclined to abuse their influence, select from their circle of patients several nervous subjects, and especially females of hysterical tendencies, whose confidence in the professional knowledge, the good principles, and good feelings of their medical advisers is so great, that they might be made the subjects of the most marked disturbance of the

nervous system, much beyond what is often effected by mesmerism, if they were positively assured that certain effects would follow the measures that were about to be put in operation? Can any one doubt for a moment that hysteric and nervous symptoms, in some of the most remarkable forms, might be thus called into action?

It is also impossible to read in some of the works on mesmerism instructions given as to the mode of manipulating the patients, without at once perceiving that they are repugnant to delicacy and propriety, and ought neither to be practised, nor submitted to, by persons of refinement and correct feeling. When more notice is taken of mesmerism by those opposed to it than has yet been done, I trust some of the most serious objections to the practice will be brought before the public. Hitherto the professors of the art have been very leniently dealt with by their opponents. It is liable to objections much stronger than those usually adduced against it. Medical men readily comprehend its bad influences. Mr. Newnham states in the last number of the *Provincial Journal*, that "During the magnetic state there is a rise in man's moral nature—that he becomes more alien from wrong—more averse from impropriety—more conscious of approaching evil—more sensitive to anything like indecorum." Such was not the opinion of Lavoisier, Dr. Franklin, and other eminent philosophers, as to the mesmerism of 1785. They state that, "there are parts of the operations which may readily be turned to *vicious purposes*: and in fact, *immoral practices* have already actually grown out of them."

I am still fully of opinion that the facts in mesmerism as yet brought before the public, are not of

that unambiguous character, or of that respectable nature, to demand the investigation of medical men. It may be an amusement to some to expose the trickery or false reasoning by which the art is supported, and the profession is obliged to those who do so, especially as it is hardly possible to come in contact with the subject without suffering some contamination thereby; yet surely it ought not to be expected that as a professional matter we should be required to scrutinize the mode in which curious tricks are played with cards, or the devices practised by persons pretending to read with closed eyes.

We have, too, a right to object to the description of persons who are the usual exhibitors of mesmeric phenomena. They are not fair cases for the experiments. Generally speaking, they are of a class below our own, and have motives to practise deception by the notice they obtain from persons in a station superior to their's, or from some worldly advantage. It is well observed in *the London and Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science*:—"No man or woman of standing or character has ever exhibited the higher phenomena of mesmerism; while clairvoyance, phrenomesmerism, community of taste, transposition of the senses, the prophetic power, the instinct of remedies, are all reserved for the boys of itinerant lecturers, servant girls, and hysterical young ladies. This is of itself sufficient to drive us to unbelief. Surely among the innumerable persons experimented on, some intelligent man or woman of known character, would have exhibited the marvellous manifestations alluded to. But where is there in all the records of mesmerism an individual of this stamp? When we hear of any person of plain good sense, and high moral

character, displaying any of these higher manifestations, we shall still be glad to inquire and learn ; until then we think we are fully entitled, from the facts above stated, to refuse the *smallest credence* to any of these phenomena."

The system of taking young persons from the lower ranks of society, bringing them upon platforms, and into drawing-rooms, and making them go through regular exhibitions for which they are both petted and paid, is equally disgusting and reprehensible. If animal magnetism be a fluid of so pervading a character, and those susceptible of its influence so numerous as they are affirmed to be, it would be more respectable for ladies and gentlemen to confine their performances among themselves, than to go into an inferior rank of life for mesmeric associates.

The *cures* of disease effected by mesmerism, are adduced as another reason why the subject should be taken up by our profession ; but in this argument there is no validity, since recoveries from disease, quite as remarkable as any resulting from mesmerism, can be shown to have been occasioned by other methods in which the imagination alone could have been influenced.

It may be expected that I should particularly refer to one instance of mesmeric cure that has taken place within the last year, which has been noticed, not only in our Medical Journals, but in nearly all the literary periodicals of the country. I must, however, decline the task. Though no circumstance has occurred for a long time so calculated in my opinion to weaken the faith of the public in *mesmerism* as this case in all its bearings, I should rejoice, were it in my power to replace before it, and the medical details which

followed, the veil which has been so hastily withdrawn.

Though the mesmerists are accustomed to complain of the manner in which they are treated by their opponents, the fact is, that very little is written against them; and I am by no means clear, that the better way of determining the merits of their art, is not to leave the field quite open to them, giving them an unchecked facility of writing and exhibiting what they think desirable. I cannot, however, omit noticing the very able exposition of the subject in "*Blackwood's Magazine*" for February; the article upon mesmerism, in the late number of the *British and Foreign Medical Review*, and published also by Dr. Forbes as a separate article, under the title of "*Mesmerism True, Mesmerism False*;" also a very spirited and instructive account of *mesmerism* in 1845, in the May number of Dr. Cormack's *London and Edinburgh Monthly Journal of Medical Science*, and a series of letters that have just been published in the *Lancet*, by Dr. Radclyffe Hall. Mr. Newnham, in his rather voluminous contributions to the *Provincial Journal*, censures these letters as giving an unfair representation of the subject. Dr. Hall, however, maintains that the absurdities of mesmerism are best displayed by shewing the extreme inconsistency in the views and statements to be found in the writings of those who are considered as authorities on the subject. The able manner in which Dr. Forbes exposed the trickery of the French clairvoyant Alexis, causing him, as it is reported, precipitately to quit the country, entitles him to the thanks of society at large.

We are bound also to express our acknowledgment to Dr. Cardew and his coadjutors for their complete

detection and exposure of the imposture practised at Bath, in November last ; and I would direct attention to a most amusing and thorough discovery of the audacious tricks of four clairvoyants who were exhibiting under a Mr. Donovan, at Leamington, in the spring of this year, one of the performers having been a professional mesmeric trickster for nearly two years and a half. The circumstance is alluded to in the article previously referred to in Dr. Cormack's Journal, and is detailed in a letter to the Editor of the *Leamington Spa Courier*, by Dr. Ross Leitch, to whom the public are indebted for much judicious and manly conduct on the occasion. The confession of these four delinquents, who were adepts in their art, does not disprove the truths of mesmerism, but it proves how easily a set of worthless boys may impose upon wealthy and well-meaning people ; and warrants that strict scrutiny into asserted facts of which mesmerists so much complain. The able writer in Blackwood, referring to mesmeric clairvoyance, truly says, the advocates of it "challenge inquiry in print, but they shrink from, or sink under *experiment*."

As a general summary of what may be deemed admissible or inadmissible in mesmerism, in relation to the evidence we at present possess, I would offer the following propositions :—

1. That the manipulations employed by the operators will, in many persons, produce a kind of sleep, varying from an apparently deep sleep to the slightest kind of somnolence, the torpor in general resembling more what is seen in hysterical patients than natural sleep.
2. That individuals of nervous and hysterical temperament are most susceptible of these impressions, but that the majority of persons cannot be brought under their influence.

3. That the patient has considerable power in either inducing or resisting the disposition to sleep; as in many females subject to hysteria the attacks are severe, slight, or altogether concealed, in proportion to the exertion of that moral control which the subjects of the complaint, to a certain extent, possess.

4. That what is termed mesmeric sleep does not exhibit itself in general on a first or second mesmerising, but comes on after repeated trials; leading to the conclusion, that, as training is often necessary, the condition requisite for the production of the phenomena must be pre-existing in the patient, and not communicable by the mesmeriser.

5. That it is observable, that in places where public mesmeric performances are first begun, persons are found to be remarkably unsusceptible of the supposed influence of mesmerism; but, that after a few individuals have exhibited the desired effects, the same phenomena are easily produced upon others, justifying the inference that *imitation* is operative here, as it is well known to be in nervous affections among young people.

6. That there is no reason for supposing that the remarkable condition of the system termed somnambulism, may not be brought on by those causes which occasion artificial sleep, but that examples of this induced somnambulism are very rare.

7. That the sleep produced by mesmerism does not differ from that which appears spontaneously in nervous persons.

8. That in consequence of the direct communication with the brain of numerous nerves belonging to the eyes and their appendages, it is very probable that a constrained and unusual position of these organs for a

considerable time, may induce various degrees of nervous somnolence, thus explaining Mr. Braid's method of mesmerising without making passes, by having the eyes long fixed on an object above them; passes before them may, however, have a similar influence.

9. That artificial sleep in no degree depends upon any power, energy, or fluid, or physical influence proceeding from the mesmeriser, but is occasioned either by an impression upon the mind of the patient that some effects will supervene, or by the effect upon the nervous system caused by a fixed position or stare of the eyes.

10. That it is probable some persons oppressed by nervous sleep feel so confused as readily to believe themselves in some extraordinary state, (especially when previously convinced that an unusual condition of the system is likely to ensue,) and in this state are ready to follow any suggestion of their mesmeriser.

11. That no person can be mesmerised at a distance, or without a knowledge or suspicion that something has been done, or is about to be done, from which effects are expected to follow.

12. That full credit may safely be given to any of the cures reported to have been effected by mesmerism; (as equally remarkable recoveries, where strong faith exists in the remedies, and where the imagination is impressed, may be adduced from medical records); and where artificial sleep can be induced it is reasonable to suppose that soothing effects would ensue.

13. That although it is probable the nervous drowsiness produced artificially may be accompanied by a degree of insensibility to external impressions, so that pain is not acutely felt, (which is known to be the case

in natural attacks of coma,) yet the recorded instances of severe operations having been performed without exciting pain, are so rare, and the evidence in favour of their reality so far from being entirely satisfactory, that they do not encourage surgeons to expect any benefit to their patients from this source. At the same time, if patients who are to be submitted to operations have faith in mesmerism and are desirous of trying it, and persons are at hand who have no conscientious scruples in practising it, there does not seem sufficient reason for forbidding a trial of the experiment.

14. That what is called *traction*, (an apparent power the mesmeriser has of drawing the patient after him,) *community of sensation*, (the patient's feeling or tasting from impressions made alone upon the sense of touch and the tongue of the mesmeriser,) and obedience of the patient to the will of the mesmeriser, may, in some instances, arise without any intentional deceit on the part of the patient, being induced while he is in a semi-conscious state by the observed suggestions of the mesmeriser; but that they never arise without some suggestion, and that in the majority of cases the exhibitions of these phenomena are willing imposture on the part of the patients, the mesmerisers, if respectable persons, being duped by the patients.

15. That "clairvoyance," in all its forms,—reading without the use of the eyes or touch, "the instinct of remedies," "mental travelling," "phreno-mesmerism," &c., &c., rest upon no satisfactory evidence. That in the somnambolic state some individuals may have their imaginations unnaturally excited, and may make rather remarkable observations, or a disposition to cunning or deceit which is known to attend this nervous condition when not artificially induced may

exist, thus freeing them from the charge of intentional duplicity; but that in the greater number of those cases the phenomena are the result of wilful imposture, sometimes on the part of the patient only, in others of both mesmeriser and patient.

16. That ordinarily, persons exemplifying what are called "the higher phenomena of mesmerism," are not of that description whose education, intelligence, station in society, and moral character, would place them above the suspicion of deceiving themselves or others, but are generally selected from those who might be expected to derive a personal interest from the exhibition, or who at least would be likely to have their vanity gratified by the circumstances and society into which they have been introduced.

17. That the assertion of mesmerisers, that it is necessary to awaken their patients from the artificial sleep by what is called *demesmerising*, and the modes employed for this purpose, throw much suspicion upon the reality of the apparent sleep.

And lastly, that there is no *occult* influence possessed by one animal body over another; that mesmeric effects follow from sensible impressions, by influencing through the senses the moral and physical state of the subject; and that the imagination alone, if not always equal to producing the effects, does so in some cases.

As regards the progress mesmerism has made during the last year in this country, I am of opinion that it has found its way into drawing-rooms more than it had ever done before, but that the ground on which alone it can have a permanent foundation in public estimation, has been rather weakened than rendered more substantial.

Gentlemen,—I have trespassed too long upon your

time in speaking of this subject, but it is one which must occasionally be forced upon our attention, and as I have had some opportunities of examining into it, it occurred to me that the result of my observations, if not interesting to the meeting, might not be altogether devoid of use.



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