THE SCIENCE OF HYPNOTISM

Occupies Prominent Position in World at Present.

Michigan Is Legislating Against Its Practice—Power of Strong Over Weak Minds Very Great.

Michigan legislators have before them a bill making it a criminal offense for any person to make improper use of hypnotic powers. In Illinois a hypnotic subject of Woodbury Workinger, has confessed to the murder of the latter, and alleged as his defence that his mind had been weakened by hypnotic exhibitions given of him by Workinger, who was a professional hypnotist. Chicago is just now interested in the claim of a local surgeon that he performed a difficult operation on a patient who was hypnotized during the time required and that the latter suffered no pain. The bill in the Michigan legislature is believed to be the first of its kind ever introduced in any legislature of the country, although the growing number of "fake" hypnotists is liable to provoke drastic legislation all over the country. The Stephenson county murder provokes the old question: "Is hypnotism weakening upon the mental faculties?" The Chicago surgical operation, true or untrue, calls sharp attention to the present status of hypnotism in the medical profession.

The statements of three unbiased and unquestionably honest students of hypnotism, of the false and true claims for it, with the purposes of the proposed Michigan legislature, will probably make plain many now dubious points in the public mind. Roger W. Lackner, of Atlanta, who is neither a physician nor a professional hypnotist, but who has given the subject much personal study, was visiting in Chicago last winter. Mr. Lackner is familiar with the progress of scientific hypnotic work in Germany and France, as well as in this country. Of this he says:

"I find the medical profession in all parts of the world, quite willing to give ten, twenty, thirty, or forty years, yes, even a lifetime, to the study of hypnotism, yet few members of the profession are prepared to admit that it can accomplish all claimed for it. The charlatan and the cheat have preceded the scientist, and besides giving a false impression have deluded the public. Then, too, if hypnotism as practiced between physician and patient is to be the great healing factor of the new century, the allopathic and homoeopathic schools of medicine must revolutioni e themselves, must concede the merits of the eclectic school, must admit that Christian Science has a broad foundation of truth, and that error has predominated over the truth in the past. This is not an easy thing to bring about; the change, if it is to come at all, will be slow.

"In my judgment, hypnotism is dependent upon two conditions—the consent of a well balanced mind to being controlled by the mind of another, and the inability of a diffusive or non-concentrating mind to resist the control of a superior or concentrated mind. There you have the two classes of subjects illustrated by the heads or two types I have selected. In the one case a well balanced, self-contained person consents for medical purposes to effect a cure, to permit the mind of another to flow into his own, take possession of his consciousness and control his subconsciousness. In the other case a person of not so great stability, with minimum ability to concentrate the mind, unconsciously or with slight resistance, passes under the control of another mind and is either treated or becomes a hypnotic subject for exhibition purposes. No person with good mental balance and poise and with fair concentrative powers can be hypnotized against his will. A mentally weak or will-weak person might be hypnotized under some conditions. To illustrate, here is a man—perform this—who is mentally diffusive. I easily reduce him to the hypnotic state, first, because he expects it, second, because he is absolutely nonresistant. I hand him this umbrella. I tell him it is raining, raining very hard. He scrouges down, he shivers, he strives to protect himself, although he is in a room and it is not raining.

"There is nothing difficult in bringing that about if you have an easy hypnotic subject, a professional—and it is tricks of this kind that enable the quack hypnotist to deceive the public as to the real merits of hypnotism and to make of it a burlesque show. I take the umbrella away from the man and hand him this photographic negative holder. I tell him it is a book—the Bible—and that I wish him to read the 'Twenty-third Psalm.' He fumbles as if he were trying to turn a page, and finally repeats the psalm after me. That is not much—the thing is as old as the hills.

"In both Germany and France the medical scientists have turned away from trick hypnotism and are applying control of the mind to the cure of ailments and of debasing habits. In Berlin there is a hypnotic tobacco cure. Patients come there, enter a building that resembles a hotel, take a room that has beautiful surroundings and meet an agreeable person. He talks gently, quietly to them on every topic in the world, but tobacco. His personality, manners, words, are soothing. He may press the eyeballs or the forehead a few times. In a little time the patient is under his mental control. He then suggests to him all the evils of tobacco—its effects on the heart, the stomach, its poison. He constantly projects into the subconsciousness an antagonism to tobacco. This institution claims that it now cures 60 per cent of the cases sent to it, and the cure is effected without the use of counteracting drugs.

"The French have new hypnotic hospitals in which the liquor habit is eradicated. A strong mind gains control of another mind or of a weakened mind, and then by constant, persistent suggestion to the subconsciousness starts the force of the will in a direction opposite to that which leads to the use of liquor. The patients are also hygienically fed so that they are constantly growing physically stronger as well morally and mentally. In this country the advance toward use of hypnotic powers is largely along the line now recognized by many physicians that it is not alone necessary to gain control of the body with medicines but that the mind must be controlled as well. The old way was to stupefy the mind. The new is to secure its consent to submit to the control of another mind, a suggestive force working for a cure. Physicians now lay a patient suffering from too rapid heart action upon a couch and by literally passing their will or mentality, which is a better term, into the patient's, lower his circulation, tone him down, and in time gain control of the heart. The man suffering with inactive kidneys, takes a static electricity treatment, receives the electric fluid through his back and along his spine, and is then ready for suggestive treatment of the hypnotic type which in conjunction with the static treatment restores life to his weak parts. I grant that into all this a great deal of humbuggery may be and is worked, but the person who denies the existence of a hypnotic power or its value in subduing troubled and disturbed mentalities or worn-out physiques is either grossly ignorant or recklessly biased. Hypnotic, suggestive treatment will dominate the medical world, I believe, before the end of this century. It will displace drugs, poisons, opiates. It will work hand in hand with medicines that are solely of vegetable origin, and its chief inspiration will be not to cure or suppress disease but to prevent it. This is the real function of a physician—to prevent disease—no matter how far he now is from such work."

The law against quack hypnotism introduced in the Michigna legislature is form George Brown, a Detroit newspaper man. The author of the bill has for several years had reason to believe that an improper use of hypnotism has often been made, and instances have come under his observation which impelled him to prescribe extreme penalties for a misuse of the power. The legislature itself has some misgivings as to the propriety of the act. If passed it recognizes hypnosis as an established science, which it is not yet. Lawyers say this recognition will give criminals great power of defense. In order to demonstrate whether a person under the influence of hypnosis could be compelled by suggestion to commit a crime the judiciary committee of the house granted permission to a well known hypnotist to give a demonstration.

A young man who had previously acted as a subject in scientific demonstrations was placed in an hypnotic condition and directed to take a watch from beneath a pile of papers on the table and hide it away. He was told that no one was present to witness the act. The subject jumped from his chair and without waiting to touch the papers left the room, put on his hat and coat and started downstairs in such haste that the hypnotist had some difficulty in restraining him. He was subjected to several tests of this kind, and while at times he seemed to be on the verge of yielding to the temptation to steal, he balked when it came to the actual performance of the act. He picked up a paper which he was told was a will and was commanded to destroy it. He immediately threw the paper on the table, declaring that he did not wish to defraud his old grandmother out of her property, that she would not need it long, and that he could wait. He was repeatedly urged to commit a small theft, but he said he would not do so as he might be arrested. The subject was afterwards placed in a cataleptic condition, and it was demonstrated to the satisfaction of the committee that he was not shamming.

The promoter of the bill was forced to admit that the man could not be induced to commit larceny under hypnotic suggestion, but he argued that if the man were of a weak moral nature he would undoubtedly yield. He also contended that another subject might not have the same moral scruples and that his bill was intended to reach that class of hypnotists who might commit crimes by suggestion, and to impose a penalty that would act as a deterrent.

It is still too early to determine the probability of the proposed measure becoming a law, the author not having perfected the measure, as he desired first to secure an expression of opinion from the leiglsators and the public generally as to its expediency. Two of the members of the house judiciary committee who were formerly opposed to the measure from a legal standpoint are now said to favor the bill, and when perfected it may be reported favorably. Other demonstrations will be given, not only before the committee, but in the presence of the two houses of the legislature.

Prof. John D. Quackenbos, of Columbia University, treating of the educational use of hypnotism, says: "Tactful suggestion has power to exalt the intellectual as well as the ethico-spiritual nature. The development of the mind is no less a hypnotic possibility than the betterment of morals. In fact, the moral exaltation characteristic of hypnosis is accompanied with a rise in intellectual dignity and power. To accomplish his part in the work of intellectual uplift the hypnotizer must be a person of liberal education, broad views, and pronounced literary and scientific convictions. He must be a sincere believer in his own suggestions. Mental reservation is fatal."

Then he goes on to cite numerous cases of incorrigible children who were subjected to hypnotic suggestive treatment. The untruthful child changed to the truthful one, the unruly one to the obedient. The instances are so many that space will not permit their mention.

Only last week a society woman of Chicago came staggering into the office of a physician. She was drunk with whisky and morphine, two things she has been taking into her ssytem for ten years past. She begged her physician to save her. Her eyes were wild, her face drawn, her nerves gone. In the presence of three other physicians she was brought under hypnotic control until a smile came to her lips, the face grew restful, and some control over the nerves was gained. She will undergo this treatment for the next six months. The doctors say she will be saved.

Dr. Frank N. Doud says: "The first object in hypnotic suggestive treatment is to get an agreement between your mind and that of the patient, or to induce the patient to think of nothing but what you are saying—secure a concentration of mind. When this concentration is secured the conscious mind of the patient is out of the way, and the physician can talk dirtectly to the subconscious mind and change the attitude of that. The suggestions made induce sleep and a lowering of the circulation, and at last the patient is under control. The contraditions of the conscious mind are done away with. The vitality, which has not been flowing in the right direction in the patient, is set upon the ture course. We have the example known to physicians of opium being given to a patient with the suggestion that it was a laxative. It worked so quickly that the dose had to be reduced. Another patient inhales ammonia freely and avoids water with great aversion. The patient suffering with insomnia sleeps, and so on. I consider that there are only two factors in disease—derangement of the subconscious mind and deposits in the system of poisonous organic matter. If the subconscious mind is properly attuned the vitality will flow in the proper direction, toward the affected part, eliminating the poison and restoring the body to health. This is not a theory, but a demonstrated fact. In treatment of tumors I have found the suggestive treatment most effective. I am not prepared to say how far hypnosis may be practiced. It is as new as the field of electricity. Much remains to be tried, tested long. But I do say this for it—that its purpose to control troubled minds, to give rest, to secure poise, is high and worthy of long consideration by the student."

And there the matter rests for the present. It is but a question of time when the statutes, the medical works, the scientific ones, will be compelled to take full cognizance of the new science. But, for your own part, do not imagine that hypnosis, as the charlatans would have it, is control of the mind by a superior mentality. Unless you are mentally deficient, not in full poise, your mind cannot be controlled by another without your own consent. That much has been well determined.—Chicago Record-Herald.

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