

composed of a series of nerve-centres, or parts regulating and controlling actions of more or less well-defined nature. It is not one organ but a collection of organs, all working together, in the healthy organism, for the regulation of the life mental and the life physical as well. This much is certain and sure. While there is harmonious working, however, between the brain centres, there exists also a certain amount of independence among them. Such independence is inseparable from the nature of the multifarious duties the brain-centres discharge. They may be compared to the sub-departments in a great Government affair—like the post office, for example—wherein each sub-division, while owning a central and connecting authority, exercises, on its own behalf, a fair share of responsibility for the discharge of its own duties. Now, roughly, yet correctly speaking, the brain shows a division into what we may term intellectual centres and lower or automatic ones. The former, located chiefly, or wholly, in the forehead lobes of the brain, deal with the highest affairs of the mental state. They exercise the will, they are the seats of intellectual operations, and they constitute by their collective working “the conscious Ego” which is the essence of our responsible individuality. The lower or automatic centres, on the other hand, as their name implies, are in the position of self-acting machines. They control actions and operations which lie outside the will, and which are not (necessarily at least) associated with our consciousness. Reading and writing and walking are each and all acts which are automatically regulated. We have to acquire them, it is true, but, once acquired they are ever afterwards performed without thought. Over such acts, then, the lower brain-centres preside. I might quote the heart’s action, the regulation of the blood-vessels, swallowing, and the movements of the stomach in digestion, as additional illustrations of automatic acts. These lower centres of ours save us a vast deal of trouble and worry. They leave the intellect free to deal with deeper problems than are involved

in the mere acts of living and being; and when we come to think of it we see that a good three-fourths of our lives are really composed of actions which are performed utterly without thinking, and which are all the better performed, in truth, because we have not to think about them at all.

In sleep-walking we see how the lower centres of the brain can assume temporary command of the body, how they can rouse the sleeper from his bed, and guide and direct his movements unerringly in the majority of cases. Now, mesmerism or hypnotism, is an analogous condition to somnambulism. I take it that in the hypnotic state, however induced, there is essentially the abolition of consciousness and will, by the repression for the time being of the intellectual centres. It is useless and needless to say *how* this occurs; it is sufficient to say it does occur. In one way or another the hypnotiser succeeds in abolishing the intellectuality of his subject. The lower centres are stimulated and come to the front. Automatic life replaces the conscious existence; and the individual is, temporarily, as clay in the hands of the potter: he is made to think and act at the behest and command of the individual or individuals who have succeeded in reducing him to the level of a mere machine. This is the essence of hypnotism. Sir Andrew Clark put the matter in other words when he said that the liability of any one to be mesmerised stood in inverse ratio to their intellectual development. If this means anything at all it, implies exactly what I said in these pages in May, that it is the intellectually sensitive (or weak) who are the hypnotiser’s best subjects.

If Dr. Bramwell or any other hypnotiser can persuade certain people that they are not ill, that pain has left them, and that they must be made unconscious while being operated upon, I have no concern whatever with his procedure. All I maintain is, that he will not, and cannot succeed with people having a fair or complete share of volition and intellectual force. Nor do I envy those who can be “mesmerised.”