cause and effect in this occurrence, it will be interesting to bear in mind the period of pregnancy at which the impression was made. Admitting a nervous connection between the mother and the fœtus, that connection would doubtless become stronger after the middle of pregnancy, if indeed it may not be supposed first to date from thence—viz., the period of quickening, when the fœtus is first endowed with motor power. In other cases of supposed maternal mental influence which have come within my notice, the impression has occurred subsequently to the period of quickening. This I should be inclined to anticipate. At the earlier periods of utero-gestation, while the fœtus is as it were parasitically connected with the mother, its existence is most precarious, and its destruction is very apt to ensue from any severe maternal shock; but at the later periods, the being of the fœtus is more certain and independent, and then probably it is, that the vital stimulus is transmitted by a nerve channel as well as in mere connection with the sanguineous current. If we allow the occasional occurrence of maternal mental influence on the fœtus, it would also be a matter of curious speculation as to the circumstances under which it is liable to occur. I do not believe it to be always ascribable to violent mental influence: in the present instance such was not the case, and the mother is a very sensible woman, of lively and cheerful disposition, but not of very excitable and imaginative temperament; there was merely the visual impression combined with some degree of curiosity and surprise.

I am Sir, your obedient servant,

BUTLER LANE, M.D.

Ewell, Surrey, Feb. 12, 1848.

ON MESMERISM.

By HENRY DAYMAN, Esq., Surgeon.

It was the trite observation of a great painter,* that "the history of errors, properly managed, often shortens the road to truth." Now, although it may be impossible to manage properly a history of the errors committed in the healing art, because "*difficile est proprie communia dicere*," still we are not without excellent charts to guide our *Materia Medica* among the mysterious quicksands, which, in the shape of idiosyncrasies, prejudices, fantasies, and other difficulties, surround the life of man,—charts laid down by the learned and the good, in all ages, for the use of their children, and the behoof of mankind.

Grave men and honest have witnessed the wonders of mesmerism, and have borne testimony to the truth of what they have seen; this paper, therefore, will not be found attempting in any way to controvert the evidence of other men's senses; but, as the *whole* truth has not always appeared, I have thought it expedient, after some observation, to lay before the profession certain phases of the mesmeric treatment which hitherto have been but little considered.

It is not many years since the powers of iodine over glandular disease began to be developed, and numerous and lofty were the conjectures of physicians on the influence which such a medicine would hold in the republic of physic. At last some keen and close observers began to discover that this deep-searching agent, not content with removing diseased structure, would occasionally carry off the very normal tissue, and then it was deemed right to warn the profession of such possible contingencies. Thus have we heard, throughout the length and breadth of the land, the all-powerful virtues of mesmerism set forth; but medical men have not had timely warning, as in the case of iodine, of the dangers which may attend the indiscriminate use of this power.

The following sketches will, I hope, sufficiently illustrate my meaning:—

CASE 1.—A lady, subject to occasional attacks of turbulent action of the heart, out of mere curiosity, suffered herself to be mesmerised. Within a few minutes all the most frightful symptoms of angina pectoris began to show themselves, and it was with difficulty, and not until many hours had elapsed, that the circulation was brought back to tranquillity. The mesmeriser was an amateur, and altogether unacquainted with the principles of medicine.

CASE 2.—A girl, half-idiotic, yet of sufficient understanding to earn her own bread, was found to be a suitable subject for mesmeric exhibitions, from the facility with which she received the necessary impression, and her easy transit into a state of coma. After submitting to the ordeal for some months, she was discovered to have become *entirely* devoid of intellect, so that being deprived of all means of gaining a livelihood, or even of performing the most ordinary personal duties for herself, she now exists, a burden to her parish, and an object of distress to those about her.

CASE 3.—A young woman, of florid habit, and irritable temperament, about 25 years of age, was attacked by epilepsy, for which she consulted an eminent person. The treatment at first was of the most approved kind, for the doctor brought all the artillery of a very powerful mind to bear on the case. No remedies, however, succeeded in preventing the recurrence of the fits, and she was at last advised to try mesmerism.

Two years after this I saw her, when she informed me that the mesmeriser had "cured her fits," but, to use her own emphatic words, she was "a wretched woman." The epileptic paroxysm, which had habitually returned about every fortnight, ceased to appear, but in the place of this periodical outbreak, a pitiable wreck of nervous energy had taken possession of her, and both the mental and physical economy were laid prostrate, so that she constantly felt and declared, that the greatest boon which could befall her would be the restoration of the epilepsy.

The foregoing cases have been selected as specimens of mesmeric results, as they appeared under three different aspects; and I have no doubt that all medical men who have seen the mode of treatment in full exercise, and have studied, without let or hinderance,

* Sir Joshua Reynolds.

the evil and the good of the system, will recognize in these sketches truths with which they are familiar, however feeble the delineation here given.

The first case may be taken as the type of a numerous family of patients, on whom slight disturbances produce very serious results, and with whom, therefore, cautious men are not prone to meddle unnecessarily. It may, however, be urged, that the somatic manipulation was not carried far enough in this case, and that as the treatment proceeded, the primary symptoms would have subsided. On this head I would only refer to the opinion of an able psychologist,* who says, in speaking of the employment of animal magnetism, as a means to produce re-action in the nervous system, "This procedure demands great caution and individual discrimination, since, after all, it is only proceeding by guess. The physician may here be compared to one attacking the case with a stick. If he strike the disorder, so much the better; if he strike the patient, so much the worse. The question always is, how far may a psycho-physical exaltation go, in this or that individual patient, in order to produce only a *salutary* excitement, and where is the point at which this excitement may become *dangerous*? It never can be a matter of indifference: he, therefore, who will venture to give a decided answer to this question, as applied to the case which he is treating, may likewise venture on this procedure."

The second case presents a terrible picture of innocent martyrdom, on which it would be painful, and of no advantage, in this place, further to dilate.

The third case, perhaps, offers more interesting features to the consideration of the physician. Here, it is evident, it would have been better to have borne the actual ills, than to have sought unto the possible but questionable cure. The epileptic diathesis existed in the constitution, like the wolf-note on the piano, well known to musicians, and it would have been well, had both discords been equally capable of bearing the same treatment. In the latter, the judicious tuner distributes the note over the whole instrument, and the flaw is lost in the general harmony. Not so the mesmeric tuner, in the instance before us, for, although the diffusion of the epileptic discord was accomplished, the effect was the reverse of harmonious. It appeared as if some subtle spirit was habitually condensed in the body, and that the issue of this process was a periodical epilepsy, exhibiting, in some measure, a *vis medicatrix* analogous to that which is seen in the struggles of ague to throw off the poison of disease. Howbeit, the condition of the patient, after the "cure," was far worse than that in which the treatment had first found her. In the place of the epilepsy, the body was governed by what may be termed a *psycho-neurosis*, and the fear was upon all who saw the case, that such a state of things might lead, as Eschenmayer (himself an enthusiastic mesmerist,) has suggested, to some peculiar form of lunacy.

Such are a few among the *caveats* which may be entered against this popular therapeia. Hitherto

science has taken little cognizance of its merits: yet, "Thus much appears from the evidence examined, that what is called idio-magnetism is not a more exalted, but a more fettered state of the mind, in which it is subject to the will of other men,—to the sway of its own instinct and of fancy—nay, even to the influence of mineral and telluric forces. That this condition must be considered as *pathological*, cannot, therefore, be doubted."* It must, however, be confessed, that to regard the series of mesmeric phenomena as a state of morbid "transition," does not assist the physician in assigning to it a place in the healing art. To oppose one disease to another has been the legitimate province of *Allopathic* science from the days of "eldest time;" and some of the warmest advocates of mesmerism have, it is conjectured with this view, sought to engraft their doctrines on catholic medicine. Yet, whether, on investigating more strictly all the powers and results of animal magnetism, "*simile simili gaudet*," will not be found to be the more appropriate motto of the school, is at present an open question. Should the decision of future inquirers give this place to mesmerism, it is obvious that it would eventually become the handmaid of homœopathy.

I leave to others the purely psychical field to which a further consideration of this subject might lead. It has ever been the wisdom of the true metaphysician to look but in one direction for the light. Let us, then, who are both physiologists and metaphysicians, keep this truth steadily before our eyes in our profound reasonings on the material world. "*Physica sunt opaca, non lucem sed lucidas res videmus*."

Millbrook, Southampton.

CLINICAL NOTES FROM PRIVATE PRACTICE.

By W. H. RANKING, M.D., (Cantab.) Norwich.

REMARKABLE SPASMODIC AFFECTION OF THE MUSCLES SUPPLIED BY THE PORTIO DURA.

A lady, aged 65, residing in the marshy district, near Lynn, came recently to this city to take my opinion on an affection which had caused her very great distress, although not accompanied by any severe amount of pain. Her health had been generally good until twelve months back, when she became the subject of pain in the limbs, apparently of rheumatic origin. About the same time she first noticed the commencement of the affection for which she sought my advice, and which consists of a peculiar spasmodic twitching of all the superficial muscles in the left side of the face. This originated in the left genio-hyoid muscle, but had now engaged the orbicularis, the levator angulæ oris, the zygomatics, and in fact every muscle supplied by the portio dura, on the left side, and shewed a disposition to extend to the other side. The twittings occurred at intervals of about one minute, and lasted during twenty or thirty seconds, so that there was scarcely any abatement during the day, and these

* Baron Von Feuchtersleben's *Psychology*. Sydenham Society's edition, p. 338.

* Op. cit., p. 209.