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THE VALUE OF HYPNOTISM

AS A MEANS OF SURGICAL
ANÆSTHESIA

By JAMES R. COCKE, M. D.

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THE one thing that differentiates our modern civilization from the civilizations of the past is the general diffusion of knowledge among the masses. With our advances in specialism there goes hand in hand the advancement in general knowledge by the people. The great reforms in politics, medicine and religion have almost without exception been caused by popular need as expressed by its pronounced demand.

In writing this article I hope to meet the popular demand for more extended knowledge upon the subject of hypnotism. So many absurd and vague notions about hypnotism are current at the present day, that I will first make my own ideas clear as to what the hypnotic state really is.

The hypnotic state is that condition of mind in which it is so dominated by an idea that all or part of the manifestations of consciousness may be subjugated to the idea, even to such an extent that consciousness itself will be absorbed by the predominating suggestion. There are a number of ways of inducing the hypnotic state. Different degrees of this state can be produced, according to the means employed to impress the psychic life of the patient.

If I wish to hypnotize a patient I have him look fixedly at a bright object held about fifteen inches from the eyes. I tell him that he must look fixedly and think only of the object at which he is looking. Holding a bright coin in one hand,

I place the other hand on the wrist of the subject over the radial artery and watch the pulse carefully. If the subject is a good one, in from three to four minutes the heart will beat more rapidly, the pulse will become bounding, and the pupils of the eyes will dilate. When the changes take place in the pulse and pupils, I tell the subject that I will absorb his consciousness, that his eyelids are growing heavy, and that he feels the warm blood coursing through his veins. I insist then that he cannot hold his eyelids open, and command him to close them. Gently stroking his right hand, I tell him it is growing numb. I suggest to him that his limbs are growing heavy, and that I am still absorbing his consciousness. Then I command him to sleep. If the hypnotism is successful, he will breathe deeply, and his face will have a peculiar, set expression.

I then begin testing the sense of touch, either by a sharp instrument, or better by two small wire brushes connected with the poles of a Faradic battery. If the patient is thoroughly hypnotized he will not respond even to quite a severe shock from the battery. If I wish to hypnotize him sufficiently to perform a surgical operation, I continue to suggest to him that he is unconscious, until, placing the electric brushes over the supra orbital nerves (just over the eyebrows), the electricity will not cause him to evince pain. When this region is insensible to pain, it is then safe to operate.

Many writers upon hypnotism have divided the hypnotic state into three stages. I think this division is unwise, for there are a number of mental stages vaguely classed as hypnotic, and any arbitrary division of them will frequently mislead the operator.

In the article written by me for the December number of *THE ARENA*, I stated that only a certain number of people were susceptible to hypnotic suggestion. I wish to modify that statement, for I have found that a much larger number of people than I supposed could be hypnotized, if only I could obtain from them six to eight minutes' absolute volitional obedience. Let me make myself clear.

Take any man, let him look you squarely in the eyes, and command him to begin rotating his hands; tell him to increase the speed, and speak to him very rapidly; if this is continued, the pupils of the average man will dilate in about

six minutes, and, in from eight to twelve minutes, a more or less profound degree of hypnosis will be induced. Since the first of last January I have tried this method upon about fifty people, and found that whenever they would give me six minutes' volitional obedience, I could induce the hypnotic state in the following six or eight minutes. In other words, I believe and hope to prove by experiment that a very large number, say ninety per cent, of all upon whom it may be tried can be hypnotized in a greater or less degree if they will give the hypnotist a few minutes' volitional obedience. If I am right, this will make hypnotism applicable in a great many ways which are not known at the present time.

The hypnotic state can also be induced by a person looking at his own eyes reflected by a mirror, into rippling water, or by looking at a couple of rapidly revolving polished metallic discs.

I believe from experience that hypnotism can and will supply the place now held in medicine by morphine and other opiates, in at least from seventy-five to eighty per cent of all the cases in which these or similar drugs are now used. The question is often asked me both by medical men and laymen, if hypnotism is as injurious as morphine and other opiates, to say nothing of chloroform, alcohol, ether, laughing gas, etc. I will make the matter clear by describing very briefly the action of some of these drugs.

Morphine is the drug generally used for the purpose of allaying acute pain. To its disagreeable and injurious effects, thousands of people in this and foreign lands can testify. Who has not felt the terrible nausea in about eight or twelve hours after taking the drug by the mouth or by a hypodermatic injection? Alas, we all know too well the brilliant intellects which have been clouded or rendered useless by this magic drug. But leaving out the danger from the morphine habit, the drug, when used either to produce sleep or to quell pain, so interferes with the digestion of food and the elimination of waste products by the bowels, that the best and most careful medical men use it now only when the suffering is so great that to withhold it would be cruel.

Now hypnotism naturally can have no bad effects upon the digestion. I have hypnotized a large number of acutely ill people, and I know that it has acted as a sedative without producing apparent harm in the cases to which it was prop-

erly adapted. I have never seen it produce acute delirium in the sick. Morphine will frequently do so, however. Hypnotism never endangered life. Morphine when used hypodermatically may do so, if it is by accident injected into a vein. There are conditions in which hypnotism may be injurious to the mind. Morphine may injure the mind in as many cases, if not more. One is not likely to form a bad habit of being hypnotized. The morphine habit, unfortunately, is already too frequent.

The disagreeable after effects of chloroform and ether are too well known to require much comment. Both have proved fatal in a large number of cases. The other leading narcotics — chloral, bromide, etc. — all have very disagreeable immediate and remote consequences, especially when used for a long time. The claim may be urged that all persons cannot be hypnotized. Many persons are kept wide awake by opium and other narcotics if used in safe doses, but they are all ultimately injurious if used long.

I will now briefly mention a case which was benefited by the prolonged use of hypnotism. He was a young man, suffering with a very painful affection. The disease was insidious, and for technical reasons cannot be described here. Suffice it to say, however, that it was one which rendered him miserable by day, and, owing to severe pain, made sleep impossible by night. Most cases of this disease (over ninety per cent) prove fatal. In addition to the severe pain, the temperature of the patient varied, he being quite feverish in the afternoon and evening. He was emaciated and was so ill that he could not stand upon his feet. He was in the habit of using, besides morphine, large quantities of other sedatives which, owing to the severe pain, gave him little relief.

When I first saw him, I think he was without exception the most thorough nervous wreck which it had ever been my lot to treat. Every function of the body was disordered. Repose could be had neither with nor without narcotics. Superadded to this condition was an intense, restless, mental anxiety, which could not be controlled by ordinary means. The slightest noise and slightest movements caused him both acute physical pain and intense mental distress. He was well educated, of an excellent family, and used his utmost will power to control himself.

I saw him the first time about nine o'clock in the evening, and a more heartrending, brave struggle I never witnessed. There, lying upon his surgical fracture bed, was a young man, intelligent, handsome, who was bravely battling against constant pain. He took my hand between his two slender, wan hands, and made an appeal to me to give him sleep, more eloquent than any lawyer's appeal to a jury in behalf of a much afflicted client.

A necessary examination caused him considerable pain. As soon as this was completed I told the patient that he would sleep. I did not believe it. The pulse was about 130 per minute, and he quivered constantly with pain. I did not think it possible that any one in such a condition could be hypnotized at the first trial. However, the light in the room was turned down, and the patient was told to look at a coin in the manner previously described. In two minutes the pulse fell from 130 to 108 per minute. I told him that he was getting sleepy, that his eyelids were heavy. I could tell by the pressure of his hand that his mind wandered from the coin twice. In thirteen minutes he was breathing deeply, and the whole body was in a state of repose.

While he was in this condition, I asked him if he had pain. He answered, "Yes." I commanded him to sleep, and told him he was feeling no pain. In twenty minutes he was in a deep trance. I tried the reflexes of the body and found their intensity diminished. I still commanded him to sleep until his respirations were only sixteen per minute; they were very deep. The brow was cool and did not response to firm pressure over the supra orbital regions. Sleep was again commanded, and I retired from the room.

The patient lay in the hypnotic state three hours and forty minutes. He awoke moaning, and begged for morphine. We found that some of the surgical apparatus needed in his care was disarranged, and as a result he must be suffering intensely. Again he was hypnotized much more easily than the first time, and lay in the condition two hours and twenty-five minutes. Having given him a good night, we were hopeful of a good day.

Now came the severe test of hypnotism. It was necessary that certain surgical procedures, for which chloroform or ether are generally used, should be performed. I will not harrow the feelings by a minute description of the details, but will give

some idea of the difficulties without appealing too much to the emotions.

It was necessary to treat an abdominal wound four and one-half inches in length, into which we had to pass a long rubber tube, around which was packed a large quantity of iodoform gauze, this in turn being firmly secured by properly adjusted straps of surgeon's plaster. This enormous raw surface had to be carefully cleansed with what is termed an antiseptic solution. Fluid had to be injected through a rubber tube deep into the abdominal cavity. This daily dressing would have necessitated the use of chloroform or ether every time had it not been for the blessed use of hypnotism.

Some conception of the amount of pain saved by hypnotism may be formed when I state that the pain inflicted by these procedures would probably equal, if not exceed, that caused by the extraction of eight or ten healthy teeth. In the hypnotic state not only was this procedure accomplished without pain, but the nerves of the patient were spared the shock of the daily administration of chloroform. The use of morphine was entirely discontinued after the first hypnotic *séance*. Owing to the constitutional condition of the patient the wound healed slowly, and it was necessary to cleanse and drain a very large raw surface. As a result of the wound the patient was obliged to lie on his back, and he could not move for fear of pain. By means of hypnotism this pain was gradually subdued, and the man nursed back almost from the jaws of death itself.

I have dwelt somewhat at length upon the case just mentioned. For seven weeks this patient has been hypnotized twice or three times a day for the purposes previously mentioned. The intensely nervous, irritable man, worn out with pain, has been brought back to a condition of comparatively healthy mental and nervous equilibrium, and that stern friend of the human race — pain — has been dismissed, as there was no further use for him. Sleep, hitherto wooed in vain by drugs, came to this tired sufferer, and now the summer days, which are covering all nature with a mantle of beauty, dawn again for this young life and bid him hope and give him sweet promise.

I cannot reproduce upon paper my seven weeks' experience with this case. His very critical condition made my presence

necessary a greater part of the time. When using hypnotism I felt like one of the magicians of old; but I was fired by a better and nobler purpose than to astonish and please, realizing that pain, like some evil spirit, would vanish at a properly directed command or suggestion.

I wish to emphasize another point in regard to this patient. Prolonged suffering had completely broken down his self-control. I found that by suggestion, during and after the hypnotic state, I could get him to exercise his will with renewed vigor, and that instead of hypnotism being an injury to the mind, as has been claimed, it was a source of health and vitality.

I have used hypnotism frequently in minor dental operations, extracting teeth, etc. It is more efficient and more lasting than nitrous oxide gas, and leaves no disagreeable effect. A physician attempting any surgical operation, and using hypnotism as an anæsthetic, must be sure that the patient becomes thoroughly unconscious. This knowledge can be gained, as I previously mentioned, by the use of Faradic electricity applied with wire brushes. The patient may be semi-conscious and feel pain, and yet be unable to make it known by outcries or gestures. But if electricity is used, the face will be so sensitive to it, that an expression of pain or other evidence of it will be given. If he is wholly unconscious there will be practically no change in his expression when the brushes are applied to the supra orbital nerves.

Can the art of hypnotism be taught? Yes, most assuredly. It does not depend upon any hidden, mysterious force inherent in a few gifted individuals. Its operation is simply the intensification of one idea by some form of impression made upon the nervous system.

The lower animals can be hypnotized, and will obey hypnotic suggestion in a direct ratio to our ability of impressing our ideas upon their minds. This intensification of a mental state inhibits, then, if carried far enough, the centres of sensation in the brain, and in this way insensibility both to pain and touch may be produced.

In very susceptible persons the hypnotic state can be prolonged for a number of hours. Some forms of it resemble very closely the condition known to medical men as catalepsy, if indeed the states are not identical.

One does not always need to be deeply hypnotized in order to obtain the best remedial effects. Simple suggestion will sometimes relieve many apparently severe conditions. Intensify these suggestions and you at first have the patient interested. Carry it a degree farther and you have interest and attention gone mad. They carry themselves so far that all consciousness is for the time inhibited. These degrees of intensification of the mind resemble in their manifestations the great law of acoustics, which is that, when bodies are in vibration, the ear can detect a certain given ratio of them per minute, as noise; then as the vibrations increase in rapidity, a low-pitched musical tone is heard, and as successive vibrations follow with greater rapidity, the tone rises in pitch until there are so many vibrations per minute that the human ear ceases to hear them. So a moderate degree of attention in the mind produces ordinary thought; carry it a little farther and you get intense mental activity; still a little farther and the human mind is blank.

All new things and all old things used for new purposes must and should stand the test of sharp conservative criticism and the most searching scientific investigation. That hypnotism, in its application to surgery and as a means of relieving pain, may withstand these tests and prove a blessing to myriads of sufferers, must be the hope of all who seek the alleviation of pain.

Recent Press Notices of
"HYPNOTISM; How It Is Done,
Its Uses and Dangers."

By JAMES R. COCKE, M. D.

The subject treated of in this book is certainly one of the few vital topics of the day, the study of which is a matter of profound interest to the intelligent laity as well as to members of the medical profession. In other words, the subject appeals with a peculiar force to all thinkers, both in and out of the medical profession, and the author's object is the difficult one of writing a book sufficiently technical to satisfy the trained medical mind, and yet not so scientific as to repel the lay reader. The author is to be congratulated on his good fortune in succeeding so admirably in accomplishing this object.—*The New England Medical Gazette.*

Apröpos of the dangers of hypnotism, T. J. Hudson says: "This gentleman had the courage to make a practical experiment in this line. Standing in front of a deeply hypnotized subject, he placed a piece of cardboard in her hands, telling her that it was a dagger, and commanded her to stab him. This command she immediately obeyed, with the greatest alacrity. He then handed her an open pocket knife and again commanded her to stab him. She raised her hand as if to execute the command, but hesitated, and immediately had an hysterical attack, which, of course, put an end to the experiment." The doctor adds: "I have tried similar experiments upon thirty or forty people with similar results." He also states that he has made a number of tests to prove that the subject was deeply hypnotized.—*New York Medical Journal.*

It is truly refreshing and delightful to read a book which, while its subject and its matter belong to the realm of science, has a style and manner so simple, so easy, and so attractive that the unscientific may read it with both interest and benefit. Dr. Cocke's book on "Hypnotism; How it is Done, Its Uses and Dangers," is of this type. Because of his direct and simple method, the subject is neither dry nor difficult. There are touches in the book which are both graceful and poetic, and yet they in no way detract from the simple dignity and direct forcefulness of its scientific purpose and spirit.

Chapter X. is a powerful temperance lecture, without a trace of the usual mandlin emotionalism of the temperance lecturer.—*Helen H. Gardner in ARENA MAGAZINE.*

As to what it precisely is Dr. Cocke does not pretend to know, no more

so than does Edison regarding electricity. The general public, with the *fin-de-siècle* thirst for investigation and research, is in this case the bar before which will be tried the phenomena which are daily occurring in our midst. For hypnotism has become a "remedial agent, mysterious and overwhelming in its effect; more wonderful than surgery; more subtle in its influence than drugs, and which permeates every part of the psychic life of the patient."

There are many interesting chapters on "Hypnotism in Surgery," on "Telepathy," "Thought Transference," "Muscular Mind Reading," and general theories of hypnotism, many of which the author does not adopt. The work is enriched with quotations from the great specialists of the day, and hundreds of illustrative cases are given and analyzed.

With our scant knowledge of psychology, we resume this cursory review of a very valuable book with these deductions: Hypnotism is the lulling of the patient's consciousness, the suspension of his central I, and the setting of his subconsciousness to work in accordance with suggestions. This is according to Zangwill's summary of hypnotism in the *Critic*, January, 1895.—*The Daily Register, Mobile (Ala.)*.

This book has especial value for the reason that most of the detailed books on the subject have been written by Europeans, especially Frenchmen, and Dr. Coeke says that he has found hypnotism in this country very different from hypnotism in France.—*Springfield Republican (Mass.)*.

A most timely work on a subject that is just now of vital interest to the general public as well as to members of the legal and medical professions.

The opening chapters of the book describe minutely the methods of inducing hypnotism, the things which will prevent it, the effect of hypnotism upon the hearing and other special senses, and how to detect the attempted simulation of the hypnotic state.—*Rockland (Me.) Daily Star*.

Dr. Coeke is a careful, and certainly an honest, experimentalist. He ought to know something about this subject, for he says, "I have hypnotized about one thousand three hundred and fifty people. The greater part of these were Americans, some negroes, quite a number French, a few Germans, and a few of the northern races, such as Danes, Russians, etc."—*New York Herald*.

It is the remedial or saving use of hypnotism. In the doctor's hands, that seems to make it important. While taking a very conservative and moderate view of the uses of hypnotism as a remedial agent, Dr. Coeke relates some extraordinary cases in his practice, in which very serious and baffling disorders, which have defied the skill of the profession, have yielded to the restorative powers of hypnotism.

The book is full of interesting reading—*Hartford Times*.

So much has been written on the subject of hypnotism and other mental phenomena by ignorant and irresponsible book-makers and magazine writers that a clear and common sense-work upon the subject from an authoritative source may be regarded as a public boon.

In touching upon the dangers attending the practice of hypnotism, Dr. Coeke asserts his belief that the average individual in the hypnotic state cannot be made to commit crimes. Many of his experiments were made with a view to decide this question, and the result in every instance was to confirm him in the above opinion. "There is no immediate danger

of hypnotism in itself being used for the purpose of unduly influencing the mind," he remarks, and adds, "The real danger of hypnotism lies in the fact that owing to the mystery which surrounds it, it may, in the imaginative and enthusiastic, produce by its very mystery a disturbed condition of the mind, similar to religious monomania."—*Boston Transcript*.

"Hypnotism, its Uses and Dangers," by Dr. James R. Cocke, the most comprehensive work yet written, withal it discusses all theories in the light of the author's own wide experience and adds nothing which tests have not found to be true, treats of the efficacy of hypnotism in the cure of diseases and demonstrates that it may be made of practical value. In a long medical practice he has often found it applicable as an anæsthetic at once perfect and harmless.—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

The work may be considered authoritative in character, and it bears such marks of genuine sincerity that it is clearly entitled to respect. Moreover the style is direct and simple, and there are occasional touches which are quite graceful and poetic.

Chapter III treats of auto-hypnosis, and is very interesting.—*Standard Union, Brooklyn, N. Y.*

A very earnest and rational attempt to rob the phenomenon of hypnotism of that mysterious and mystical character with which it ordinarily is invested is made by Dr. James R. Cocke in his recent work "Hypnotism, How it is Done, Its Uses and Dangers."—*Boston Globe*.

Dr. Cocke believes that the susceptibility to hypnotism consists in what he terms "latent hysterical possibilities." He does not believe that his theory of latent hysteria will account for all the phenomena witnessed in hypnotized subjects. He says: "I affirm but little, doubt much, and deny absolutely nothing." There is a chapter which treats entirely on the subject of Telepathy. This chapter is clear and to the point.—*Louisville Courier Journal*

The demand for a popular exposition of hypnotism which will at the same time be scientifically accurate has been met by Dr. James R. Cocke, an eminent surgeon of Boston, in a volume entitled "Hypnotism, How it is Done, Its Uses and Dangers." While abstaining from technicalities that might puzzle the lay reader, the author treats the subject with precision, intending his work for professional readers also.—*New York Evening World*.

The great charm of the work is its simplicity and clearness. It is written so that the lay reader may gain the benefits of the author's undoubted peculiar genius and research, and from this fact its value to the world is many times multiplied.—*Boston Home Journal*.

"Hypnotism; How It is Done, Its Uses and Dangers," has explained exactly what constitutes this wonderful power, how it may be acquired, and the right kind of subjects on whom to use it. Dr. Cocke does not speak wholly from the standpoint of a medical man, although he believes hypnotism capable of an infinite variety of applications in his profession. But he also believes it to be as great a factor in sociology.—*Detroit Free Press*.

There are many curious facts in the book, the result of personal observation, upon the effects of hypnotism on inebriety, the morphine habit, nervous diseases, hallucinations, and many functional and some organic

diseases. The second part of the book is a theory and history of hypnotism.—*Baltimore Sun*.

It is worth careful study, for it deals with the matter in a conservative way by a man whose aim it is to "divest hypnotism of the supernatural, show how it is done, and to explain its rational basis."

There is an entertaining chapter on "Telepathy" and mind reading, and, in fact, many other facts and theories of more than ordinary value.—*Boston Traveller*.

Dr. James R. Coeke treats this interesting subject very fully. The work is probably the best on the subject that has appeared in the English language.—*Indianapolis Journal*.

As to dangers, Dr. Coeke does not believe that in ordinary application of hypnosis an individual is liable to permanently lose his power of self-control and of judgment. In dealing with the medico-legal side of the question, he states that a hypnotized subject will not ordinarily go beyond certain lengths in obeying criminal suggestions. One of the most interesting features of the volume is its treatment of hypnotism as a remedial agent.—*Boston Advertiser*.

This is by far the most complete and up-to-date popular work on hypnotism and kindred subjects that has yet been issued. It gives the results of the latest experiments and researches, and the matter is appropriately classified under different chapter headings.—*Rochester Democrat*.

Dr. Coeke's work is more valuable from the candid way in which he writes on the subject, honestly confessing his limitations on a subject as yet partially unexplained. He uses no mysteries and assumes no mystic powers, but tells all he has learned and all he has done in practical work along these lines, at no time pretending to "know it all."

He makes a step in the right direction when he names "latent hysteria" as the principle cause of hypnotic influence gaining a hold on a subject.

The book is to be commended for its frankness as well as for the knowledge of the subject evinced by the author.—*Boston Post*.

The description of methods of producing the hypnotic state is clear even to simplicity. In one chapter the "Dangers of Hypnotism" are set forth in a succinct manner. Dr. Coeke does not believe that in the ordinary application of hypnosis an individual is liable to permanently lose his power of self-control and of judgment.—*Elmira Telegram*.

In a thoroughly analytical book, written by a Boston man, Dr. James R. Coeke, on the subject of hypnotism, the author gives many instances of patients, treated by him, in which hypnotic influence was the principal adjunct to his efforts.—*Boston Journal*.

Price, Cloth, - - - = \$1.50.

THE ARENA PUBLISHING COMPANY,
PIERCE BUILDING,
COPLEY SQUARE, BOSTON.