

very desirable in all cases removed directly to the asylum. Recent cases before the courts seem to render this advantage of tangible value.

The law's uncertainty in this matter ought assuredly to be set at rest. This might be done by a case brought before a court of law; or the Commissioners in Lunacy, having their attention directed to such occurrences, might reject or confirm the procedure. Many such admissions have evidently occurred, and have been accepted as valid; so that the question may be asked whether these do not act as precedents confirmatory of the practice.

The Act, however, evidently intended, in the 13th clause, that there should be the safeguard of the double certificates in these cases, and it is to be regretted that this should be abrogated by a clause referring to another category of lunatics.

Hypnotism and Will-making.

The recent will case, in which the possibility of undue influence by means of hypnotism was raised, is concluded, and the questions in relation to this possibility can now be considered apart from any reference to that particular case.

These questions would appear to be (α) whether a will could be obtained in an hypnotic condition; (β) whether a suggestion made in an hypnotic state could lead to the subsequent execution of a will; and (γ) whether repeated hypnotism can induce in the person hypnotised a feeling towards the hypnotiser of fear or affection which could fairly be considered "undue influence."

That a person in the hypnotic state might be induced to sign a document purporting to be a will is probable, but that a lawyer, acting in good faith, would draw a will for a person in such a state is most improbable, and the same improbability applies to the second proposition of will-making by suggestion.

"Undue influence" may be exerted over weak-minded persons quite apart from hypnotism, but there can be no doubt that persons who have been frequently hypnotised by the same physician often conceive a great liking for, or have an excessive belief in the powers of, that physician. It is therefore much more probable that such a person would be more susceptible to "undue influence" on the part of the hypnotiser. This is probably a result of the mental deteriora-

tion which hypnotism produces, and which is so markedly seen in what a recent writer naively describes as "fully developed" cases of hysterical disorder—cases that have been habitually treated by hypnotism over considerable periods.

Hypnotism as a direct basis of "undue influence" is probably a very untenable allegation, and one which it would be difficult, or almost impossible, to conclusively establish, although the fact of its having been habitually used might be advanced in support of such a contention. In the case already alluded to there does not appear to have been any proof of the testator having been actually hypnotised, and the allegation consequently altogether failed.

English law regards with great suspicion all wills made in favour of priests or lawyers, and the French law forbids a doctor attending a testator during a last illness from becoming heir to the estate.

This question of "undue influence" is probably much more one of "undue susceptibility to influence" than judges are apt to consider.

When a testator has made a variety of wills, first bequeathing property to this person and then to another, there can be little doubt that the disposition of the property rests solely on the accident of the particular person who is most in evidence for a time preceding death, and it becomes a question whether the services rendered or the affection engendered during that time are really commensurate with the reward. Many aged testators would certainly will their property to any kindly person with whom they were more or less completely isolated, or on whom they were dependent for care and attention. Yet it is certainly often unjust that such a great reward should be given, to the exclusion of the claims of kinship and of long-standing affection, even if this has been latterly disturbed.

The ease with which dissension is sown between a wealthy testator and the natural heirs, by the designs of the would-be inheritors, is also too little appreciated; the facts of the dissension are patent, but the ways in which they have been brought about are not seen. These family quarrels are, it is to be feared, often allowed too much weight in the judicial decision.

Hypnotism, as a direct means of obtaining a duly drawn and attested will, must be regarded as almost an impossibility, but that habitual hypnotism might end in the establishment of "undue influence" must be conceded as a probability.

Medical men, whether hypnotists or not, who are aware that they are inheritors, however deservedly, from a patient would do well to remember the French law, and obtain the aid of a colleague during the final illness. In this way only can they avoid the suspicion which so readily attaches to such an inheritance.

Lead Poisoning.

The public attention has been of late very much directed to the subject of the ill effects resulting from lead intoxication in industrial workers brought into contact with this poisonous substance.

The injurious effects are much more numerous than even the most alarmist of these reports show; for beyond the striking and obvious cases recorded are many of more insidious nervous deterioration, besides the cases of abortion traceable to this cause, and the less frequent but undoubted occurrence of idiocy and imbecility in the offspring of lead-intoxicated parents.

That legislation safeguarding the use of this noxious substance may follow on this direction of popular attention is to be hoped, but these outbursts of interest in health subjects are, unfortunately, but too easily forgotten. It is the duty, however, of our profession to periodically stimulate the social memory, and we must endeavour not to neglect the performance of this function.

Hypnotism.

The section of Psychology at the British Medical Association meeting again discussed this subject, but apparently nothing novel of actual fact was adduced.

The bold attempt of Dr. Milne Bramwell to prove that there are no drawbacks to the therapeutic use of hypnotism is, however, a challenge which should be promptly met. Very many observers have seen cases in which hypnosis has been followed by very definite and distinctly evil results. Many instances of this kind have been recorded, and good service would be done by their collection and tabulation, as a check to future assertions of this kind.

Hypnotism is an abnormal state of the brain, and although it may result in apparent benefit to less highly developed portions of the organism, the question remains whether this