

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

benefit may not be too dearly purchased. Such conditions may be produced in a fairly healthy brain for a few times without any very tangible results, but in cases in which ill-health already exists there can be little doubt that very considerable harm may follow. Hysteria *plus* hypnotism, for example, probably develops into forms of complicated disorder which it very rarely reaches in cases uncomplicated by this form of treatment—a degree of disorder which a recent writer on this subject pithily described as “fully developed.”

Therapeusis admits the principle that a lower tissue may be sacrificed to save a higher. Thus the skin may be blistered for the advantage of an underlying organ, or the leg amputated to save life; but it is distinctly bad practice to harm the higher organ to release the lower, as it appears to us is the case in hypnotic treatment.

Mr. Myers' speculative theories are interesting, but give no ground for his conclusion that hypnotism develops organic concentration and recuperation. If this were true it would be obvious that the simplest way to promote human evolution would be to habitually hypnotise all humanity.

Pathologically hypnotism is related to somnambulism, hysteria, lata, and stupor, and is therefore worthy of the most careful scientific investigation. Hypotheses as to its nature may be useful, but should be carefully based on known facts, and not complicated by dialectical subtleties, such as the “subliminal consciousness.”

Therapeutically, hypnotism is related to the various varieties of faith-healing, the limitations of which are fairly well known and recognised. The assertion that it unlocks or re-develops some latent organic endowment is beyond possible proof, and is opposed to all evidence of organic evolution.

Hypnosis, from the point of view of our specialty, is a temporary disorder and weakening of the power of self-control, which by repetition must inevitably tend to be confirmed and increased. It is, indeed, a temporary shunting on one of those side-tracks of disordered mental function of which insanity is the terminus.

Priest and Physician.

In a recent number of the *Zeitschrift f. Psychiatrie* (published in May, 1898) Möbius devotes an article to the memory of Heinroth (dead now fifty-five years), who is chiefly famous for