

Before closing these few remarks it should not be forgotten to be stated that on two occasions, within the last ten or twelve years, the Irish Government had introduced a superannuation clause in Bills connected with the district lunatic asylums, which provided that after *fifteen* years' service three-fourths of salary and allowances might be granted in the event of infirmity, physical or mental, preventing the due discharge of the duties of the officials of those institutions, and the full salary and allowances after twenty years. This clause, be it remembered, was agreed to without any objection whatever at the time, but owing to other matters in the Bills in question being objectionable they were withdrawn. Subsequently a Bill was brought in by the late Sir R. Fergusson, Bart., M.P., in 1856, which confined itself to the above superannuation alone, and which passed through committee in the House of Commons without any opposition whatever; but at its *third* reading an entire change was made in it by substituting the provisions of the Civil Service Superannuation Act. At the time that was supposed to be a mere *ad interim* arrangement until the next session, that one being then just expiring; and for reasons best known to the late Sir R. Fergusson, the Bill was thus suddenly changed at the last moment, and so became an Act, and has so continued to the present time.

THE LATE DR. ELLIOTSON.

THE death of Dr. Elliotson forcibly recalls the stormy debates upon the subject of animal magnetism to which his advocacy of it gave rise so many years ago. The able and dispassionate review of his life in your issue of August 8, leaves little to be desired. At the same time there are one or two allusions and statements which we should like still further to confirm and somewhat amplify, although without any direct reference to the judicious remarks the writer makes.

Now that the struggle and the main cause of it have passed away, we are able to regard the combatants with the equanimity which distance from the conflict and the dulling influence of the lapse of time inspire. We have most carefully, and without bias, gone through the discussions which took place thirty years ago and subsequently, and placing side by side these and the standard works of the present day on physiology and psychology, we have endeavoured to answer the question, Who was right? Well, our conclusion is, the latter support the correctness of the opponents of Dr. Elliotson as to *theory*; while they support, *in the main*, the correctness of Dr. Elliotson as to *fact*. These works tell us that animal magnetism is a myth; but they also tell us that the facts which appeared to establish it are, for the most part, confirmed by subsequent observation, proving certain important and highly interesting physiological and psychological laws, quite independent of animal magnetism. Dr. Elliotson was wrong; his opponents were right. Dr. Elliotson was right; his opponents were wrong. And so, as in most fierce disputes, it turns out that "both were right, and both were wrong." Unacquainted, or at least unfamiliar, as we then were with the marvellous influence of expectant attention, suggestion, monotonous sounds and movements, excito-motor and ideo-motor acts, reflex action of the brain, &c., we may, perhaps be excused if we were too ready to explain all the phenomena of so-called animal magnetism by the easy solution of "it's all imposture." It is

certainly curious to look back now and read the unqualified denial by even eminent medical men of the genuineness of phenomena which no one now denies, but which our authorities explain on sound, although enlarged, physiological principles. Even in the case of the Okeys, which so naturally suggested imposture, we find two of the sturdiest opponents of animal magnetism (as such) stating some years after, that, in their opinion, the phenomena in question might fairly be attributed to other causes than intentional imposition. Professor Laycock, while regretting that Dr. Elliotson should have been deceived as to the character of the phenomena, adds, they "were undoubtedly not feigned;" and Mr. Braid shows that the psychology of hypnotism, while lending no sanction to, but disproving, animal magnetism, "readily accounts for the result of Mr. Wakley's experiments with the Okeys." Referring to the wonderful acuteness of smell in such cases, he adds—"May not this account for the fact of Dr. Elliotson's patient, Okey, discovering the peculiar odour of patients *in articulo mortis*?" Be this as it may, however, the action of the Hospital authorities in interfering with these misplaced exhibitions in the wards of the institution was manifestly a duty, and Dr. Elliotson's resignation was but one of several inconsiderate acts which arose from his fiery, impulsive nature. Indeed, his inability to brook the slightest opposition, whether from friend or foe, was, if we mistake not, his cardinal sin—the real cause of his fall. However much he may in some instances have been ill-treated by his professional brethren (and we do not deny that the shallow cry of imposture raised so indiscriminately against the phenomena of mesmerism was calculated to disgust and exasperate him), he undoubtedly condescended to retaliate in very unparliamentary language, and made the grand mistake of vituperating not only the class above referred to, but those who were disposed candidly to investigate the facts brought forward, but who could not adopt his explanations of them.

A few words on anæsthesia in connection with Dr. Elliotson and mesmerism. A passage written by Dr. Forbes in the *British and Foreign Review* on its employment in surgical operations is now of real historical interest, and the period which it marks ought not to be overlooked by any one who undertakes to write a complete history of anæsthetics. Four years before (in 1842) at a discussion of the Medico-Chirurgical Society on an operation performed without pain under the influence of mesmerism (so called), a distinguished member of the profession asserted that the fact was unworthy of the Society's consideration, because pain is a wise provision of nature, and patients are all the better for it, and recover better! In 1843 appeared Dr. Elliotson's well-known work, "Numerous Cases of Surgical Operations without Pain in the Mesmeric State." Then, after the lapse of a few years, a large number of capital operations in various countries (especially in India by Dr. Esdaile) having been painlessly performed, a considerable change of opinion evidently took place, and Dr. Forbes, in his *Review* for October, 1846, thus writes:—"Indeed, we hesitate not to assert that the testimony is now of so varied and extensive a kind, so strong, and, in a certain proportion of cases, so seemingly unexceptionable, as to authorise us—nay, in honesty, to compel us—to recommend that an immediate and complete trial of the practice be made in surgical cases." But scarcely had this number of the *Review* appeared when the first operation under the influence of ether was performed in America! This was on Oct. 16, and the news reaching England on Dec. 17, its discovery was announced in the *Medical Gazette* of the 18th, under the head of "Animal Magnetism Superseded," and on the following day Liston operated for the first time upon a patient under its influence. It was soon seen that many phenomena, such as partial consciousness, calling out as if in pain, sensitiveness to slight touch, were quite consistent with perfect anæsthesia, and were not, as many had supposed when they occurred in mesmeric patients, proofs of imposture. Here, then, Dr. Elliotson and his opponents were both right and wrong—he wrong in asserting that mesmerism would be the anæsthetic ultimately adopted by the profession, but right in his belief that operations had been painlessly performed under its influence. We can but smile now at the objection, already referred to, then raised against the prevention of pain; perhaps some would think we ought rather to blush that members of our profession should on

this ground have opposed Dr. Elliotson's attempt to introduce painless operations in surgery. Perhaps the prejudice was not more singular than that of the esteemed editor of *Chelius* against the employment of ether, who wrote, "I have considerable doubt of the propriety of putting a patient into so unnatural a condition as results from inhaling ether, which seems scarcely different from severe intoxication—a state in which no surgeon would be desirous of having a patient who was about to be submitted to a serious operation." (*South's Chelius*, 1847, vol. ii. p. 1009). Recurring, however, to the main phenomena of so-called animal magnetism—the coma, rigidity, &c.—we can now see clearly enough, after the investigations and sound physiological explanations of Mr. Braid, Professor Laycock, Dr. Carpenter, Sir H. Holland, Professor Bennett, and others, that they can all be produced by certain recognised methods, alike without imposture and without animal magnetism. Once again, true facts, but false theories. We now honour Dr. Carpenter and others who dared to look the facts in the face, and instead of denying them (so easy to the dogmatist) pressed them into the service of psychology and physiology. Gradual as was the admission and the reasonable explanation of the facts in dispute, they may be said to have been generally regarded in the light they now are by the year 1853, when Dr. Carpenter, in his "Human Physiology," thus pronounced his verdict:—

"It appears to the author that the time has now come when a tolerably definite opinion may be formed regarding a large number of the phenomena commonly included under the term 'mesmerism.' Notwithstanding the exposures of various pretenders which have taken place from time to time, there remains a considerable mass of phenomena which cannot be so readily disposed of, and which appear to him to have as just a title to the attention of the scientific physiologist as that which is possessed by any other class of well-ascertained facts." Dr. Carpenter then briefly enumerates "the principal phenomena which he regards as having been veritably presented in a sufficient number of instances to entitle them to be considered as genuine and regular manifestations of the peculiar bodily and mental condition under discussion:—1. A state of complete coma or perfect insensibility. . . . In this condition severe surgical operations may be performed without any consciousness on the part of the patient. 2. A state of somnambulism or sleep-waking, which may present all the varieties of natural somnambulism from a very limited awakening of the mental powers to the state of complete double consciousness, in which the individual manifests all the ordinary powers of his mind, but remembers nothing of what has passed when restored to his natural waking state . . . characterised by the facility with which the thoughts are directed into any channel which the observer may desire by the principle of 'suggestion.' 3. A frequent phenomenon of this condition, and one which has its parallel in natural somnambulism, is a remarkable exaltation of one or more of the senses, so that the individual becomes susceptible of influences which, in his natural condition, would not be in the least perceived. 4. The muscular system may also be excited to action in unusual modes and with unusual energy. Notwithstanding the fallacy of many of the cases of cataleptic rigidity which have been publicly exhibited, the author is satisfied, from investigations privately made, of the possibility of artificially inducing this condition." Lastly, Dr. Carpenter observes that, as regards the therapeutic influence of mesmerism, the same effects may be produced by other forms of artificial somnambulism (as Braidism) by simply fixing the attention upon the part, and, even in the waking state, by confident expectant attention.

Substitute, then, "Braidism" or "hypnotism" for mesmerism or animal magnetism, and we can look back on the phenomena so prominently brought into notice thirty years ago by Dr. Elliotson, and perceive that in the heat of controversy both of the contending parties made great mistakes, and that much time would have been saved had we at once, as a profession, fearlessly investigated the reputed facts, and separated the chaff from the grain, instead of adopting something of the tone of wholesale denunciation and contempt. Let the course pursued by a few of the ornaments of our profession, at a later period, be a lesson and a guide for us in the future.—*Medical Times and Gazette*, August 29.—D. H. T.