

Psychic Medicine

By Charles Whitebread*

Psychic, or mind, medicine is a general term applied to methods of treating disease through mental impressions. States of mind are induced, or mental qualities stimulated to such a degree as to modify physiological function, and through such modified function even to produce tissue change. Confidence, hope, faith are aroused, the imagination excited, the attention fixed by suggestion or individual effort, or certain peculiar mental conditions induced which are known by such names as mind healing, faith cure, hypnotism, etc.

These psychic conditions may be established by sensory impressions, as by music, visual objects to fix the attention, eyestrain to modify consciousness, by manipulation, by personal magnetism of the mind doctor or by mental effort on the part of the patient.

MUSIC

The use of instrumental music in the treatment of disease is of very ancient origin. David is said to have cured Saul of an attack of mania by playing on the harp in his presence:

"But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." Samuel, xvi 14-23.

Jean Battiste Porta, in the 16th century, advised that musical instruments be made of wood of medicinal plants, and affirmed that the music of these instruments would produce the medicinal effects of the plants.

In later times music was successfully used in the treatment of the delirium of fevers, the plague, gout, poisoned wounds, to mitigate the pain of surgical operations and especially in nervous affections such as hysteria and mania.

Music is beneficial in the management of the insane, and musical entertainments are frequent in modern institutions for their treatment.

ROYAL TOUCH

Royal Touch was a mode of mind healing which is said to have originated with an English king, Edward the Confessor, 1004-1066. It was practiced by succeeding kings and queens of England, with

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Fig. 1.—Egyptian Harp.

From a wall painting in a tomb at Thebes. This harp probably represents a larger and more elaborate form of the musical instrument used by David for the relief of Saul. Courtesy of U. S. National Museum.

occasional exceptions, down to Queen Anne, 1664-1714. A register of persons touched by King Charles II, from May 1662 to April 1682, gives the number at 92,107. Healing by touch was also practiced by French kings, and it is claimed by some French historians that the custom originated in France. Until the time of Henry VII no particular ceremonies attended the practice of healing by touch. This monarch established a special religious service to be employed at the healings, during which a piece of gold (touchpiece) was presented to the patient, to be worn as an amulet suspended from the neck.

The ceremony of touching for scrofula, or King's Evil, as practiced by Charles II, is described by Evelyn in his memoirs as follows:

"July 6, 1660. His majestie sitting under his state in ye banquetting house, the chirurgeons cause the sick to be brought, or led up to the throne, where they kneeling, ye king strokes their faces or cheeks with both his hands at once, at which time a chaplaine in his formalities says: 'He put his hands upon them and he healed them.' This is said to everyone in particular. When they have all been touched they come up againe in the same order, and the other chaplaine kneeling, and having angel gold strung on white ribbon on his arme, delivers them one by one to his majestie, who puts them about the necks of the touched as they passe, while the first chaplaine repeats, 'That is ye true light who came into ye world.' Then follows an epistle (as at first a gossell) with the liturgy, prayers for the sick; lastly ye blessing; and then the lord chamberlaine and comptroller of the household brings a basin, ewer and towell, for his majestie to wash."

It is claimed now that the cures effected by Royal Touch, which are so often cited as proof of the power



Fig. 2.—Royal Touch.

A model depicting the laying on of hands for the cure of scrofula, as practiced by European kings and queens. Courtesy of U. S. National Museum.

of faith over disease, or of mind over the body, were produced by very different causes. It is said that it was a part of the duty of the royal physicians and surgeons to select such patients afflicted with scrofula as evinced a tendency toward recovery, and that the touch of the king secured the patient from the mischievous importunities of ancient medical art, so that the efforts of nature to heal were left free and unhampered with the result that the cure of the disease was not retarded by the operation of adverse remedies.

LAYING ON OF HANDS

Valentine Greatrakes, an Irishman, attained great reputation about the middle of the 17th century by his marvelous cures of diseases by simply stroking with the hands. At first he confined his efforts to the cure of scrofula, or King's Evil; subsequently he treated patients with many other diseases, such as apoplexy, convulsions and palsy. In 1666, a physician of Oxford, had the following to say about Mr. Greatrakes' ability:

"I saw him stroke a man for a great and settled paine in his left shoulder, which rendered his arme uselesse: upon his stroking it the pain removed instantly into the end of the Musculus Deltodes: being stroked there, it returned to the shoulder again; thence (upon a second stroking) it flew to the elbow, thence to the wrist, thence to the shoulder again; and thence to the fingers: whence it went out upon his last stroking, so as that he moved his arme vigorously every way." From "The Miraculous Conformist," by Henry Stubbe, Physician.

METAL THERAPY

The curing of disease by the application of metallic substances to the surface of the body, is another method of therapy which falls under the head of mind medicine in most instances, appealing as it does to the credulity and imagination of the patient. It has been advocated from the time of the Middle Ages to the present, principally as a prophylactic and a remedy for distinctly nervous diseases.

A plate of copper, worn as a preventive of cholera and a remedy for facial neuralgia and other nervous



Fig. 3.—Valentine Greatrakes.

A psychic medicine practitioner of Affane, County of Waterford, Ireland, famous for curing by the stroke of his hands. (Published June 1, 1794, by I. Caulfield.) Courtesy of U. S. National Museum.

affections, was commonly used in Europe in the early part of the 19th century.

Many people in Germany in the first half of the 19th century wore a small tube of mercury suspended from the neck as a protection from the cholera. This practice had its origin in the immunity of workmen in quicksilver mines during an epidemic of cholera.

The alleged healing properties of an old horseshoe is another example of mind medicine. This was considered such a wonderful remedy for cramps, that it was customary to keep a horseshoe at the bedside where it could be reached in case of an attack. The healing effects attributed to the horseshoe were said to be due to a magnetic quality it had acquired by long beating upon stony roads and pavements.

The carrying of a partially consumed arc-light carbon as a preventive of rheumatism and neuralgia came into use about a half a century ago when the streets of cities were illuminated by such lights. The curative properties of the carbon were attributed to the electricity the wearer thought it contained.

The suspension of bags of camphor and asafoetida around the neck during epidemics, which most of us can remember as a common practice, is perhaps an outgrowth of metal therapy. The use of camphor and asafoetida bags in this manner is still practiced in some parts of the United States.

HYPNOTISM

Hypnotism, which is also known by the familiar names of trance, ecstasy, somnambulism and

animal magnetism, is an artificially produced or self-induced mental state, in which the mind becomes more or less passive, and both consciousness and will may be controlled or abolished by the influence of command or suggestion. The mental impressions made by the senses may be perverted, enfeebled or interrupted, muscular irritability greatly increased, and various and often remarkable nervous phenomena exhibited. As one of the magic arts it was practiced by the ancient Egyptians, Hindoos and Greeks; as a demoniacal possession, or a miraculous interposition of Divine Providence, it is familiar in the religious history of every nation and period of time.

An apparatus used for hypnotizing, a so-called mirror hypnotizer, consists of two wooden arms about 9 inches long, in each of which are set circular mirrors, seven on each side. The two arms are made to revolve in opposite directions by means of clock work. Many subjects, particularly those who have been hypnotized before, are susceptible to the dazzling effects of these revolving mirrors.

Another type of hypnotizer is a polished nickel-plated ball mounted on a lead wire, and attached to a headband. The lead wire is bent so that the ball is a little above the level of the eyes of the subject, and slightly within the natural focal distance. Staring at the ball creates eyestrain and fatigue of the ocular muscles, and produces the effect of hypnotism. The effect of this and other types of hypnotizers is usually intensified by "suggestion" on the part of the operator.

Still another device for producing hypnotism is a piece of faceted glass which is used in the same manner as the nickel-plated ball.

MESMERISM

Friederich Anton Mesmer, born in Weil, Germany, in 1733, gave the name to that form of psychic medi-

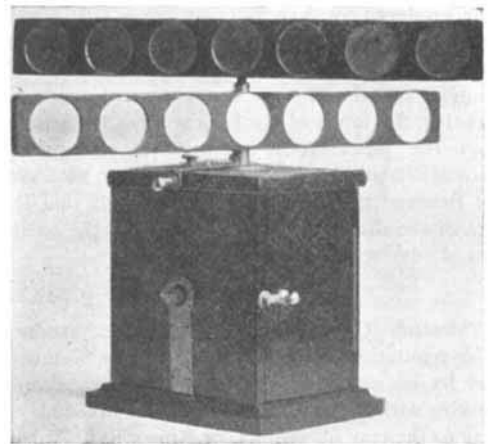


Fig. 4.—Mirror Hypnotizer.

An apparatus for hypnotizing. (Man and Abnormal Man, Arthur MacDonal, p. 189.) Courtesy of U. S. National Museum.

cine known as mesmerism. At first he effected cures by stroking the diseased parts of the body with magnets. Afterward, with the aid of the mysterious surroundings of the professed magician, he produced upon his patients the well-known nervous phenomena of hypnotism by a touch, by "passes" with his hands or even by a look. Though many of his methods were those of the charlatan, yet the effects produced were real, and were attributed by him to what he called animal magnetism, and not to any form of magic. The following gives an idea of Mesmer's method of conducting his seances:

"In these he appeared clad in a lilac suit, playing upon a harmonica, touching his patients with a wand, staring into their eyes, and attending them in a private chamber in case of a 'crisis.' A prominent feature of the mesmeric treatment was a number of so-called magnetic tubs, or *baquets*, containing a *mixtum compositum* of hydrogen sulphide and other ingredients, and provided with iron conductors from which depended a ring for purposes of contact with the patients, who stood around the tubs, joining hands." From Garrison's "History of Medicine," 2nd edition, pages 370-371.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

Christian Science, a form of religion introduced by Mary Baker Eddy in 1866, includes mental healing.

"The beginning of Mrs. Eddy's interest in religious or spiritual healing can be traced to an incident which occurred when she was 12 years old, . . . During a fever her mother commended prayer to God. Then as Mrs. Eddy has related, 'I prayed; and a soft glow of ineffable joy came over me. The fever was gone, and I rose and dressed myself, in a normal condition of health.'

"Mrs. Eddy regarded her discovery of Christian Science as resulting directly and immediately from an incident which occurred . . . in 1866. While returning from a meeting . . . she fell on an icy street and was injured severely. Carried to a nearby residence, she was attended by a physician and cared for during the night. The next day she was removed to her home, as a local newspaper reported at the time, 'in a very critical condition.' On the third day after this injury, having obtained little or no relief, Mrs. Eddy asked for her Bible, opened it so that she read an account of Christian healing (Matt. 9:2) and again experienced an immediate recovery." Encyclopædia Britannica, 14th Ed., pages 947-948.

Her followers attach much importance to the Christian Science method of healing because mankind is in great need of relief from disease; because healing results from the power of good over evil; and because it is, so they believe, the most effective means to that end.

AUTO-SUGGESTION

A French druggist, Emile Coue of Troyes, France, is responsible for the familiar formula for the cure of sickness, "Every day, and in every way, I am becoming better and better," which has since become proverbial. Coue studied and practiced hypnotic suggestion for many years. He observed the influence of suggestion in effecting cures when associated

with the use of drugs, the latter often quite weak in themselves. In 1910, at the age of fifty-three, Coue established a clinic in his home and gave his healing suggestions free to those who flocked to receive them. Coue depended entirely upon waking suggestion, which he called auto-suggestion. What he meant by auto-suggestion can be gleaned from his directions to a person suffering from pain:

"Therefore every time you have a pain, physical or otherwise, you will go quietly to your room—sit down and shut your eyes, pass your hand lightly across your forehead if it is mental distress, or upon the part that hurts, if it is pain in any part of the body, and repeat the words: 'It is going, it is going,' very rapidly, even at the risk of gabbling, it is of no importance. The essential idea is to say: 'It is going, it is going,' so quickly, that it is impossible for a thought of contrary nature to force itself between the words. We thus actually think it is going, and as all ideas that we fix upon the mind become a reality to us, the pain, physical or mental, vanishes. And should the pain return repeat the process 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 times, if necessary, for it is better to pass an entire day saying it is going! than to suffer pain and complain about it." Suggestion and Auto-suggestion, Coue, page 82.

PSYCHIC MEDICINE'S LIMITATIONS

There always has been and there always will be a need for psychic medicine, only a few examples of which have been mentioned. The important thing to realize is that this kind of medicine like all others has its limitations. We must not go to extremes in our faith in mind healing any more than we should in other things. There are times when psychic medicine is the best and most satisfactory medicine. We know, of course, that there are other times when only drugs will help, and still others when only a surgical operation will overcome the trouble.

MENTAL HEALTH

Physical health depends to a great extent upon mental health. Excessive anger, hatred, envy, jealousy, fear, revolt, malice and other mental conflicts if persisted in cause serious mental and physical trouble. With continuing wrong thoughts and emotions we cannot be well. Frequently people who are ill take remedy after remedy, all to no avail. The source of the trouble, wrong thinking, false beliefs, distorted imagination and misdirected emotion are not realized. Such diseases are not physical diseases although they may be accompanied by physical pain and may be manifested by sleeplessness, nervousness, indigestion and other physical symptoms. For centuries before the words psychology and psychiatry had come into the common use of the present time, religion, philosophy and the types of mind medicine described have helped the human race to maintain health and mental poise.

All through the ages pharmacists have daily practiced psychic medicine when, by their patient, thoughtful and serious answering of questions, they have assisted in keeping hope alive in the sick often after other means of helping them have been

exhausted. There is still a great need for psychic medicine, and those who select any branch of the

healing art as a calling will do well to maintain a tolerant attitude toward this type of medication.

Book Reviews

Practice of Allergy, by WARREN T. VAUGHAN, M.D. Price, \$11.50, pages 1082, with 338 illustrations. St. Louis: C. V. Mosby Company, 1939.

This is the newest and most complete book on the subject of allergy. It contains 80 chapters dealing thoroughly with every phase of the subject. Take, for instance, the chapter on diagnosis which is typical of the thoroughness of which each phase of the subject is handled. In this chapter, history taking, testing and evaluation of findings are discussed. Detailed directions are given for carrying out all of the different techniques of testing including the less frequently used diagnostic procedures such as passive transfer, mucous membrane tests, patch tests, leucopenic index, elimination diets and the examination of nasal secretions. The botanical aspects of allergy are unusually well covered. The author has gathered and condensed all existing contributions to this field and has included atmospheric studies up to and including 1938. There are more than 100 photographs of plants, in addition to regional maps, charts and photomicrographs of pollen. There are four chapters on fungi and these are likewise well illustrated. Food allergy is given 138 pages and space is also given to drug, entomogenous, contact and physical allergies. The discussion of the therapy of allergies deals with all of the methods in use and summarizes the procedures used in allergic clinics throughout the country. The last section of the book is devoted to a systematic discussion of the major and minor allergic diseases—asthma, hay fever, migraine, dermatitis, urticaria, gastro-intestinal allergy, epilepsy, arthritis, otologic and ocular symptoms, etc. The pathology, diagnosis, prognosis and such forms of therapy as have not been touched upon in the other chapters are also presented. The closing chapters are a plea for the compilation of continuous life records of all persons, but particularly the allergies.—A. G. D.

The Tools of The Chemist. Their Ancestry and American Evolution, by ERNEST CHILD. 220 pages, 105 illustrations. Reinhold Publishing Corp., 330 West 42nd St., New York, N. Y., 1940. Price \$3.50.

This book has to do with the evolution of American chemistry in general and the tools used by the chemist. It represents a thorough documentary research on these subjects. The author has given a brief and interesting summary of the European background of American chemistry and has traced the early history of chemistry in this country. He has also reviewed the evolution of the apparatus

and instruments used by chemists during this period.

Part I deals with the pioneers and events in American chemistry. Among the persons mentioned are John Winthrop, Benjamin Rush, Joseph Priestley, Benjamin Silliman and Robere Hare.

Part II deals with the ancestry and development of chemical laboratory apparatus in America. It describes briefly the evolution of the balance, the history of the manufacture of glassware and porcelain, heating apparatus, metal appliances and optical instruments.

Part III deals with early American distributors of chemical laboratory apparatus.

The book is well illustrated, there is a good index and it will be found to be of interest to pharmacists as well as chemists.—A. G. D.

Hydrocarbon Chemistry. Reprinted from Transactions of the Faraday Society, 28, Part 8 (1939), 286 pages (806 to 1092). GURNEY & JACKSON, 98 Great Russell St., London, England. Price, 12s, 6d.

Hydrocarbon chemistry is considered under four main subdivisions. Part I deals with the homogeneous thermal reaction of hydrocarbons. The structure and energies of hydrocarbons are discussed. Several papers are presented on the mechanism of hydrocarbon reactions, particularly from the standpoint of Rice's free radical theory. In Part II, certain catalytic reactions are discussed. Part III deals with the mechanism of technical synthesis and the transformation of hydrocarbons. Papers on the catalytic high-pressure hydrogenation of carbonaceous material and the cyclization of aliphatic hydrocarbons are included. Part IV deals with the polymerization of olefins—dimerization, medium molecular weight polymers and high molecular weight polymers. The book is a notable contribution to our knowledge of hydrocarbons and should prove of interest to all organic chemists.—A. G. D.

Micro-Diffusion Analysis and Volumetric Error, by EDWARD J. CONWAY. 306 pages. Crosby Lockwood & Son, Ltd., London, England, 1939. Price, 25s.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part describes the apparatus and principles of diffusion analysis, and includes a discussion of the factors governing the rate and degree of quantitative transfer of the volatile substances, also a description of the pipettes and burettes used in microvolumetric analysis. The second part gives the directions for carrying out specific determinations, by the use of the micro-diffusion apparatus. The third part is a discussion of error in micro- and