



# M E S M E R I S M

By

**DOCTOR MESMER**

(1779)

*Being the first translation of mesmer's  
historic Mémoire sur la découverte  
du Magnétisme Animal to appear in  
English*

By

**GILBERT FRANKAU**

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Dr Mesmer	<i>Frontispiece</i>
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# INTRODUCTORY MONOGRAPH

By Gilbert Frankau

DURING a visit to London's famous "mental institution", Camberwell House, at the invitation of its medical superintendent, that distinguished bibliophile the late Dr Hubert J. Norman, I obtained on loan from his private library an original edition of Mesmer's *Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme Animal*, printed at Geneva in 1779 and published in Paris by the Dauphin's Libraire-Imprimeur, P.Fr.Didot le jeune. The prolonged researches undertaken for a mere tale, *Michael's Wife*, enabling me to realize my find's medico-historical importance, I communicated with the British Museum; and discovered that it had never been translated into English.

Tempted by a layman's vanity to undertake the translation myself, I eventually decided that the task could only be accomplished by an expert; and was fortunate enough to secure the services of Captain V. R. Myers of the Berlitz School of Languages. His rendering of the eighteenth-century French – written by a German-thinking Austrian, and possibly amended by a Swiss proofreader – is all the more praiseworthy when one considers how rapidly the commonest words change their meaning. A simple example of this is our English adjective "dumb", now generally understood to convey stupidity rather than muteness; for a more complex one, see Captain Myer's footnote on p.50.

Yet the adjective "mesmeric", the substantive "mesmerism" and the verb to "mesmerize" have not changed their meanings since they first became current – posterity's unique tribute to a unique man.

That man, Franz Anton Mesmer, was born in the little Austrian village of Iznang, Lake Constance, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1734. To realise his significance in medical history, it is pertinent to remember that the last European neuropath to suffer death for witchcraft had been burned at the stake in Leith, Scotland, only twelve years previously, and that the Abbe Fiard, writing nearly a century later, bracketed Mesmer with Cagliostro as a Satanist. Of such stuff can contemporary opinions be made!

Mesmer's father held a good position, head of the woods and forests department, under the local archbishop. Professor O. E. Deutsch, to whom I am indebted for much information and the loan of Dr Fritz Schürer-Waldheim's rare and invaluable life of Mesmer, privately published in Vienna (1930), notes a brother, Johann, who became a priest. The other children were girls.

Mesmer, also intended for the priesthood, went to a monks' school, apparently till he was fifteen; thence to the Jesuit University at Dillingen in Bavaria; and from there to Ingoldstadt University, where he finally decided that the Church was not for him. "At what university he obtained his degree in philosophy", Schürer-Waldheim tells us, "is not known". In 1759 he arrived at the University of Vienna as a law student; but soon abandoned the law for medicine, passing his final on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1765, three months after the death of the Queen Empress Maria Theresa's prolific husband Francis, among whose sixteen children was Marie Antoinette.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1766, just turned thirty-two, Mesmer publicly read the paper *Disputatio de Planetarum Influxu* ("concerning the influence of the planets") for which the faculty awarded him his diploma and which he refers to in this *mémoire*, hereinafter called "The Dissertation", that being the correct translation of the word. The paper, to whose title he subsequently added the words *in corpus bumanum*,

(“on the human body”), contains the germ of his famous Twenty-Seven Propositions, also recorded in the Dissertation, about animal magnetism.

That these Propositions, however fallacious, foreshadowed some of our present-day knowledge about the afferent and efferent elements in the nervous system seems to me a possibility. Indubitable, however, is the fact that they led up, through “somnambulism”, as it was originally called, to hypnotism, a word coined by the Scottish doctor James Braid in the eighteen-forties. This fact, I claim, entitles Mesmer to be regarded as the father of modern psychotherapy. Because not only was James Braid the first medical man to formulate the concept of “double consciousness”, but because it was only after hearing Velpeau read a paper on “Braidism” that Ambroise-Auguste Liébault decided to found his clinic at Nancy – from which, through Liébault’s brilliant pupil Bernheim and the coincidental work of the misguided pathologist Charcot at the Salpêtrière, it is the shortest step in medical history to “the Breuer experiment” under hypnosis, starting-point of the entire concept that still dominates psychotherapy, Freud’s.

Present-day spiritualism, also, owes some debt – in so far as it is based on the evidence of mediums – to Mesmer. And so does the Church of Christ Scientist, which was not founded by Mary Baker Eddy until after her treatment at the hands of Phineas Parkhurst Quinby at Boston, Massachusetts, in 1875.

I trust that Christian Scientists will not find this last claim objectionable, or imagine that I give complete credence to the late Stefan Zweig, who alleges in his *Mental Healers* (1932) that the first edition of Mrs Eddy’s *Science and Health* was largely a panegyric on Quinby although she subsequently enrolled a guard of virgins to protect her from the malign influence of animal magnetism. That Zweig was apt to let imagination embroider truth is proved by another

passage in the same book which gives currency, almost at novelistic length, to the legend that Mesmer owed his original inspiration to the Jesuit Father Hell – a legend flatly disputed, as you will read, in what follows. That Mrs Eddy, nevertheless, was treated, shortly before her restoration to complete physical health, by Quinby, and that Quinby was an avowed practitioner of animal magnetism, are facts.

How much the author of this Dissertation owed to the iconoclast Paracelsus (1493-1541), first medical man to consider the esoteric properties which might be inherent in the magnet, and van Helmont (1577-1644) – if he was influenced by Malebranche, with whose *Communication des Imaginations fortes* he is alleged to have been familiar – whether or no he had heard tell of the “Stroking Doctor”, Valentine Greatrakes, born at Affane, Ireland, in 1628, and performer of many “miraculous” cures in the London of the Restoration, are interesting speculations raised by the perusal of Margaret Goldsmith’s *Mesmer, The History of an Idea* (1935),<sup>1</sup> a book to which I acknowledge my indebtedness, trusting, nevertheless, that its author will eventually correct one of its blemishes – the currency she also gives to the legend of Father Hell.

All such speculations, however, are beyond my thesis ; and I leave it to the reader to decide how far Mesmer’s marriage to the rich and “nobly born” widow, Maria Anna von Posch (also spelled Bosch), which took place some two years after he received his diploma, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 1768, thus freeing him from material cares and giving him the entrée to the best social circles in Vienna (the von Stoerck referred to in the Dissertation was one of those who signed the wedding register), can be taken as evidence that, however fanciful

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<sup>1</sup> As far as I can discover Margaret Goldsmith’s book was the only one entirely devoted to Mesmer written in our language until the publication of Nora Wydenbruck’s *Doctor Mesmer* in 1947. A curious sidelight on our insularity!

his Propositions, he was an absolutely honest clinician, in whose case histories we are bound to believe.

Such evidence, of course, is at best only circumstantial. Had we no more, except the man's own words, to substantiate his contention that he both could and did effect permanent cures of nervous diseases (Margaret Goldsmith says he did not claim to cure any others) it would be difficult to dismiss the charge, so constantly levelled against him, of charlatanism. But, from the day he began his treatments to the day he retired into exile, independent witnesses, both lay and professional, to his success were legion – including Wolfgang Mozart, who writes from Vienna on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1780 about that very same “young lady aged twenty-nine named Oesterline” (factually Fräulein Franziska von Oesterling) with whose case history the factual part of the Dissertation opens:

“I write this – where? – in Mesmer's garden on Landstrasse – the gracious old lady” (Mrs Mesmer was only ten years older than her husband, then forty-six!) “is not at home – but the former Fräulein Franzl, nowadays Mrs von Bosch” (she had married Mesmer's stepson) “is – she has bidden and is actually still bidding me to send you and my sister a thousand respects – listen, on my honour I hardly recognised her she is so large and so fat – she has three children – two girls and a boy – the eldest girl is called Nannerl, four years old and one would swear she was six – the boy's three and one would swear he was seven – and one would certainly take her three-quarter-year-old baby for two – they're all growing up so healthy and strong”.

Admittedly the young Mozart was under an obligation to Mesmer – a staunch friend of his father Leopold, an acquaintance of Glück and Hadyn, and something of a virtuoso on the musical glasses, or glass-harmonica, which two Englishwomen named Davis first demonstrated in Vienna.

Despite the fact stressed by Alfred Loewenberg in his learned article on *Bastien et Bastienne* in *Music and Letters* (July 1944) that we have no first-hand account of it, there must be some foundation for the report that the original performance of that work, Mozart's first effort in opera, took place in the then fashionable doctor's Viennese garden-theatre in 1768. But however great the obligation, even if the story that Mesmer commissioned *Bastien et Bastienne* be true, how can one conceive that the composer of *Così fan Tutte*, in which Mesmer finds honourable mention – though the “magnetisation” back to life of the two pseudo-suicides pokes gentle fun at his theories – would have attempted to pay off a twelve-year-old indebtedness by penning a deliberate lie to his own father? The mere idea is exploded by a sentence in an earlier letter, dated the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1773, “Fräul. Franzl has again been on the point of death”.

The testimony, moreover (printed as a footnote trailing over many pages in its original edition, which I have transferred to an appendix), written by the father of that other even more famous patient whose case history this Dissertation records at length, Miss Paradis, seems to me even more confirmatory of Mesmer's abilities as a psychotherapist than Mozart's letters. Nor am I much impressed by the fact that this patient was eventually brought *blind* to Paris as a living confutation of Mesmer's claim to have cured her. Because it appears obvious, by the light of modern knowledge, that the girl-pianist and singer was not suffering from a “perfect amaurosis” (loss of power in the optic nerve) but from what is now known as psychogenic amblyopia (blindness dictated by the unconscious) – and both her pension and her publicity depended on her inability to see.

Even more obvious, by the same light, appears the fact that the “imperfect amaurosis, accompanied by paralysis of the limbs which was afflicting Mr d'Oesterwald” must have been psychogenic rather than biogenic – as indeed whole “Collection of Cures effected by Magnetism” referred to in

Mesmer's, footnote on p. 44.

Unfortunately neither that Collection nor the letter of the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1775 (addressed to Dr J. C. Inzer of Altona), to which the Dissertation makes several allusions, are available to me for evidence of my contention that its author was no charlatan. But further proof that he sincerely believed his own Propositions to constitute scientific truth is afforded by his reference to the famous exorcist Johann Gassner, "an ecclesiastic, a man of good faith but excessive zeal", as "nothing but a tool of Nature" which you will find on P. 43.

While for complete proof the discoverer of animal magnetism did cure what is now known by the misbegotten word psychoneurosis, compound of the presumably immortal psyche and the admittedly mortal neuron, I refer you to the anonymous patient (p. 52), "aged forty", who suffered from a "a general paralysis" which produced "every appearance of old age and drunkenness". For, thanks to the researches of another of Mesmer's English biographers, R. B. Ince (who, most unfortunately in my opinion, entitles his book *Three Occultists*), I am enabled to quote the publicly sworn statement of that particular patient, Charles du Hussay, Major of Infantry and Knight of the Royal Military Order of Saint Louis (a shellshocked officer of Lafayette's American Expeditionary Force?), which reads in effect:

"After four years of useless experiments by other doctors I consulted Mesmer. My head was constantly shaking and my neck bent forward. My eyes protruded and were greatly inflamed. My tongue was almost paralysed. I could only speak with difficulty. I laughed, involuntarily, for no reason. My cheeks and nose were reddish purple and my breathing difficult. I suffered from a pain between my shoulders and constant tremors. I staggered when I walked".

Having sworn to these symptoms, du Hussay details the mesmeric crises, “ice coming from my limbs, followed by great heat and foetid perspiration”, several of which seem to have occurred during the first month of his treatment, and concludes his statement, “Now, after four months I am completely cured”.

Again I am willing to make an admission. The cure may not have been permanent. I submit, however, that this extant evidence proves that Mesmer must have had no mean abilities as a psychotherapist. And the evidence seems all the more incontrovertible, because it is so curiously supported by the experiences of the many medieval exorcists who observed and recorded the same symptom of “foetid perspiration” after a successful “casting out” of the devil. Equally incontrovertible, nevertheless, is the fact that Mesmer remained in complete ignorance of the main source of his abilities – almost certainly some form of pre- or post-hypnotic suggestion – throughout a career whose first apotheosis synchronised with the appearance of the Dissertation, which was put on sale in Paris five years after Louis XVI succeeded Louis XV, one year after the death of Voltaire and the neurotic Rousseau, and ten before the pusillanimous surrender of the Bastille.

I have stressed the historical background because it is important to realise that the Paris in which Mesmer took refuge from the setback he admits himself to have suffered in Vienna, though still the scientific centre of Europe, was already in an intellectual ferment, a perfect seedbed, therefore, for the implantation of a new medical idea. That strange sect, the Illuminati, founded by Adam Weishaupt and his colleagues in 1777, had begun operating there; and it is possible, though not provable, that Mesmer’s most prominent supporter, Dr Charles d’Eslon, physician to the Count d’Artois, the king’s youngest brother – destined to become

## THE FAMOUS BAQUET

Charles X of France, abdicate to Holyrood and die in Austria – was one of the “illuminated”. But that again is speculation, and beyond my thesis.

Factually, thanks to various other treatments no less successful than du Hussay’s, to d’Eslon and a few more influential supporters whose belief in animal magnetism was as absolute as his own, Mesmer soon became the rage of Paris and the clinic he established in the Place Vendôme a centre of fashion, not have patronised which – no matter whether you were suffering from nerves, gout, ennui or mere curiosity – was to argue yourself unknown.

Chief and most discussed feature of this lavishly furnished, gorgeously curtained and carpeted clinic – very first for the practice of group therapy and mass hypnotism? – where Mesmer, armed with a wand, officiated in “anti-magnetic” clothes to the strains of music, was the celebrated “baquet”, a large vat filled with water and magnetic material such as iron filings. From this projected metal bars, which the patients, who also held one another’s hands as at tableturning séances,<sup>1</sup> grasped during treatment.

The baquet – Margaret Goldsmith states – had been used by Mesmer, along with “magnetised” trees, ponds, etc., since 1775. It seems to have been regarded by the ignorant as a source of electrical energy. The Dissertation, however, state categorically: “The desire to refute such errors once and for all, and to do justice to truth, determined me to make no further use of electricity or the magnet from 1776 onwards”; and it is obvious that Mesmer himself believed the baquet to be some kind of storage tank, as laid down in Proposition Seventeen, “This magnetic property may be stored up, concentrated and transported”.

His employment of mirrors, with which the clinic was also lavishly provided, and of music, are explained by Proposition

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<sup>1</sup> Table-turning was “discovered” and became the rage of Paris in the early 1850’s.

Fifteen, “It is intensified and reflected by mirrors, just like light”, and Proposition Sixteen, “It is communicated, propagated and intensified by sound”.

And here, since I am dealing with the theoretical basis of Mesmer’s activities, I cannot refrain from alluding to a little-known tale by Ruyard Kipling, which will be found in his ultimate volume of short stories, *Limits and Renewals*, under the title *Unprofessional*, and the verses which follow. The chances are that Kipling, an omnivorous reader, was familiar with the Propositions. If not – for they form the very plinth of the tale – the coincidence is one of the most remarkable in the whole history of human imagination.

The furore created by the Mesmer’s clinic, at which d’Eslon was also working, may – as some authorities allege – have led to the immediate foundation of the Society of Harmony, pledged to the propagation of his principles. The point, however, is extremely dubious. That rare book printed from copper plates, *Théorie du Monde et de Êtres organisés selon les principes de M ...* which Maggs of Berkeley Square priced at fifty guineas in 1932, and of which I was recently shown a copy by Goldschmidt of Bond Street, was not published until 1784, and is totally incomprehensible without the separate key-page to the secret cyphers used for all important words. This proceeding seems to me far more in accord with the tenets of the Society than with the publicity campaign between 1779 and 1781.

That same year, 1781, Mesmer removed himself, with a handful of patients, to Spa, which was then under Austrian suzerainty. Subsequently, he and d’Eslon quarrelled.

A. V. Arnault’s *Biographie Nouvelle des Contemporains*, published in 1824, which treats Mesmer throughout as a charlatan, alleges (1) that d’Eslon claimed nearly the whole credit for the cures, and (2) that Mesmer’s action was taken in order to extort money from the government. The first

statement is obviously suspect – d’Eslon was certainly loyal, and Mesmer tetchy. (One cannot help being reminded of a slightly similar situation which arose between Freud and Jung.) The second statement is a downright lie.

What actually happened – my authority is Schürer-Waldheim, who gives chapter and verse for all his statements – appears to have been this:

Between them, Mesmer and d’Eslon had roused the opposition of the entire medical faculty. In vain d’Eslon – under the threat that his name would be “erased from the register” unless he forswore the mesmeric doctrine – appealed to the King’s physician, Dr de Lassonne. Whereupon, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1781, the enraged Mesmer informed his patients that he intended to leave Paris; one of them, the Duchess of Chaulnes, carried the news to Marie Antoinette, and her Master of the Household (*Hausminister*) called on Mesmer to find out on what “conditions” he would remain.

Mesmer’s first demand was for “recognition”. That refused, no cash offer – Arnault says he was bid 20,000 livres<sup>1</sup> down and 10,000 annually to found a school of animal magnetism – could tempt him to stay.

He left France where he had been making a mint of money (in his own words “a stream of silver”) immediately; and did not return as a permanent resident for three years. In the meantime his wife, an extravagant woman whom he was never to see again – she died in 1790 – had dissipated most of her fortune.

These facts, I maintain, are more proofs of his intrinsic honesty. That he was both a disgruntled, and a thoroughly misled scientist, is beside the argument maintained by me.

Abandoned by his master, deprived of his professorship for refusing to renounce his beliefs, d’Eslon continued the fight in Paris. As a mere general practitioner he established

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<sup>1</sup> The word *livre* is misleading. It means a franc (at the franc’s then value) and should be so understood throughout.

another clinic. A year later, having affected various cures, he asked the faculty for a committee of investigation. Hearing of this in Spa, Mesmer wrote a furious protest to the faculty: d'Eslon, a mere pupil, had neither the right nor the knowledge to testify the truth about animal magnetism.

But by then the fight had become a pitched battle; and on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 1784 Louis XVI convened a body of nine commissioners under the presidency of Benjamin Franklin, newly accredited ambassador of the United States of America whose independence had just been recognised by Great Britain, which included Jean Sylvain Bailly, the most distinguished astronomer of his day, Lavater, the scientist, and Doctor Guillotin, inventor and subsequent victim of the humane killer that still bears his name. The Royal Society of Medicine protesting that it was not represented, four more commissioners, making thirteen in all, were added to the original number. Among these four was Antoine Laurent de Jussieu, doctor and botanist, whose great book on plants, published five years later, is still the basis of their classification.

Despite another protest from Mesmer, written personally to Benjamin Franklin, the commissioners decided that an investigation of d'Eslon's clinic and patients would suffice their purpose ; and their subsequent report on d'Eslon's method of treatment, its successes and its failures, is such a model of objective clarity that one cannot help marvelling why only de Jussieu dissented from the verdict of the majority, "The imagination does everything, the magnetism nothing",<sup>1</sup> until one remembers Charcot's childish dictum, uttered a whole century later, "It is faith which cures" ... and that, as lately as 1922, our own War Office's Committee of Enquiry into Shellshock dismissed Freud's entire teaching as contemptuously as its civilian successor of 1939, on one of whose secret findings the Ministry of Pensions still relies for its systematic refusal of all pensions for nervous disabilities,

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<sup>1</sup> "Touch" and "imitation" were also given as causes of the phenomena.

though thousands of such decisions have already been reversed on appeal.

From the verdict of Louis XVI's commissioners, needless to say, of which 20,000 copies were instantly published, there was no legal appeal; and a personal petition by Mesmer to the King's Parliament did not even receive an acknowledgement. Seventeen of d'Eslon's twenty-one medical assistants, hauled before the faculty, renounced magnetism rather than lose their titles of doctor. But d'Eslon himself remained loyal; and round him gathered a phalanx of enthusiasts, Thomas Onglée, Louis Varnier, Baptiste Bonnefroy, Hervier of the Sorbonne, whom Mesmer had cured of a serious illness, Galart de Montjoye of Philadelphia, Orelut, Kornmann, the banker, and the fiery lawyer from Lyons, Nicholas Bergasse. Thanks largely to Bergasse's efforts Mesmer, backed by the Society of Harmony, returned to Paris for his second apotheosis in that same year 1784.

The original members of this Society, mostly laymen, numbered forty-eight, each of whom subscribed 100 Louis d'or<sup>1</sup>. What its funds eventually welled to is conjectural. Schürer-Waldheim mentions one sum of half a million franc refused by Mesmer for a lecture tour in the provinces, and devoted, at his wish, to the establishment of magnetic clinics throughout France. The *Nouvelle Biographie's* estimate is 340,000 francs; and the same figure is given in Lewis Spence's *Encyclopaedia of Occultism* from which I have also borrowed my modicum. The pecuniary point, however – even if Mesmer's contention, made when he was nearly eighty, that the French Revolution cost him 400,000 livres be more than a senile boast – is immaterial to the main argument of this thesis ; and his personal story from 1789 onwards can be told in the fewest words.

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<sup>1</sup> One louis d'or = 24 livres or francs.

From France, in that year, he fled to Baden; from Baden to Karlsruhe; and thence to Vienna, where the murdered Marie Antoinette's brother, Joseph II, is said to have taken the precaution of locking him up for two months as a suspected revolutionary. In 1798 he ventured back to Paris. The extant identity card describes him as, "64 years old. Height 1 metre 76 centimetres." (5 ft. 10 ½ in.) "Hair and eyebrows, brown. Eyes ditto. Chin – double. Face – round. Forehead – high. Nose and mouth – medium". After nearly three years in Paris he moved out to Versailles and entered into negotiations with the Directory; eventually securing, after five more years which seem to have been spent in Switzerland, a small annuity (3,000 florins)<sup>1</sup> as compensation for 500,000 francs-worth of pre-revolutionary Government bonds.

1803 finds him back in Switzerland, at Frauenfeld, south of Lake Constance. To write of him as a "forgotten man" may be a slight exaggeration. He still receives an occasional letter from old French colleagues, an occasional visit from some curious Swiss or German doctor. For animal magnetism is being more and more practised, especially – thanks largely to Lavater – in the various states of Germany. But his original doctrine, Mesmer holds – never did a stumbler towards scientific truth cling more obstinately to an unscientific premise – has been perverted; and the end of 1811 finds him refusing an invitation from Professor Reil, head of the Prussian Faculty of Medicine, to demonstrate his methods in Berlin.

Not until January 1812 does he receive his first letter from Reil's duly authorised representative, Doctor Karl Christian Wolfart, whose friendship and enthusiasm not only irradiated the last three years of his life but ensured the publication of his *System der Wechselwirkungen*. That book – compiled from a mass of notes, half in French and half in German, edited and published by Wolfart – sums up the whole doctrine of animal magnetism as preached by Mesmer. It appeared

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<sup>1</sup> The florin or Dutch guilder (value 2/-) was an international currency.

towards the end of 1814. A few months later, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1815, he died.

Mesmer died at Meersburg on the north shore of that lake in which he must have swum when a boy, having moved to a house in the Vorburg Gasse from his summer chalet at Riedetsweiler, a village nearby; and his young friend Justinus Kerner, thanks to whose book, published in Frankfurt on the Main in 1856, we know so much about his last years, tells us that he died smiling, a strange thing.

Strange, too, is the tale of the magnetisable canary which would fly from its cage, always open, and perch on his head to sing him awake every morning; perch on the sugar basin while he ate his breakfast and anticipate his need by pecking extra lumps into his coffee cup. For the end of that tale, as Kerner relates it, runs: “Next morning Mesmer lay as though he were still alive, but never again did the canarybird fly on to his head to wake him. It ate no more and sang no more and soon it was found dead in its cage”.

Far stranger, however, to me at any rate, is the impression I have gathered that, when it came to clinical treatment, the discoverer of animal magnetism pinned his whole faith to the therapeutic value of the mesmeric “crisis”, as exemplified by the case of du Hussay, setting little or no value on the mesmeric “trance”.

This impression may be erroneous. Schürer-Waldheim does not seem to agree with it. He admits, however, that Lavater’s conversion to animal magnetism was largely due to experiments of a hypnotic nature carried out on his own wife; and lists among his many sources of information the Marquis Chastenet de Puysegur’s – though he does not, in my opinion, give its author enough credit for his services to science – *Researches, experiences and physiological observations on man in the state of natural somnambulism and of somnambulism provoked by the magnetic act.*

Both the Marquis and his brother Count Maximus de

Puységur had been members of the Society of Harmony. Starting in 1784, both carried on their clinical activities – one is tempted to draw a parallel with Pavlov continuing his investigation of the conditioned reflex during the Russian Terror – throughout the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. But with the publication in the year 1811 of the former’s book – chronicle of his experiments on simple peasantfolk, mainly women, conducted round an allegedly magnetised tree in his château near Soissons – the spade work, if I may be permitted that expression, done by the Society came to an end; the mesmeric crisis was as good as forgotten, and the mesmeric trance focused every investigator’s attention.

Held, not altogether erroneously, to be a form of sleepwalking, the trance retained its name Somnambulism until the publication of Braid’s *Neuhypnology or the Rationale of Nervous Sleep considered in relation with Animal Magnetism* re-christened it Hypnotism shortly after 1843.

Meanwhile, as early as 1819, only four years after his death, a Portuguese abbot, José Custodio de Faria, had elaborated Mesmer’s theory of a *rapport* between the somnambulist and the somnambulist (note the similarity with Freud); a bare two years later the French surgeon, Doctor Recamier, is alleged to have performed the first operation on a “tranced” patient;<sup>1</sup> Alexandre Bertrand, who died untimely, was gathering material for his *Traité du Somnambulisme*, which appeared in 1823; and a certain Baron d’Hénin, to whose forgotten works the *Nouvelle Biographie* makes the most enthusiastic reference, branded Mesmer, the Puységurs, Johann Gassner, Valentine Greatrakes, and, or so at least one gathers, almost everybody else whose mind had ever gained any sort of ascendancy over his fellow, as *Phantasiécousiastes* – an omnibus word which appears to need the acute accent as little as my English

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<sup>1</sup> There is some evidence that a M. Dubois painlessly removed a breast under somnambulism as early as 1797.

equivalent for it, “imagination mongers”. Early in the nineteenth century, too, diagnosis by somnambulists – which was being practised in this country as recently as 1941 – had become moderately fashionable. And it was mainly to investigate this feature of the phenomenon that the French Academy of Medicine appointed two more commissions of inquiry, the first in 1825 – the year, by the way, which saw Mesmer’s vicarious patron, the Count d’Artois, succeed his brother Louis XVIII as Charles X.

The first commission sat until 1831, the year after Charles abdicated to Holyrood. Its report, largely favourable, though it ignored Bertrand, was promptly disowned by the Academicians, who refused to have it printed, and appointed the second – under a chairman who had sworn open hostility to all forms of mesmerism – with the desired result.

The Academy, however, no longer possessed the powers of anathema wielded by its predecessor of 1784.

A few years later, in 1837, Doctor Oudet of the Academy certified that he had witnessed the painless extraction of teeth under somnambulism – a feat which seemed such news to an English editor of 1946 that it very nearly landed its performer into professional trouble for selfadvertisement. And in 1838, Dr John Elliotson, with whose name medical history honourably associates that of Dr James Esdaile of Calcutta, was sacked from London University for preaching and practising – both operated on somnambulised patients – the “gross humbug”, as the *Lancet* stigmatised it shortly before the publication of Braid’s *Neurhypnology*, of mesmerism.

Braid suffered from various delusions, notably that he could bring about both psychological and physiological changes in a tranced patient by stroking certain parts of the skull. (This process was called phreno-magnetism.) But with

his discovery that “hypnosis” could be induced by the simplest means of fixing the patient’s attention it became obvious, even to the most academically minded medico, that, whatever its cause, the mesmeric trance could not be humbug. The hypnotic condition was too well established a fact.

The cause of the condition, nevertheless, remained obscure; and although, in 1843, two English periodicals, *The Zoist* and *The Phreno-Magnet*, were launched, under the editorship of Spencer T. Hall, in support of Braidism, the “fluidic theory” still claimed innumerable adherents. Prominent among these was a Baron von Reichenbach who maintained that he had proved the existence of the fluid by various means, including clairvoyance; and renamed it “odylic force”.

Odylic force soon went the way of phreno-magnetism, an untenable hypothesis conceivably hybrid by Franz Josef Gall’s *Physiology of the Brain* out of Johann Caspar Speerz’s writings on “bumps”, both of which date back to the first decade of the nineteenth century. *The Zoist*, however, did not cease publication till 1855 – by which time James Robinson’s *Treatise on the Inhalation of the Vapour of Ether for the Prevention of Pain in Surgical Operations*, first English book to broadcast the discovery of anaesthesia by Dr Bigelow of Boston, had been on sale for eight years.

As a surgical aid, hypnosis was now *vieux jeu*. Could it be of medical aid? Once again, the academic medicine men thundered their anathematous, “No”. “Leave mesmerism and hypnotism and animal magnetism”, cried the academicians of all occidental countries, “to conjurers and quacks. Leave them the dupes of Mr Sludge the Medium.” And at first not even the young student who was to become his most fervent disciple, Bernheim, believed the countercry of Liébault.

Liébault founded his clinic at Nancy in 1860. In 1884 the appearance of Bernheim’s *De la Suggestion*, one of the most

important contributions ever made to scientific psychology, split the schools into three.

The original school, Mesmer's, still preached a modified form of animal magnetism. They believed in what common parlance – music-hall comedians of my own youth still made great play with the word – dubbed “the ‘fluence’”. And so strongly was this belief held that no less an authority on hypnotism than Moll writes in all seriousness:

“Obersteimer states that in Austria the law requires army horses to be mesmerised for the purpose of shoeing them. This process was introduced by an army officer named Balassa, and hence it has been termed and is now known as the ‘balassieren’ of horses”.

The second school, Charcot's at La Salpêtrière in Paris, which confined its investigations to a few permanently employed hypnotic subjects whom one is tempted to class with mediums, is said to have been still experimenting with magnets in the eighteen-eighties. Finally making up its mind, however, that the mesmeric trance was a purely pathological, and primarily diseased condition, it declared total war on Nancy – only to be totally defeated by Bernheim, ably aided by Heidenhain of Breslau.

It is largely to Bernheim and Heidenhain that we owe the whole doctrine of “suggestibility” as exemplified by the late Professor Couè, some of whose cures were as indubitable as they were remarkable.

Nevertheless it is partly to Charcot, under whom he studied, that we owe the Darwin of modern psychotherapy – deride some of his theories as you will, you cannot deny the man's medico-historical importance – Sigmund Freud.

Freud, I contend – he also a Viennese – is a direct descendant in the Mesmeric line. In final support of the contention, I cite yet one more book, published at Chicago a whole decade before the coiner of the word psychoanalysis

## CONCLUSION OF FRANKAU'S ARGUMENT

began to formulate his concept of the conscious and unconscious elements in the human mind.

The date of that book is 1893 and its author Thomas Jay Hudson. Its title page reads: *The Law of Psychic Phenomena. A Working Hypothesis.*

Hudson's hypothesis – briefly that we possess two minds, the one open to, the other completely closed against and immune from the process of inductive reasoning – is, I claim, an unbreakable link in my chain of evidence; as it were the central arch of a bridge spanning three centuries, the long road over which conducts the medical historian straight back from narcoanalysis (for which the hypnotic state is induced by drugs) and electric convulsion therapy (to a form of which, as you will read, Mademoiselle Paradis was also subjected) as practised by psychotherapists in 1948, through Freud's obsolescent psychoanalysis and Bernheim's equally obsolescent suggestion, to Elliotson, Esdaile and Braid. And from Braid, I claim, the road leads straight back to the author of this dissertation whose hand rekindled in eighteenth-century Europe the torches of a science partly known to its so-called pagan inhabitants and consistently practised by the oriental world through countless centuries. . .

Once again vanity, both the layman's and the professional's, tempts a conditioned pen. The pen would fain run on. But it has never been conditioned to the writing of medical history. And I must leave the fuller elaboration of my thesis to some writer of more knowledge, and maybe of greater objectivity.

In the meantime, let Mesmer speak for himself.

*London.*  
July 1948.

G.F.

**M É M O I R E**  
**S U R L A D É C O U V E R T E**  
**D U**  
**M A G N É T I S M E**  
**A N I M A L ;**

*Par M. MESMER , Docteur én Médecine  
De la Faculté de Vienne.*

**A G E N E V E ;**

Et fe trouve

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**M. DCC. LXXIX.**



## FOREWORD TO THE PUBLIC

THE DISCOVERY, which has so long been sought, of a principle acting on the nerves, should be of interest to all. It has the twofold aim of adding to their knowledge and of making them happier, by affording a means of curing the maladies which have hitherto been treated with but scant success. The advantages and the singular nature of this system were responsible, some years ago, for the eagerness of the public to grasp the first hopes which I held out ; and it is by perverting them that envy, presumption and incredulity have in a very short space of time succeeded in relegating them to the status of illusions, causing them to fall into oblivion.

I have vainly endeavoured to resuscitate them by the enormous number of facts; nevertheless, prejudices won the day and truth has been sacrificed. But, it will be asked today, of what does this discovery consist? How have you come by it what idea may be formed of its advantages? And why have you not enriched your fellow-citizens there-with? Such are the questions that have been put to me since my stay in Paris by persons who are highly qualified for taking up a new question.

It is with the object of giving a satisfactory reply and in order to provide a general idea of the system I propose, to free it from the errors with which it has been surrounded and to make known the vicissitudes which have formed an obstacle to its being made known, that I am publishing this Dissertation; which is merely the forerunner of a theory I shall impart as soon as circumstances enable me to indicate the practical rules of the method I am announcing.

From this standpoint, therefore, I entreat the reader to consider this little work. I am well aware that it will raise

CONTINUATION OF MESMER'S FOREWORD

many difficulties, but it must be borne in mind that they are of such a nature as not to be solved by any amount of reasoning without the assistance of experience.

Experience alone will scatter the clouds and shed light on this important truth: that NATURE AFFORDS A UNIVERSAL MEANS OF HEALING AND PRESERVING MEN.

DISSERTATION  
ON THE DISCOVERY OF  
ANIMAL MAGNETISM

MAN IS by nature an Observer. From his birth, his sole occupation is to observe in order to learn how to use his organs. The eye, for instance, would be useless to him if Nature did not cause him to pay attention to the slightest variations of which his observation is capable. It is by the alternating effect of enjoyment and deprivation that he learns of the existence of light and its different degrees, but he would remain in ignorance of the distance, size and shape of objects if he did not learn, by comparing and combining the impressions of other organs, how to correct one by the other. Most sensations are therefore the result of his reflections on the impressions assembled in his organs.

Thus Man spends his early years in acquiring the prompt and correct use of his senses. His gift of observation, which he has from Nature, enables him to form himself, and the perfection of his faculties depends on its more or less constant application.

Among the infinite number of objects which come successively before him, his attention is chiefly attracted by those which interest him for more particular reasons.

Observation of the effects which Nature is universally and constantly producing on each individual is not the exclusive domain of Philosophers; universal interest makes an observer of almost every individual. These observations, multiplied in every age and every place, leave nothing to be desired as regards their reality.

## WHAT IS TRUTH?

The activity of the human mind, together with its ambition for knowledge, which is never satisfied, in seeking to perfect knowledge previously acquired, abandons observation, replacing it by vague and often frivolous speculation. It forms and accumulates systems which have only the merit of their mysterious abstraction. It departs imperceptibly from truth, to such an extent as to lose sight thereof, setting up ignorance and superstition in its stead. Human knowledge, thus perverted, ceases to possess any of the reality which it had to begin with.

Philosophy has occasionally made efforts to free itself of errors and prejudices, but by overturning those edifices with too much vigour it has covered the ruins with disdain, without fixing the attention on the precious things contained there.

We see among the different peoples the same opinions preserved in a form so disadvantageous and dishonourable for the human mind that it seems improbable that they could have been set up in that form.

Imposture and aberration of reason would have attempted in vain to win over nations and cause them generally to adopt such obviously absurd and ridiculous systems as we see today; truth alone and the general interest should have conferred their universal nature on these opinions.

It may therefore, nevertheless, be asserted that among the vulgar opinions of all ages, whose principles are not rooted in the human heart, there are but few which, however ridiculous and even extravagant they may appear, cannot be regarded as the remains of an originally recognised truth.

Such are my reflections on knowledge in general, and more particularly on the fate of the doctrine of the influence of celestial bodies on the planet we inhabit. These reflections have induced me to seek, among the ruins of that science, brought so low by ignorance, what it might have contained that was useful and true.

In accordance with my ideas on this subject, I published

at Vienna in 1766 a thesis on the influence of planets on the human body. According to the familiar principles of universal attraction, ascertained by observations which teach us how the planets mutually affect one another in their orbits, how the sun and moon cause and control the ocean tides on our globe and in the atmosphere, I asserted that those spheres also exert a direct action on all the parts that go to make up animate bodies, in particular on the nervous system, by an all-penetrating fluid. I denoted this action by the INTENSIFICATION AND THE REMISSION of the properties of matter and organic bodies, such as gravity, cohesion, elasticity, irritability, electricity.

I maintained that just as the alternate effects, in respect of gravity, produce in the sea the appreciable phenomenon which we term ebb and flow, so the INSENSIFICATION AND REMISSION of the said properties, being subject to the action of the same principle, cause in animate bodies alternate effects similar to those sustained by the sea. By these considerations I established that the animal body, being subjected to the same action, likewise underwent a kind of ebb and flow. I supported this theory with different examples of periodic revolutions. I name the property of the animal body that renders it liable to the action of heavenly bodies and of the earth ANIMAL MAGNETISM. I explained by this magnetism the periodical changes which we observe in sex, and in a general way those which physicians of all ages and in all countries have observed during illnesses.

My object then was only to arouse the interest of physicians; but, far from succeeding I soon became aware that I was being taxed with eccentricity, that I was being treated like a man with a system and that my tendency to quit the normal path of Medicine was being construed as a crime.

I have never concealed my manner of thinking in this respect, being unable to convince myself that we have made the progress of which we boast in the art of healing.

Indeed, I have held that the further we advanced in our knowledge of the mechanism and the economy of the animal body, the more we were compelled to admit our insufficiency. The knowledge that we have gained today about the nature and action of the nerves, imperfect though it be, leaves us in no doubt in this respect. We know that they are the principal agents of sensation and movement, but we are unable to restore them to their natural order when this has been interfered with. We confess this to our shame. The ignorance of bygone centuries on this point has sheltered physicians. The superstitious confidence which they had and which they inspired in their specifics and formulae made them despotic and presumptuous.

I have too much respect for Nature to be able to convince myself that the individual preservation of Man has been left to the mere chance of discovery and to the vague observations that have been made in the course of a number centuries, finally becoming the domain of the few.

Nature has provided everything for the existence of the individual. Propagation takes place without "system" and without trickery. Why should preservation be deprived of the same advantage? The preservation of animals affords proof that the contrary is the case.

A non-magnetised needle, when set in motion, will only take a determined direction by chance, whereas a magnetised needle, having been given the same impulse, after various oscillations proportional to the impulse and magnetism received, will regain its initial position and stay there. Thus the harmony of organic bodies, when once interfered with, goes through the uncertainties of my first hypotheses, unless it is brought back and determined by the GENERAL AGENT, whose existence I recognise: it alone can restore harmony in the natural state.

Thus we have seen, in all ages, maladies which become

worse or are cured with and without the help of Medicine, in accordance with different systems and by the most conflicting methods. These considerations have removed all doubt from my mind that there exists in Nature a universally acting principle which, independently of ourselves, operates what we vaguely attribute to Art *and* Nature.

These reflections have caused me to stray imperceptibly from the beaten track. I have subjected my ideas to experience for over twelve years, which I have devoted to the most accurate observations of all types of disease, and I have had the satisfaction of seeing the maxims I had forecast being borne out time and time again.

It was chiefly in the years 1773 and 1774 that I undertook in my house the treatment of a young lady aged twenty-nine named Oesterline, who for several years had been subject to a conclusive malady, the most troublesome symptoms of which were that the blood rushed to her head and there set up the most cruel toothache and earache, followed by delirium, rage, vomiting and swooning. For me it was a highly favourable occasion for observing accurately that type of ebb and flow to which ANIMAL MAGNETISM subjects the human body. The patient often had beneficial crises, followed by a remarkable degree of alleviation; however, the enjoyment was always momentary an imperfect.

The desire to ascertain the cause of this imperfection and my own uninterrupted observations brought me time and time again to the point of recognising Nature's handiwork and of penetrating it sufficiently to forecast and assert, without hesitation, the different stages of the illness. Encouraged by this first success, I no longer had any doubts as to the possibility of bringing it to perfection, if I were able to discover the existence, among the substances of which our globe is made, of an action that is also reciprocal and similar to that of the heavenly bodies, by means of which I could

imitate artificially the periodic revolutions of the ebb and flow just referred to.

I possessed the usual knowledge about the magnet: its action on iron, the ability of our body fluids to receive that mineral. The various tests carried out in France, Germany and Britain for stomach ache and toothache were known to me. These reasons, together with the analogy between the properties of this substance and the general system, induced me to regard it as being the most suitable for this type of test. To ensure the success of this test, in the interval of the attacks, I prepared the patient by the continuous use of chalybeates.<sup>1</sup>

My social relations with Father Hell, Jesuit and Professor of Astronomy at Vienna, then provided me with an opportunity of asking him to have made for me by his craftsmen a number of magnetized pieces, of convenient shape for application. He was kind enough to do this for me and let me have them.

On 28<sup>th</sup> July 1774, after the patient had had a renewal of her usual attacks, I applied three magnetized pieces to the stomach and both legs. Not long afterwards, this was followed by extraordinary sensations ; she felt inside her some painful currents of a subtle material which, after different attempts at taking a direction, made their way towards the lower part and caused all the symptoms of the attack to cease for six hours. Next day, as the patient's condition made it necessary for me to carry out the same test, again I obtained the same success with it.

My observation of these effects, coupled with my ideas on the general system, provided me with fresh information. While confirming my previous ideas about the influence of the GENERAL AGENT, it taught me that another principle was causing the magnet to act, the magnet itself being incapable of such action on the nerves, and I saw that I only had a short

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably "iron" tonics. G.F.

way to go in order to arrive at the IMITATIVE THEORY, which formed the subject of my research.

A few days afterwards, having met Father Hell, I mentioned to him in the course of conversation that the patient was in a better state of health, also the good effects of my process and the hopes that I had, on the strength of this operation, of soon finding a means of curing nerve sufferers.

I found out not long afterwards, from the public and from the newspapers, that this man of religion, abusing his fame in astronomy and wishing to appropriate for himself a discovery of whose nature and benefits he was entirely ignorant, had taken upon himself to publish the fact that by means of some magnetized pieces, to which he attributed a specific virtue depending on their shape, he had obtained the means of curing the gravest nerve disorders. To lend support to this opinion, he had sent to a number of Academies some sets consisting of magnetized pieces of all shapes, mentioning according to their outline their analogy with the various maladies.

This is how he expressed himself: "I have discovered in these shapes, which agree with magnetic vortex, a perfection on which depends their specific virtue in cases of illness ; it is owing to the lack of this perfection that the tests carried out in England and France have met with no success". And by affecting to confuse the manufacture of the magnetized shapes with the discovery I had mentioned to him, he finished by saying "that he had communicated everything to the physicians, and particularly to myself, and would continue to avail himself of them for his tests".

The repeated writings of Father Hell on this subject inspired the public, which is always eager for a specific against nervous disorder, with the illfounded opinion that the discovery in question consisted in the mere use of the magnet. I in my turn wrote to refute this error, by publishing the existence of ANIMAL MAGNETISM, essentially distinct from

the Magnet; however, as the public had received its information from a man of high repute, it remained in its error.

I continued my experiments with different disorders so as to generalize my knowledge and perfect the application thereof.

I knew particularly well Baron de Stoerck, President of the Faculty of Medicine at Vienna and Chief Physician to Her Majesty. It was moreover seemly for him to be acquainted with the nature of my discovery and its purpose. I consequently placed before him the circumstantial details of my operations, particularly as regards the communication and currents of animal magnetic matter, and I invited him to verify them for himself, stating that it was my intention to report to him in future all progress that I might make in this new science. To give him certain proof of my good faith, I made known my methods to him without reserve.

The natural timidity of this physician, no doubt based on motives which it is not my intention to penetrate, induced him to reply that he wished to have nothing to do with what I was telling him about, and he begged me not to compromise the Faculty by giving publicity to an innovation of this kind.

Public prejudice and uncertainty as to the nature of my methods decided me to publish, on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1775, a Letter to a Foreign Physician, in which I gave an exact idea of my theory, the success I had hitherto obtained and the success I had reason to hope for. I set forth the nature and action of ANIMAL MAGNETISM and the analogy between its properties and those of the magnet and electricity. I added "that all bodies were, like the magnet, capable of communicating this magnetic principle; that this fluid penetrated everything and could be stored up and concentrated, like the electric fluid; that it acted at a distance; that animate bodies were divided

into two classes, one being susceptible to this magnetism and the other to an opposite quality that suppresses its action". Finally, I accounted for the various sensations and based these assertions on experiments which enabled me to put them forward.

A few days prior to the publication of this Letter, I heard that Mr Ingenhousze, member of the Royal Academy of London and Inoculator at Vienna, by entertaining the nobility and distinguished personages with experiments in electricity, and by the skill with which he varied the effects of the magnet, had acquired the reputation of being a physician. I heard, as I said, that when this gentleman learned of my operations, he treated them as vain imaginings, going so far as to say that only the English genius was capable of such a discovery, if it could be done. He came to see me, not to gain information, but with the sole intention of persuading me that I was laying myself open to error and should suppress all publicity with a view to avoiding inevitable ridicule.

I replied that he was not sufficiently talented himself to give me this advice, and that I should moreover have pleasure in convincing him at the first opportunity. This presented itself two days afterwards.

Miss Oesterline took fright and contracted a chill, causing a sudden stoppage, and she relapsed into her former convulsions. I invited Mr Ingenhousze to call. He came, accompanied by a young physician. The patient was then in a fainting fit with convulsions. I told him that it was the most favourable opportunity for convincing himself of the existence of the principle I announced, and the property which it has to communicate. I told him to approach the patient, while I withdrew from her, instructing him to touch her. She made no movement. I recalled him to me, and communicated animal magnetism to him by taking him by the hands ; I then bade him approach the patient once more, while I kept at a distance, telling him to touch her a second time.

This resulted in convulsive movements. I made him repeat this touching process several times, which he did with the top of his finger, changing the direction each time. Always, to his great astonishment, he brought about a convulsive effect in the part touched.

When this operation was over, he told me he was convinced, and I suggested a second visit. We withdrew from the patient, so as not to be perceived even had she been conscious. I offered Mr Ingenhousze six china cups and asked him to tell me to which one he wished me to communicate the magnetic quality. I touched the one of his choice and then applied the six cups to the patient's hand in succession; on reaching the cup that I had touched, the hand made a movement and gave signs of pain. Mr Ingenhousze obtained the same result when he applied the six cups.

I then had these cups taken back to the place whence they had come, and after a certain interval, holding him by one hand, I asked him to touch with the other any cup he wished; he did so, the cups were brought to the patient, as before, with the same result.

The communicability of the principle was now well-established in Mr Ingenhousze's eyes, and I suggested a third experiment to show its action at a distance and its penetrating quality. I pointed my finger at the patient, a distance of eight paces; the next instant, her body was in convulsion to the point of raising her on her bed with every appearance of pain. I continued, in the same position, to point my finger at the patient, placing Mr Ingenhousze between herself and me. She underwent the same sensations.

Having repeated these tests to Mr Ingenhousze's satisfaction, I asked him if he was convinced of the marvelous properties about which I had told him, offering to repeat our proceedings if he were not. His reply was to the effect that he wished for nothing further and was convinced; but owing to his friendship with me, he entreated me not to make any

## ODIOUS INSINUATIONS

public statement on this subject, so as not to lay myself open to public incredulity. We parted, and I went back to the patient to continue the treatment, which was most successful. That same day I managed to restore the normal course of nature, thereby putting an end to all the trouble brought about by stoppage.

Two days later I was astonished to hear that Mr Ingenhousze was making statements in public that were quite the reverse of his utterances in my house, and was denying the success of the different experiments he had witnessed. He effected to confuse ANIMAL MAGNETISM with the magnet and was endeavouring to damage my reputation by spreading the report that with the aid of a number of magnetized pieces which he had brought with him, he had succeeded in unmasking me, proving that it was nothing but a ridiculous, prearranged fraud.

I must confess that such words at first seemed to me to be unbelievable, and I had some difficulty in bringing myself to regard Mr Ingenhousze as their author. However, his association with the Jesuit Hell, and the latter's irresponsible writings in support of such odious insinuation, aimed at ruining the effect of my Letter of 5<sup>th</sup> January 1775, removed all doubt from my mind that Mr Ingenhousze was the guilty party. I refuted Father Hell and was about to draw up an indictment when Miss Oesterline, who had been informed of Mr Ingenhousze's procedure, was so affronted at finding herself thus compromised that she relapsed into her former state, which was aggravated by a nervous fever.

Miss Oesterline's condition claimed the whole of my attention for a fortnight. In these circumstances, by continuing my research, I was fortunate in overcoming the difficulties which stood in the way of my progress and of giving my theory the desired perfection. The cure of this young lady represented the first fruits of my success, and

had the satisfaction of seeing her henceforth in excellent health. She married and had some children.

It was during this fortnight that, being determined to justify my conduct and to give the public a correct idea of my abilities by unmasking Mr Ingenhousze's behaviour, I informed Mr de Stoerck, requesting him to obtain orders from the Court for a Commission of the Faculty to be acquainted with the facts, so that it might verify and make them known to the public. This step appeared to be agreeable to the senior physician; he seemed to share my view-point and promised to act accordingly, remarking, however, that he could not be on the Commission.

I suggested several times that he should come and see Miss Oesterline and satisfy himself as to the success of my treatment. His replies in this matter were always vague and uncertain. I explained to him how it would benefit humanity to have my method adopted by the hospitals, and asked him to demonstrate its utility forthwith at the Spanish Hospital. He agreed to this and gave the necessary instructions to Mr Reinlein, physician at that hospital.

The latter was a witness of the effects and usefulness of my visits over a period of eight days. On several occasions he expressed surprise and reported to Mr de Stoerck. However, I soon became aware that different impressions had been given to this leading physician. I met him almost every day and insisted on my request for a Commission, reminding him of the interesting matters about which I had told him, but saw nothing but indifference, coldness and reserve in his attitude whenever the topic was broached.

Being unable to obtain any satisfaction, and as Mr Reinlein had ceased reporting to me (I moreover found out that this change of front was the result of steps taken by Mr Ingenhousze), I realized my inability to stem the course of the intrigue, and sought consolation in silence.

## FURTHER CURES

Emboldened by the success of his plans, Mr Ingenhousze acquired fresh vigour; he vaunted his incredulity and it was not long before he succeeded in having those who suspended judgment or who did not share his opinion classed as feeble-minded. It will readily be understood that all this was quite enough to alienate the masses and have me looked upon at least as a visionary, especially as the indifference of the Faculty appeared to support that opinion.

What I felt to be most strange was that the same opinion should be shared the following year by Mr Klinkosch, Professor of Medicine at Prague, who, without knowing me and without the slightest idea of the true state of the matter, was sufficiently foolish (to use no stronger term), as to publish in the public journals the curious details of the impostures attributed to me by Mr Ingenhousze.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever public opinion might be, I felt that truth could not find better support than in facts. I undertook the treatment of various disorders, including a hemiplegia, the result of apoplexy; stoppages, spitting of blood, frequent colics and convulsive sleep from childhood, with spitting of blood and normal ophthalmia. Mr Bauer, Professor of Mathematics at Vienna and a man of outstanding merit, was attacked by this latter malady. My work was crowned with the best possible success, and Mr Bauer himself was honest enough to make public a detailed report on his cure. However, prejudice had the upper hand. Nevertheless, I had the satisfaction of being quite well known to a great Minister, a Privy Councillor and an Aulic Councillor, friends of humanity, who had often recognized truth for themselves, seeing that they upheld and protected it. They even made several attempts to lighten the shadows in which it was being wrapped. They met

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<sup>1</sup> Letter on Animal Magnetism and the Electrophorus, addressed to Count de Kinszky. It was included in the Proceedings of the Scientists of Bohemia, Vol. II, 1776. It was also printed separately and published at Vienna in the following year. – F.A.M.

with little success, however, it being objected that only the opinion of physicians was capable of deciding, and their good will was thus confined to their offers to give my writings the necessary publicity in foreign lands.

It was through this channel that my explanatory Letter of 5<sup>th</sup> January 1775 was transmitted to the majority of the scientific institutions, and to a few scientists. Only the Berlin Academy, on the 24<sup>th</sup> March that year, made a written reply in which by confusing the properties of ANIMAL MAGNETISM which I had expounded with those of the magnet, which I only spoke of as a conductor, it incurred a number of errors and its opinion was that I was the victim of illusion.

This Academy was not the only one to make the mistake of confusing ANIMAL MAGNETISM with mineral magnetism, although I have always stressed in my writings that the use of the magnet, however convenient, was always imperfect without the assistance of the theory of ANIMAL MAGNETISM. The physicians and doctors with whom I have been in correspondence, or who have endeavoured to find out my methods in order to usurp this discovery, have taken upon themselves to spread about either that the magnet was the only means I employed, or else that I used electricity as well, because it was well known that I had availed myself of both. Most of them have been undeceived by their own experience, but instead of realizing the truth I was expounding, they have concluded from the fact that they obtained no success from the use of these two agents that the cures announced by myself were imaginary and that my theory was nothing but an illusion.

The desire to refute such errors once and for all, and to do justice to truth, determined me to make no further use of electricity or of the magnet from 1776 onwards.

The poor reception given to my discovery and the slight hopes it held out to me for the future made me resolve to undertake nothing of a public nature at Vienna, but instead to travel to Swabia and Switzerland and add to my experience, thus arriving at the truth through facts. Indeed, I had the satisfaction of making some striking cures in Swabia, and of operating in the hospitals, before the eyes of doctor from Berne and Zürich. They were left in no doubt as to the existence of ANIMAL MAGNETISM and the usefulness of my theory, which corrected the error into which they had been led by my opponents.

Between the years 1774 and 1775 an ecclesiastic, a man of good faith but of excessive zeal, was operating in the diocese of Ratisbon on various disorders of a nervous nature, using means that appeared to be supernatural to the less well informed in that district. His reputation extended to Vienna, where society was divided into two halves: one regarded his methods as imposture and fraud, while the other looked upon them as miracles performed by Divine power. Both, however, were wrong, and my experience at once told me that the man in question was nothing but a tool of Nature. This was because his profession, assisted by fate, had furnished him with certain natural talents enabling him to find out the periodical symptoms of maladies without knowing their case. The end of such paroxysms was held to be a complete cure, and time alone could undeceive the public.

On returning to Vienna towards the end of 1775, I passed through München, where His Highness the Elector of Bavaria was kind enough to consult me on this subject, asking me whether I could account for these pretended miracles. I carried out before his eyes some experiments that removed any prejudices he may have had and left him in no doubt as to the truth I announced. Shortly afterwards, the

Scientific Institution of that city paid me the honour of admitting me as a member.

In 1776 I again visited Bavaria and secured similar success there in illnesses of different kind. In particular, I effected the cure of an imperfect amaurosis, accompanied by paralysis of the limbs, which was afflicting Mr d'Osterwald (factually Oesterwald, G.F.) director of the Scientific Institution of Munich; he was kind enough to make public mention of this and of the other results he had witnessed.<sup>1</sup>

After returning to Vienna, I persisted until the end of that year in undertaking no further work; neither would I have altered my mind if my friends had not been unanimous in opposing my decision. Their insistences, together with my desire to see the truth prevail, aroused in me the hope of accomplishing this by means of fresh successes, particularly through some striking cure. With this end in view, among other patients I undertook the treatment of Miss Paradis, aged eighteen, whose parents were well known ; she herself was known to Her Majesty the Queen-Empress, through whose bounty she received a pension, being quite blind since the age of four. It was a perfect amaurosis, with convulsions in the eyes. She was moreover prey to melancholia, accompanied by stoppages in the spleen and liver, which often brought on accesses of delirium and rage so that she was convinced she was out of her mind.

I also undertook the treatment of one Zwelferine, a girl nineteen years of age who had been blind since the age of two owing to amaurosis accompanied by a very thick, wrinkled albugo with atrophy of the ball; she was also afflicted with periodic spitting of blood. I found this girl in the Vienna

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<sup>1</sup> There was published at the beginning of 1778 a Collection of Cures effected by Magnetism, printed at Leipzig. This bulky Collection, whose author is unknown to me, has the sole merit of assembling faithfully, without partiality, the reports and writings for and against my system. – F.A.M.

orphanage and her blindness was attested by the Governors.

At the same time I also treated Miss Ossine, aged eighteen, who was in receipt of a pension from Her Majesty, as being the daughter of an officer in her armies. Her malady consisted of purulent phthisis and irritable melancholia, accompanied by fits, rage, vomiting, spitting of blood and fainting. These three patients and others besides were accommodated in my house so that I might continue my treatment without interruption. I was fortunate in being able to cure all three.

The father and mother of Miss Paradis, who witnessed her cure and the progress she was making in the use of her eyesight, hastened to make this occurrence known and how pleased they were. Crowds flocked to my house to make sure for themselves, and each one, after putting the patient to some kind of test, withdrew greatly astonished, with the most flattering remarks to myself.

The two Presidents of the Faculty, at the head of a deputation of their corps, came to see me at the repeated instances of Mr Paradis; and, after examining the young lady, added their tribute to that of the public. Mr de Stoerck, one of these gentlemen who knew this young person particularly well, having treated her ten years without the slightest success, expressed to me his satisfaction at so interesting a cure and his regret at having so far deferred his acknowledgment of the importance of my discovery. A number of physicians, each for himself, followed the example set by our leaders and paid the same tribute to truth.

After such authentic recognition, Mr Paradis was kind enough to express his gratitude in his writings, which went all over Europe. It was he who afterwards published the interesting details of his daughter's recovery in the newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix

## THE CONSPIRATORS

Among the physicians who came to see me to satisfy their curiosity was Mr Barth, professor of anatomy of diseases of the eye, and cataract specialist; he had even admitted on two occasions that Miss Paradis was able to use her eyes. Nevertheless, this man's envy caused him to state publicly that the young lady could not see, and that he had satisfied himself that she could not. He founded this assertion on the fact that she did not know or confused the names of objects shown to her. He was answered from all quarters that he was therein confusing the necessary inability of those blind from birth or at a very tender age with the knowledge acquired by blind persons operated on for cataract. How, he was asked, is it that a man of your profession can be guilty of so obvious an error? His impudence, however, found an answer to everything by asserting the contrary. It was in vain that the public told him again and again that a thousand witnesses had given evidence of the cure; he alone held the opposite view, in which he was joined by Mr Ingenhousze, the Inoculator of whom I have spoken.

These two individuals, who were at first regarded as fanatics by sensible, honest folk, succeeded in weaving a plot to withdraw Miss Paradis from my care, her eyes still being in an imperfect state, and made it impossible for her to be presented to Her Majesty, as was to have been the case. This inevitably lent credence to their assertion of imposture. To this effect they worked on Mr Paradis, who began to be afraid that his daughter's pension and several other advantages held out to him might be stopped. He consequently asked for his daughter back.

The latter, supported by her mother, showed her unwillingness and fear lest the cure might be imperfect. That father insisted, and this dispute brought on her fits again and let to an unfortunate relapse. However, this had no effect on her eyes, and she continued to improve the use of them.

When her father saw her she was better, being still egged on by the conspirators, he returned to the charge. He demanded his daughter with some heat and compelled his wife to do likewise.

The girl resisted for the same reasons as before. Her mother, who had hitherto supported her, and had apologized for the lengths to which her husband had gone, came to tell me on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1777 that she intended to remove her daughter instantly. I replied that she was free to do so, but if fresh accidents were the result, she could not count on my help.

These words were overheard by the girl, who was so overcome that she went into a fit. She was assisted by Count de Pellegrini, one of my patients. Her mother, who heard her cries, left me abruptly and seized her daughter angrily from the hands of the person who was assisting her, saying: "Wretched girl, you too are hand in glove with the people of this house!" as she flung her in a fury head-first against the wall.

Immediately all the troubles of that unfortunate girl recommenced. I hastened towards her to give her assistance, but her mother, still livid with rage, hurled herself upon me to prevent me from doing so, while she heaped insults on me. I had the mother removed by certain member of my household and went up to the girl to assist her. While I was so engaged, I heard more angry shouts and repeated attempts to open and shut the door of the room where I was.

It was Mr Paradis who, having been warned by one of his wife's servants, now invaded my house sword in hand with the intention of entering the room where I was, while my servant was trying to remove him by guarding the door. The madman was at last disarmed, and he left my house breathing imprecations on myself and my household.

Meanwhile, his wife had swooned away. I had her given

the necessary attention, and she left some hours afterwards, but the unhappy girl was suffering from attacks of vomiting, fits and rages, which the slightest noise, especially the sound of bells, accentuated. She had even relapsed into her previous blind state through the violence of the blow given her by her mother, and I had some fears for the state of her brain.

Such were, for my patient and for me, the sinister effect of that painful scene. It would have been easy for me to take the matter to court, on the evidence of Count de Pellegrini and eight persons who were with me, to say nothing of other neighbours who could have acted as witnesses too. But, as I was solely concerned with saving Miss Paradis, if possible, I refrained from availing myself of legal redress. My friends remonstrated in vain, pointing out the ingratitude exhibited by her family and the wasted expenditure of my labours. I adhered to my first decision and would have been content to overcome the enemies of truth and of my peace of mind by good deeds.

Next day I heard that Mr Paradis, in an endeavour cover up his excesses, was spreading about the most wicked insinuations regarding myself, always with a view to removing his daughter and proving, by her condition, the dangerous nature of my methods. I did indeed receive through Mr Ost. Court physician, a written order from Mr de Stoerck, in his capacity as head physician, dated Schoenbrunn, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1777, who called upon me “to put an end to the imposture” (his own expression) “and restore Miss Paradis to her family, if I thought this could be done without risk”.

Who would have believed that Mr de Stoerck, being so well informed by the same physician of all that had taken place in my house and, after his first visit, having come twice to convince himself of the patient’s progress and the success

of my methods, could have taken upon himself to use such offensive and contemptuous language to me? I had indeed reason to expect the contrary, because being well placed for recognizing a truth of this kind, he should have been its defender. I would even go so far as to say that as the repository of Her Majesty's confidence, one of his first duties under these circumstances should have been to protect a member of the Faculty whom he knew to be blameless, and to whom he had time and time again given assurances of his affection and esteem. I made answer to this irresponsible order that the patient was not in a position to be moved without running the risk of death.

Miss Paradis's critical condition no doubt made an impression on her father, and caused him to reflect. Through the intermediary of two reputable persons, he begged me to continue attending his daughter. I told him that I would do so on condition that neither he nor his wife ever again appeared in my house. My treatment indeed exceeded my hopes, and nine days sufficed to calm down the fits entirely and put an end to the disorders. But her blindness remained.

Fifteen days' treatment cured the blindness and restored the eye to its condition prior to the incident. To this period I added a further fortnight's attention to improve and restore her health. The public then came to obtain proof of her recovery, and everybody gave me, even in writing, fresh evidence of satisfaction. Mr Paradis, being assured of the good health enjoyed by his daughter through Mr Ost, who, at his request and by my permission, followed the progress of the treatment, wrote a letter to my wife in which he thanked her for her motherly care.

He also wrote thanking and apologising for the past; he finished by asking me to send back his daughter so that she might enjoy the benefit of country air. He said that he would send her back to me whenever I might think necessary,

## BETRAYAL

so as to continue the treatment, and he hoped that I would attend her. I believed him in all good faith, and returned his daughter to him on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June.

Next day I heard that her family asserted that she was still blind and subject to fits. They showed her thus and compelled her to imitate fits and blindness. This news evoked some contradictions by persons who were convinced of the contrary, but it was upheld and accredited by the obscure intriguers who used Mr Paradis as their tool, and I was unable to check its spread by the highest testimony, such as that of Mr de Spielmann, Aulic Councillor of Their Majesties and Director of the State Chancellery ; Their Majesties' Councillors, Messrs de Molitor and de Umlauer, physician to Their Majesties ; de Boulanger, de Heufeld and Baron de Colnbach and Mr de Weber, who, independently of several other persons, had almost every day followed for themselves my processes and results.

Thus in spite of my perseverance and my work, I have little by little seen relegated to the position of a conjecture, or at least of something uncertain, a truth that has been authentically proven.

It is easy to imagine how I might have been affected by the relentlessness of my enemies to do me harm and by the ingratitude of a family on which I had showered kindnesses. Nevertheless, during the last half of 1777 I continued with the cure of Miss Ossine and the aforementioned Zwelferine whose eyes, it will be remembered, were in an even more serious condition than Miss Paradis's. I also persevered successfully with the treatment of my remaining patients, in particular Miss Wipior aged nine, who had in one eye a growth on the cornea, known by the name of staphyloma ; this cartilaginous excrescence, of 3 to 4 lines,<sup>1</sup> prevented her from seeing with that eye.

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<sup>1</sup> There is nothing which can clear up definitely to what Mesmer refers when mentioning "3 á 4 lignes". This has been translated by "3 to 4 lines"

I succeeded in removing the excrescence to the extent that she was able to read sideways. There only remained a slight albugo in the centre of the cornea, and I have no doubt that I would have caused it to disappear entirely, had circumstances permitted me to continue the treatment. However, being wearied by my labours extending over twelve consecutive years and still more so by the continued animosity of my adversaries, without having reaped from my research and efforts any satisfaction other than that of which adversity could not deprive me, I felt that I had done my duty by my fellow-citizens.

With the conviction that justice would one day be done me, I decided to travel for the sole purpose of securing the relaxation I so much needed. However, to guard against prejudice and insinuations as far as possible, I arranged matters so as to leave at home in my absence Miss Ossine and the girl Zwelferine. I next took the precaution of telling the public of the reason for this arrangement, stating that these persons were in my home so that their condition could be ascertained at any moment and thereby lend support to truth. They remained there eight months after my departure form Vienna and only left on orders from a higher authority.

On arriving at Paris in February 1778,<sup>1</sup> I began to enjoy the delights of repose there, in the interesting company of

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but could equally well mean “3 to 4 lignes” taken in the sense of an old French measure, in which case the correct translation would be “7 to 9 millimetres” in present day equivalent measure. V. R. MYERS

<sup>1</sup>My adversaries, who were ever on the watch to harm me, lost no time in spreading warnings about me on my arrival in France. They went to the length of compromising the Faculty of London by causing an Anonymous Letter to be inserted in the *Journal Encyclopédique* for March 1778, page 506; Mr Hell, bailiff of Hirsingen and Lundzer, did not scruple to lend his name to his libelous document. Nevertheless, I was not known to him, and I only saw him afterwards, at Paris, to receive his apologies. The untrustworthiness, inconsistency and maliciousness of this Letter are merely deserving of contempt, as will be found on perusing it. – F.A.M.

the scientists and physicians of that capital. However, acceding to their requests and to repay the kindness shown to me, I decided to satisfy their curiosity by speaking of my system. They were astonished at its nature and results and asked me for an explanation. I gave them my concise assertions in nineteen articles.<sup>1</sup> They seemed to them to bear no relation to established knowledge. I felt indeed how difficult it was, by reason alone, to prove the existence of a principle of which people had not the slightest conception. With this in mind, I therefore yielded to the request made to me to show the reality and the usefulness of my theory by the treatment of a few serious maladies.

A number of patients placed their trust in me. Most were in so desperate a plight that it required all my desire to be of use to make me decide on attending them. Nevertheless, I cured a vaporous melancholia with spasmodic vomiting, a number of longstanding stoppages in the spleen, liver and mesentery, an imperfect amaurosis, to the extent of preventing the patient from moving about alone, and a general paralysis with trembling which gave the patient (aged forty) every appearance of old age and drunkenness. This malady was the result of frost-bite; it had been aggravated by the effects of putrid and malignant fever which the patient had contracted six years before in America.

I also obtained the same success in a case of total paralysis of the legs, with atrophy; one of chronic vomiting, which reduced the patient to a state of progressive emaciation; one of general scrofulous debility, and finally in a case of general decay of the organs of perspiration.

These patients, whose condition was known and verified by the physicians of the Paris Faculty, were all subject to considerable crises and evacuation, on a par with the nature

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<sup>1</sup> These same Assertions had been forwarded in 1776 to the Royal Society of London by Mr Elliot, English Envoy to the Diet of Ratisbon; I communicated them to that Minister at his own request, after carrying out before him various experiments at M $\ddot{u}$ nich and Ratisbon. – F.A.M.

## THE REASON FOR THIS DISSERTATION

of their maladies, without making use of any medicaments. After completing their treatment, they gave me detailed declarations.

That should have been more than enough to prove beyond all doubt the advantages of my method. I had reason to flatter myself that recognition would follow. However, the persons who had induced me to undertake the foregoing treatments were not enabled to see their effects, owing to considerations and reasons which it would be out of place to enumerate in this dissertation.

The result is that the cures which, contrary to my expectation, were not communicated to bodies whose duty it might have been to call the attention of the public to them, only imperfectly fulfilled the task I had set myself, and for which I had been praised.

This induces me to make a fresh effort today in the cause of truth, by giving more scope and the publicity which they have hitherto lacked to my original Assertions.

## PROPOSITIONS ASSERTED<sup>1</sup>

1. There exists a mutual influence between the Heavenly Bodies, the Earth and Animate Bodies.
2. A universally distributed and continuous fluid, which is quite without vacuum and of an incomparably rarefied nature, and which by its nature is capable of receiving, propagating and communicating all the impressions of movement, is the means of this influence.
3. This reciprocal action is subordinated to mechanical laws that are hitherto unknown.
4. This action results in alternate effects which may be regarded as an Ebb and Flow.
5. This ebb and flow is more or less general, more or less particular, more or less composite according to the nature of the causes determining it.
6. It is by this operation (the most universal of those presented by Nature) that the activity ratios are set up between the heavenly bodies, the earth and its component parts.
7. The properties of Matter and the Organic Body depend on this operation.
8. The animal body sustains the alternate effects of this agent, which by insinuating itself into the substance of the nerves, affects them at once.
9. It is particularly manifest in the human body that the agent has properties similar to those of the magnet; different and opposite poles may likewise be distinguished, which can be changed, communicated, destroyed and strengthened; even the phenomenon of dipping is observed.

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<sup>1</sup> The word "asserted" is implied by the context. It has been added by me. G.F.

10. This property of the animal body, which brings it under the influence of the heavenly bodies and the reciprocal action of those surrounding it, as shown by its analogy with the Magnet, induced me to term it ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

11. The action and properties of Animal Magnetism, thus defined, may be communicated to other animate and inanimate bodies. Both are more or less susceptible to it.

12. This action and properties may be strengthened and propagated by the same bodies.

13. Experiments show the passage of a substance whose rarefied nature enables it to penetrate all bodies without appreciable loss of activity.

14. Its action is exerted at a distance, without the aid of an intermediate body.

15. It is intensified and reflected by mirrors, just like light.

16. It is communicated, propagated and intensified by sound.

17. This magnetic property may be stored up, concentrated and transported.

18. I have said that all animate bodies are not equally susceptible; there are some, although very few, whose properties are so opposed that their very presence destroys all the effects of magnetism in other bodies.

19. This opposing property also penetrates all bodies; it may likewise be communicated, propagated, stored, concentrated and transported, reflected by mirrors and propagated by sound; this constitutes not merely the absence of magnetism, but a positive opposing property.

20. The Magnet, both natural and artificial, together with other substances, is susceptible to Animal Magnetism, and even to the opposing property, without its effect on iron and the needle undergoing any alteration in either case; this proves that the principle of Animal Magnetism differs essentially from that of mineral magnetism.

21. This system will furnish fresh explanations as to the

nature of fire and light, as well as the theory of attraction, ebb and flow, the magnet and electricity.

22. It will make known that the magnet and artificial electricity only have, as regards illnesses, properties which they share with several other agents provided by Nature, and that if useful effects have been derived from the use of the latter, they are due to Animal Magnetism.

23. It will be seen from the fact, in accordance with the practical rules I shall draw up, that this principle can cure nervous disorders directly and other disorders indirectly.

24. With its help, the physician is guided in the use of medicaments; he perfects their action, brings about and controls the beneficial crises in such a way as to master them.

25. By making known my method, I shall show by a new theory of illnesses the universal utility of the principle I bring to bear on them.

26. With this knowledge, the physician will determine reliably the origin, nature and progress of illnesses, even the most complicated; he will prevent them from gaining ground and will succeed in curing them without ever exposing his patient to dangerous effect or unfortunate consequences, whatever his age, temperament and sex. Women, even in pregnancy and childbirth, will enjoy the same advantage.

27. In conclusion, this doctrine will enable the physician to determine the state of each individual's health and safeguard him from the maladies to which he might otherwise be subject. The art of healing will thus reach its final stage of perfection.

Although there is not one of these Assertions regarding which my constant observation over a period of twelve years leaves me in any uncertainty, I quite realise that compared with old-established principles and knowledge, my system may appear to contain as much illusion as truth. I must,

## FINAL REQUEST

however, ask the enlightened to discard their prejudices and at least suspend judgment, until circumstances enable me to furnish the necessary evidence of my principles. Consideration for those languishing in pain and unhappiness through the very inadequacy of known methods is well calculated to inspire the desire for and even the hope of more useful methods.

Physicians, being the repositories of public trust for everything connected with the preservation and happiness of mankind, are alone enabled, by the knowledge on which their profession is founded, to judge of the importance of the discovery I have just announced and realise its implications. In a word, they alone are qualified to put it into practice.

As I have the privilege of sharing the dignity of their profession, I am in no doubt whatever that they will hasten to adopt and spread principles intended to alleviate the sufferings of humanity, as soon as they realise the importance of this Dissertation, written essentially for them, on the true conception of ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

## APPENDIX<sup>1</sup>

### THE CASE OF MISS PARADIS

I GIVE here, for the reader's satisfaction, the historical summary of this singular cure. It has been faithfully taken from the report written in German by the father himself. He himself sent it to me in March 1777 for publication. I have it before me now.

Marie-Thérèse Paradis, only daughter of Mr Paradis, Secretary to Their Majesties the King-Emperor and Queen-Empress, was born at Vienna on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1759; her eyesight was perfectly normal.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1762, it was found that when she awoke she was unable to see. Her parents were all the more surprised and afflicted by this sudden infirmity because, since her birth, there had been no indication of any change in that organ.

It was ascertained that it was a case of perfect amaurosis, whose cause might have been a fluid with repercussions, or some fright the child had had that night, some noise at the door of her room.

Her parents were in despair and employed all the methods considered most suitable for curing this infirmity, such as blistering, leeches and cauterising.

The first of these methods was applied very intensively as for over two months her head was covered by a plaster, producing continual suppuration. For a number of years purgatives and diuretics were used as well, together with pulsatilla and valerian root.

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<sup>1</sup> The colossal footnote to the original edition begins, as indicated, on p. 45 of this translation. – G.F.

These various methods met with no success. The patient's condition was aggravated by spasms in the eyes and pupils which, as they approached the brain, gave rise to transports and awakened fears that she had gone out of her mind. Her eyes bulged and were so much out of place that as a rule only the whites could be seen; this, coupled with the spasms, made her appearance disagreeable and difficult to endure. Last year, electricity was resorted to; it was administered to the eyes by over three thousand shocks, and she bore up to a hundred in each treatment. This latter method was fatal for her, and so much increased her irritability and spasms that it was only possible to preserve her from harm by repeated bleedings.

Baron de Wenzel, during his last stay in Vienna, was instructed by Her Majesty to examine and assist her, if possible, after the examination. He said he thought she was incurable.

In spite of her condition and the pain that accompanied it, her parents omitted nothing to educate her and provide distraction from her suffering. She had made great progress with music, and her talent at the organ and harpsichord had won for her the happy fate of becoming known to the Queen-Empress. Her Majesty, being touched by her unhappy condition, was kind enough to grant her a pension.

Dr Mesmer, a physician who has been known for some years through the discovery of animal magnetism, and was present at the first treatment given her in childhood, had been observing this patient particularly attentively every time he had an opportunity of meeting her. He obtained information regarding the circumstances that had accompanied the malady and the methods so far used for treating her. What he found most unsatisfactory and appeared to give him anxiety was the manner in which use had been made of electricity.

In spite of the stage reached by this malady, he gave the parent some hope that he would restore the eyes to their natural position, by alleviating the spasms and calming the

pains, and although it was afterwards known that he had then and there entertained the hope of restoring her eyesight, he made no mention of this to the girl's parents, who, as the result of unhappy experience and many setbacks, had resolved to make no further attempts at a cure which they considered impossible.

Mr Mesmer commenced his treatment on 20<sup>th</sup> January last; its first effects were of heat and redness in the head, and then she had a trembling feeling in her legs and arms. Next she felt a slight tug in the back of her neck, which forced her head backward and, becoming stronger, increased the convulsive agitation of her eyes.

On the second day of treatment, Mr Mesmer produced an effect that greatly surprised the persons who witnessed it. Seated beside the patient, he held out his stick<sup>1</sup> towards her face reflected in a mirror, and as he moved the stick, so the patient's head followed its movements. This sensation was so powerful that she herself announced the different movements of the stick. It was soon observed that the agitation in her eyes increased and decreased alternately in a very appreciable way; their movements multiplied both outside and inside, and were sometimes followed by complete repose. She was relieved from the fourth day onwards, and her eyes resumed their natural positions, it being noticed that the left hand one was smaller than the right-hand; however, as the treatment went on, they became the same size again.

The trembling in her limbs ceased a few days afterwards, but she complained of a pain in the occiput which penetrated her head, increasing towards the front. When the pain reached the part where the optic nerves are connected, it seemed to her for two days that her head was splitting in two. This pain followed the optic nerves, dividing like them. She defined it as a series of pinpricks which, as it advanced slowly towards the eyeballs, penetrated them and multiplied there, spreading

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<sup>1</sup> Presumably the famous wand.

through the retina. These sensations were often accompanied by jerks.

The patient's sense of smell had been affected for some years and there was no further secretion of mucus. Her treatment caused the inside of her nose to swell, together with the adjacent parts; this was relieved after eight days by the copious discharge of a green, viscous substance. At the same time she had an extraordinarily abundant attack of diarrhea, the pains in her eyes increased and she complained of giddiness. Mr Mesmer thought that these were the effect of the first impressions of light, and he thereupon had the patient to live in his house, so as to take the necessary precautions.

The sensitivity of her eyes was such that after covering them with a triple bandage, he was obliged to keep her in a dark room, as the slightest sensation of light on any part of her body affected her to the extent of causing her to fall. The pain which she felt in her eyes varied continuously. At first it was general and smarted, then it took the form of a violent irritation, ending with a sensation similar to that produced by a fine brush drawn across the retina.

These progressive results gave Mr Mesmer grounds for supposing that the cure was sufficiently far advanced to give the patient her first idea of light and its changes. He removed the bandage, leaving her in the darkened room, and besought her to pay attention to the sensation in her eyes, before which he placed alternately black and white objects. She explained the feeling produced in her by the former as if fine points were inserted in the eyeball, the painful effect of which proceeded in the direction of brain. This pain and the various sensations that accompanied it increased and decreased proportionately to the degree of whiteness of the objects in front of her. Mr Mesmer then ceased using these and replaced them by black objects.

Through these successive and opposite effects, he showed

the patient that the cause of these sensations was external, and that they differed therein from those she had had hitherto. Thus he succeeded in making her realise the different degrees of light and its absence. To continue his instruction, Mr Mesmer exhibited different colours to her. He then perceived that the light impinged more gently and left with some impression, and presently she distinguished colours by comparing them, but was unable to remember their names, in spite of possessing a very good memory. On seeing black, she said sadly that she could see nothing, and was reminded of her blindness.

In the early days, the impression of an object on the retina lasted one minute after beholding it, so that to distinguish another and not to confuse it with the first, she was obliged to cover up her eyes as long as her first impression lasted.

She was able to distinguish in darkness where other people had difficulty in seeing, but she gradually lost this ability as her eyes began to admit more light.

The motor muscles of her eyes had not hitherto been in use, and she had to be taught their use for controlling the movements of the eyes in searching for objects, seeing them, focusing on them and giving their position. This tuition, of which it would be impossible to enumerate the countless difficulties, was the more painful in that it was often interrupted by attacks of melancholia, one consequence of her malady.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> February Mr Mesmer attempted for the first time to make her see faces and movements, and he himself appeared before her in the darkened room. She was frightened on beholding the human face: the nose seemed absurd to her and for several days she was unable to look upon it without bursting into laughter. She asked to see a dog which she often fondled and the appearance of that animal seemed more pleasing to her than that of man. Not knowing the name of the feature, she drew the shape of each with her finger. One of the most difficult parts of the instruction was teaching her

to touch what she saw and combine the two faculties. Having no idea of distance, every-thing seemed to her to be within reach, however far away, and objects appeared to grow larger as she drew near them.

The continual effort she had to make to overcome her clumsiness and the large number of things she had to learn sometimes troubled her to the point of causing her to regret her previous condition, especially as, when blind, people used to admire her skill and intelligence. However, her natural gaiety soon got the upper hand, and Mr Mesmer's continual care encouraged her to make fresh progress.

Little by little she succeeded in supporting daylight, and distinguishing objects perfectly at any distance. Nothing escaped her, even the faces painted on miniatures, whose expressions and attitudes she imitated. She even possessed a singular aptitude for judging with astonishing accuracy the character the persons whom she saw, by their physiognomy. The first time she saw the starry heavens she expressed astonishment and admiration, and since that moment all objects shown to her as being handsome and pleasing seemed to her very inferior to the appearance of the stars, for which she expressed a decided preference.

The large number of persons of all conditions who came to see her caused Mr Mesmer to fear that she might become unduly fatigued, and caution induced him to take precautions to this end. His opponents made use of this, as well as the lack of dexterity and helplessness of the young lady to question the genuineness of the cure. However, Mr Mesmer declares that the organ is in perfect condition and that she will make the use of it easier by exercising it diligently and with perseverance.

END OF M. PARADIS'S TESMONY.